

Physical Environment

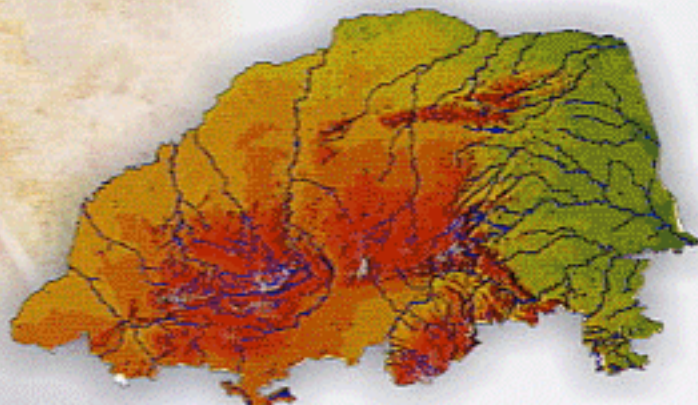
Overview and current state

Limpopo covers an area of 123 910 km², which is 10, 2% of the surface area of South Africa. It has a diverse topography, with many interesting and valuable environmental features. The broad terrain patterns of the province are characterised by the Limpopo Plain forming the northern half of the province and the Bushveld basin surrounded by the Central Highland which is bordered to the east by the Great Escarpment and the Eastern Plateau slope.

Looking at the landscape in more detail, specific features stand out as significant scenic areas. These include the tablelands and escarpments of the Waterberg complex, the low mountains of the Soutpansberg range and the Blouberg with the extensive plains towards the Limpopo River in the north. To the east are the very scenic high mountains of the Drakensberg range.

The mountainous areas of the province are of high scenic value and together with the Lowveld and northern plain areas have great eco-tourism potential for initiatives such as The African Ivory Route.

Limpopo falls in the summer rainfall region with the western part semi-arid, and the eastern part largely sub-tropical. The western and far northern parts experience frequent droughts. Winter throughout Limpopo is mild and mostly frost-free.



Landscape and Rivers

The province has limited surface and ground water resources. Most of the water management areas are severely stressed and many people still do not have access to the accepted minimum supply of water. Most of the province relies on ground water as a source of supply.

Pressures

Water requirements for development (especially agriculture, mining and rural areas) are placing severe stress on the available water supply in the province.

The surface water resource in Limpopo

River	Catchment (km ²)	MAP (mm)
Mokolo	14 409	533
Lephalala	6725	469
Mogalakwena	19 314	481
Sand, Nzelele	19 972	453
Luvuvhu	5941	627
Letaba	18 979	584
Olifants	54 563	631

The pressures on the physical and scenic resources include:

- indiscriminate development in scenic and sensitive landscapes that could have a significant impact on tourism
- inappropriate development that could undermine the eco-tourism potential
- land degradation that is increased by the pressure of human activities, which reduces the natural production capacity of the province with severe long-term consequences.

Key issues

The key issues affecting water management in the province include:

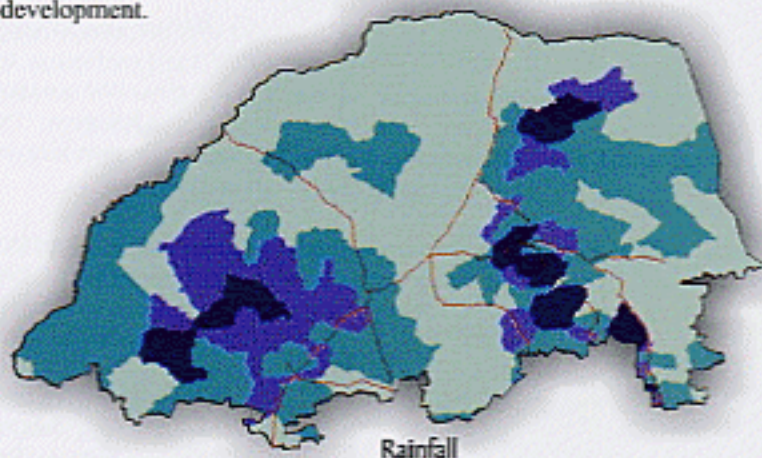
- the imbalance between the supply and demand for water
- inappropriate land uses in the river valleys
- the impact of fertilisers and pesticides
- inadequate monitoring
- high concentrations of pit latrines in certain areas
- flood events and droughts.

The key issues negatively affecting the scenic quality of the province include:

- development pressures on scenically valuable areas.

The key issues affecting land degradation include:

- deforestation especially in Sekhukhune and Vhembe districts
- unsustainable agricultural practices
- growth of the commercial forestry industry in sensitive landscapes.
- mining activities
- land use development.



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