



# Biodiversity Stewardship for communities

## HOW RURAL COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM CONSERVING THEIR LAND

In many parts of South Africa land is owned by rural communities. Ongoing land reform is creating new communal landowners across the country. South Africa also has high biodiversity, with many unique ecosystems and species. Much of this exceptional biodiversity occurs on communally-owned land. Biodiversity Stewardship is an approach to securing land in biodiversity priority areas through entering into agreements with private and communal landowners, led by conservation authorities and supported by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It recognises landowners as the custodians of biodiversity on their land. Entering into Biodiversity Stewardship programmes can have many benefits for communal landowners, including support on land management and the potential for successful commercial enterprises.





## THE PRINCIPLES OF BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP

### Biodiversity priority areas

The Biodiversity Stewardship programmes focus their efforts on high priority biodiversity areas. Before a landowner can enter the programme, an assessment is done of the biodiversity on their land.

### Voluntary commitment

Biodiversity Stewardship agreements are completely voluntary agreements between willing landowners and conservation agencies. The landowners retain the rights to their land, although there may be restrictions on some types of land uses to protect biodiversity.

### Cooperative governance and partnerships

Biodiversity Stewardship relies on cooperation between many different partners, mainly the landowners and government conservation agencies, but often supported by NGOs or private-sector funding partners.

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Biodiversity priority areas



Voluntary commitment



Cooperative governance and partnerships

## THE BENEFITS OF BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP FOR COMMUNAL LANDOWNERS



Advice and support



Assessment on the land



Developing a management plan



Assistance with aspects of land management

## THE BENEFITS OF BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP FOR COMMUNAL LANDOWNERS

Disadvantaged landowners who enter into Biodiversity Stewardship can receive benefits from conserving their land. Once Biodiversity Stewardship agreements are in place, the conservation authorities and other partners can provide advice and support to landowners. This includes an assessment of the important biodiversity on the land, support in developing a management plan, and assistance with aspects of land management, such as clearing of invasive species or fire management. When the land is better managed, communities will also begin to see the benefits of healthier ecosystems, such as less erosion or more productive land.

Where commercial enterprises are feasible, communities can receive assistance with developing business plans, receiving training and identifying private funding partners. A successful conservation business on a Biodiversity Stewardship site can provide jobs and income to the community. Jobs can be created through land management, as well as sustainable commercial activities such as game farming.

## COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP CASE STUDIES

### ■ Nambiti Private Game Reserve

Nambiti is a 9 859 ha 'Big-5' reserve near Ladysmith in KwaZulu-Natal. Nambiti was subject to a successful land claim, and is owned by the Senzo'kuhle Nkos'uNodada Community Trust. It was declared a Nature Reserve under the Biodiversity Stewardship programme in 2013.

Nambiti is now a successful eco-tourism and wildlife ranching venture that benefits from its significant biodiversity value. Operations include a range of business activities. There are 10 luxury game lodges catering for tourists, and the reserve also conducts limited hunting, live sale of game, and the production of venison from its own abattoir and butchery.

It provides a remarkable model of cooperation between a community and the private sector. The reserve generates a monthly turnover in excess of R4 million, which has significant implications for the local economy. It also employs more than 220 people, far more jobs than would be possible under conventional agriculture, and provides higher salaries than minimum agricultural wages.

The reserve contributes towards biodiversity conservation as it contains a number of threatened vegetation types, priority wetlands and threatened species.

### ■ Mgundeni Community

The Mgundeni community lives near Utrecht in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2009, it was the first in the country to sign a Biodiversity Stewardship agreement on communally-owned land. The community initially opted for a 124 ha Biodiversity Agreement, but has since upgraded to a Protected Environment of 455 ha.

The community has been supported by WWF-South Africa since 2005. This partnership has provided capacity building in invasive weed control, fire management and the development of a grazing plan. After an economic feasibility study, a sustainable cattle farming initiative was initiated in 2013. Support was provided to formalise the community herd, including training in cattle nutrition, bull and pregnancy testing, and vaccinations. WWF-SA also helped the community gain access to commercial markets to sell their cattle at better prices. By setting aside conservation areas, and conducting sustainable farming, cattle quality has improved.

iNkosi Mabaso's progressive approach to sustainable land management led to the upliftment of the Mgundeni community. iNkosi' Mabaso explained: "This background and learning makes [the people] happy because they're learning how to use the farm. This is very important because before they were allowing cattle to roam without consideration of grazing methods. Now they know to let cattle graze in one area and then rotate them to allow the land to recover and improve food security."







## BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP CAN CREATE A FOCUS FOR A RANGE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



Eco-tourism



Game farming



Sustainable natural resource harvesting



Other small business possibilities

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## BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP: LINKS WITH RURAL DEVELOPMENT, LAND REFORM AND THE BIODIVERSITY ECONOMY

There are numerous links between rural development, land reform, the biodiversity economy and Biodiversity Stewardship. All of these activities occur in rural areas, where natural biodiversity remains. Biodiversity Stewardship can stimulate rural development by diversifying rural livelihood options. Biodiversity Stewardship can create a focus for a range of alternative rural development activities, such as eco-tourism, game farming, sustainable natural resource harvesting and other small business possibilities. This is especially beneficial in agriculturally marginal areas, where traditional farming is less viable. At the same time, Biodiversity Stewardship will help to ensure that natural resources are used sustainably and biodiversity is conserved.

## THE LAND REFORM AND BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

The Land Reform and Biodiversity Stewardship Initiative (LRBSI) is a conservation and developmental initiative formed in partnership between the South African National Biodiversity Institute, the Department of Environmental Affairs, and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. The LRBSI aims to address simultaneously the critical developmental and environmental challenges faced by South Africa.

The LRBSI was established in 2009 to provide a learning network for land reform beneficiaries who are involved in Biodiversity Stewardship across the country. The LRBSI caters for land reform beneficiaries in areas of critical biodiversity importance, to ensure the conservation of biodiversity and provision of ecosystem services, while promoting sustainable rural development. It aims to demonstrate both socio-economic and conservation benefits. A major component of the LRBSI is capacity building and facilitation of partnerships, so that communities can benefit from participation in the Biodiversity Stewardship programmes.



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