



## environmental affairs

Department:  
Environmental Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Ref: 02/1/5/2

MINISTER

QUESTION NO. 362 FOR WRITTEN REPLY: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

A draft reply to Mrs J F Terblanche (DA) the above-mentioned question is enclosed for your consideration.

MS NOSIPHO NGCABA  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE:

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

MRS B E E MOLEWA, MP  
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE:

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

(For written reply)

**QUESTION NO. 362**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 6 of 2014 {NW416E}**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 14 March 2014**

**Mrs J F Terblanche (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:**

- (1) What steps has his department taken to ensure the preservation of national biodiversity in South Africa;
- (2) how (a) are the collections at SA National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) institutions maintained and (b) does his department ensure that institutional memory is retained at the SANBI institutions where the collections are held;
- (3) what has his department done to increase the accessibility at SANBI institutions to ensure that members of the public can visit the institutions and are made aware of the importance of biodiversity? NW416E

### 362. THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS REPLIES:

(1)

To ensure conservation and sustainable utilisation of South Africa's biodiversity, the department promulgated two Acts under the umbrella of the framework Act (the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) which are the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA), 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003) and the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act respectively (NEMBA), 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004).

NEMPAA protects areas of land, inland waters and marine and coastal areas of inherent nature conservation value and areas modified or built by people and deserving protection for cultural, scientific or aesthetic value.

These areas are protected through formal declaration of state-owned land as national parks, nature reserves and heritage areas. Private and communal lands are also declared as protected areas generally with the consent of the land owner and in terms of which an agreement is concluded between a state institution and the land owner.

NEMBA provides for a National Biodiversity Framework (NBF), Bioregional Plans, listing of threatened and or protected species and ecosystems, Biodiversity Management Plans for species and ecosystems. Regulatory tools under NEMBA include Norms and Standards for Biodiversity Management Plans for species and ecosystems, Regulations for Threatened or Protected species, Regulations on Bioprospecting Access and Benefit Sharing, and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Regulations.

The legislative framework is underpinned by prominent strategic tools, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2005, and the NBF 2009 (mentioned above). Both these documents were supported by a spatial component, the National Biodiversity Spatial Assessment (NBSA) 2004, which was updated in 2011 National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA).

The National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy (NPAES) 2009 was developed with the goal of achieving cost-effective expansion of the protected area network that enhances ecological sustainability and resilience to climate change. It was in part a response to the NSBA 2004 which

highlighted that many ecosystems were under-protected. The NPAES sets ecosystem-specific targets for protected area expansion, identifies geographic focus areas for land-based protected area expansion, and makes recommendations regarding mechanisms for protected area expansion.

A myriad of other tools were developed to promote the conservation of biodiversity in South Africa.

(2)

- (a) The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has research collections of preserved plant specimens housed at three herbaria: the National Herbarium, Pretoria, > 1 million specimens); the Compton Herbarium, Cape Town, > 500,000 specimens, and the KwaZulu-Natal Herbarium Durban, >250,000 specimens. These specimens are housed in cabinets in dedicated storerooms where they are accessible to researchers from the institute and other institutions for study. The data for the majority of the specimens (where and when it was collected, who collected it) are kept in a large database. In addition, a project is currently underway to scan each specimen so that there is an image of each.

There are documented policies and procedures that are used for management and care of the collections, and staff including scientists and technicians dedicated to the maintenance of each of the three collections. SANBI does not hold collections of animals or fungi; these are maintained in museums, and in the case of fungi, by the Agricultural Research Council.

- (b) The database that includes all information associated with each specimen ensures that data is held on a permanent basis in SANBI. All published research that has used the collections specifies which specimens were examined. These publications date back over 100 years and are permanently kept in the SANBI libraries. The policy and procedures documents have been developed through the inputs of senior staff over many years. These are updated but they have been developed from the inputs of experienced staff. Staff working with the collections interact on a daily basis and the experienced staff mentor the young and inexperienced staff on the maintenance of the collections.

(3)

SANBI currently manages nine national botanical gardens in six provinces which are all open to the public all year round. The gardens are used by more than a million visitors for various purposes (tourism, education, leisure, meetings, entertainment) every year. SANBI has a range of garden-based programmes that attract members of the public. These include sponsored concerts, natural history courses, garden-based and curriculum-linked environmental education programmes, garden fairs and exhibitions, and provides special concessions for pensioners. Wheelchairs are available for use at all garden entrances. Kirstenbosch has a dedicated education bus that is used to transport learners, educators and also pensioners to the garden on a weekly basis, thereby making the garden more accessible. Where staff buses exist in other gardens, they are also used to transport learners during the week for dedicated learning programmes. Some gardens also host arts and crafts exhibitions as well as farmers' markets on weekends. The gardens also offer guided tours and are popularly used by members of the public as venues for weddings, picnics and other social events. All the gardens have dedicated web sites and some gardens use social media (for instance, Facebook) to engage with and attract interested members of the public. Each garden's web site has a link to a trip advisor. Several gardens have dedicated braille trails and are, where possible, accessible to members of the public with disabilities. SANBI has a very comprehensive interpretation programme used to promote environmental awareness and make the gardens attractive to visitors. Interpretive material includes storyboards (in different South African languages), plant labels, brochures, booklets, maps, and audio guides that share with visitors the importance of biodiversity. SANBI also celebrates international environmental days such as Arbor Day, International Biodiversity Day and other special days like Biodiversity Career Day with members of the public. Learners and educators are often invited to participate in these events. SANBI also engages with environmental societies and Non-Governmental Organisations (for instance, Botanical Society of South Africa, Birdlife SA, Clivia Club and so forth), to provide programmes, exhibitions and talks available to members of the public. SANBI also uses demonstration gardens and traditional structures to showcase the association between different cultures and biodiversity. SANBI partners with government departments, municipalities, civil society, research institutions, museums, zoos and corporate sponsors in reaching out to as many members of the public as possible.

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