

DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM PLANNING FOR INDIGENOUS FORESTS OF SOUTH AFRICA: POLICY, CORE ISSUES, OBJECTIVES & TARGETS

1. Overarching Policy and Legislative Framework

The formulation of a policy and strategy for the development of a protected area system for indigenous forests must happen within the framework of the overarching national policy and legislative framework and of the international obligations in that regard. The following legislation and key policies are relevant:

National Constitution

In terms of the National Constitution forestry is a national responsibility, while both the national and provincial governments have concurrent responsibility for nature conservation.

White Paper on Environmental Management Policy in South Africa (May 1998)

This policy states that the government must act as custodian of the environment and must, inter alia, promote conservation. The policy focus areas for protected areas in the White paper is the prevention of loss of biodiversity and the protection of natural resources. Biodiversity should be protected by conserving the diversity of landscapes, ecosystems, habitats, biological communities, populations, species and genes throughout the country. The White Paper also states specifically that indigenous forest ecosystems must be protected as part of the national heritage.

In its background on core policy issues, the White paper states that in 1999 there were 422 formally protected areas (consisting of 21 different categories of protected areas) in South Africa, covering 6% of the land. All seven major habitat types (biomes) are found in the various protected areas, including indigenous forests, but many sub-habitat types are not adequately protected. Available funding for nature conservation is shrinking, and available funding must be utilised more efficiently.

Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Conservation (2001/2002)

The Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T) developed the directives of the Environmental Management Policy relating to protected areas further into a strategic action plan. The focus of this action plan is to:

- Consolidate the current system of protected areas. One outcome of this is the Protected Areas Bill.
- Promote the harmonisation of conservation approaches amongst conservation agencies in South Africa.
- To promote the application of international conservation tools, including the application of the World Heritage Act.

National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Bill

The Bill provides for the continued existence of the South African National Parks (SANPARKS) and for the declaration and management of protected areas in South Africa, and cooperative governance in such declaration and management of protected areas. It provides for 4 types of protected areas namely:

- Special Nature Reserves
 - to protect highly sensitive, outstanding ecosystems, species, geological or physiological features;
 - - to be made primarily available for scientific research or environmental monitoring
- National Parks
 - to protect areas of national or international biodiversity significance; a viable, representative sample of natural systems and scenic areas; or the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems;
 - to exclude exploitation or occupation inconsistent with such protection; and
 - to provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and tourism opportunities which are environmentally compatible.
- Nature Reserve
 - Is declared to:
 - supplement the system of national parks;
 - protect areas with significant natural features, species, habitats or biotic communities;
 - protect a particular site of scientific, cultural, historical or archaeological interest;
 - provide for its long term protection and the maintenance of its biodiversity;
 - provide for a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs;
 - enable a variety of traditional consumptive uses; or
 - provide for nature based recreation and tourism opportunities.
- Protected Environment
 - Is declared to:
 - provide a buffer zone from undesirable development adjacent to national parks or nature reserves;
 - to protect ecosystems needing protection outside of national parks and nature reserves;
 - to protect areas which are sensitive to development due to natural characteristics or aesthetic reasons; or
 - to limit land use in an area to be included into a national park or nature reserve.

It is intended that all terrestrial protected areas in South Africa will be catered for in this Bill, except those established in terms of the National Forests Act no 84 of 1998.

National Environmental Management Act No 107 of 1998

As far as protected areas are concerned, the principles stated in this act are relevant, but these are broad statements that basically re-iterates the policy directives of the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy in South Africa. Specific reference is made to the importance of sensitive, vulnerable, highly dynamic or stressed ecosystems which require specific attention in planning and management. Much emphasis is placed on cooperative governance, harmonisation of policies, transparency in decision-making and public participation.

White Paper on Sustainable Forest Development in South Africa (1996)

The overall goal is stated in the White Paper is to: “to promote a thriving forest sector, to be utilised for the lasting benefit of the national society, and developed and managed to protect the environment.” It also provides the following policy directives related to protected areas in indigenous forests:

- “Government will...ensure the protection of biodiversity, habitats, sites of historical and cultural value, and scenery.”
- “The policy recognises the special value which the people of South Africa place on natural forest and woodlands and associated habitats, and our obligation to the global community to adequately protect the forests and biodiversity of the world.”
- The policy is to maintain the protected State forests. Government will also promote the sustainable use and management of other forests, and the protection of forests and woodlands under threat.
- The White Paper provided for a new Forest Act (promulgated in 1998, 2 years after the White Paper) and stated that the Act must inter alia provide for the proclamation of special conservation areas and for the protection of biodiversity, habitats, soil and cultural assets
- “Government will continue to manage and control indigenous forests declared under the Forest Act. It will seek to declare new protected areas where necessary. Government will monitor and protect indigenous forests on privately owned land. It will delegate management to appropriate agents where desirable.”
- The policy also states that Government must seek to work in co-operation with international development/donor agencies.
- Government must facilitate progress towards a coherent policy, including linkage between forest policy and the policies of the DEA&T regarding environmental management and the conservation of biodiversity.

National Forests Act No 84 of 1998

The following aspects in the National Forests Act (NFA) has direct relevance to protected area systems:

The purpose of the Act is inter alia to:

- provide for the protection of certain forests
- promote the sustainable management and development of forests

The Act defines biodiversity as:

- genetic diversity
- species diversity
- ecosystem diversity

The guiding principles of the Act include:

- a minimum of each woodland type should be conserved
- forests must be developed and managed so as to:
 - conserve biological diversity, ecosystems and habitats
 - conserve natural resources, especially soil and water
 - conserve natural heritage resources and promote aesthetic., cultural and spiritual values
 - sustain their potential yield of their economic, social and environmental benefits

Part 2 of the Act deals with protected areas. It allows the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry to declare certain forests as protected forest areas.

The categories of protected areas are:

- forest nature reserve
- forest wilderness area
- any other type of protected area which is recognised in international law or practice

The Act does not define “forest nature reserve” or “wilderness area”, but interpretations are given in various documents. From these interpretations the purpose of nature reserves as declared and managed in terms of the NFA appears to be the protection of outstanding ecosystems or habitats, and/or unique or threatened species of fauna and flora and/or areas of particular biological or scientific importance. The size of these areas may vary considerably, from very small to large. Recreational use of these areas, if allowed, are usually restricted nature-orientated activities of a low intensity.

Wilderness areas are relatively large, undeveloped areas which are protected to retain their intrinsically wild appearance and character. Only low intensity nature-orientated activities such as hiking are usually allowed. Although their management objectives may be very similar, wilderness areas differ from forest nature reserves mainly in size, protecting major ecosystems and landscapes, whereas the latter usually protects smaller parts or sites as a representative sample of a larger habitat, depending on the habitat requirements of particular species or on a specific area to be maintained for the well-being of a larger ecosystem.

The minister may also declare “State forests” , and the NFA defines this as State land, other than trust forests, acquired or reserved for forestry in terms of this Act, or designated as demarcated State forest. Some State forests contain mostly timber plantations of exotic trees, while others are purely managed for the protection of indigenous forests and surrounding veld types. Although they may be seen as “protected areas”, especially in the latter case, they have a lower protective status than “nature reserves” and “wilderness

areas”, and less stringent restrictions on resource use (where allowed) or on access for recreation and other purposes than in the case of the former.

Ultimately, the underlying approach to the protection of State forests as far as indigenous forests are concerned is one of “multiple use management”, with areas allocated to various uses according to the DWAF management class system, including resource utilization, protection, nature reserve, recreation and research. The management objectives of these management classes correspond in varying degrees to those of the IUCN categories of protected areas.

In terms of Part 4 the Minister may also declare “controlled forest areas” to prevent deforestation or rehabilitate a natural forest or woodland.

International Policy Framework and Conventions/Agreements

Much of the international guidance on forest management and protection stem from two major programme areas. Firstly the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and its products, the Agenda 21 set of internationally agreed guidelines for global sustainable development, the Forest Principles and the Convention on Biodiversity. Secondly the World Conservation Union (IUCN) which has sought to influence and encourage societies to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature since its creation in 1948. This body has six commissions, which include the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

References to forests and protected areas occur in various parts of Agenda 21, but the most relevant chapters are Chapter 11 titled Combating Deforestation and Chapter 15 titled Conservation of Biological Diversity. Among the statements in Chapter 11 is a call for the establishment, expansion and management of protected area systems appropriate to each national context, which “...includes systems of conservation units for their environmental, social and spiritual functions in representative ecological systems and landscapes, primary old-growth forests, conservation and management of wildlife, nomination of World Heritage Sites..., conservation of genetic resources...” Chapter 15 urges nations inter alia to take pro-active action for the conservation of ecosystems and habitats, especially vulnerable ones, and to reinforce protected area systems.

The non-binding Forest Principles adopted at the Earth Summit includes a statement that national policies must also be aimed at the “...protection of ecologically viable representative or unique examples of forests, including old-growth forests, cultural, spiritual historical, religious and other unique and valued forests of national importance. South Africa has ratified the Convention on Biodiversity which was adopted at the Earth Summit. Article 8 of this Convention requires the development of protected area systems plans.

The IUCN defines a protected area as “...an area dedicated primarily to the protection and enjoyment of natural or cultural heritage, to maintenance of

biodiversity, and/or to maintenance of ecological life-support services". Its management categories are as follows:

- Category Ia: Strict Nature Reserves – managed mainly for science or wilderness protection (area possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring)
- Category Ib: Wilderness Area – managed mainly for wilderness protection (large area of unmodified or slightly modified land and/or sea, retaining its natural characteristics and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is managed to preserve its natural condition)
- Category II: National Park – managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation (natural area of land and/or sea designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible)
- Category III: Natural Monument – managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features (area containing specific natural or cultural features of outstanding or unique value because of their inherent rarity, representativeness or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance)
- Category IV: Habitat/Species Management Area – managed mainly for conservation through management intervention (area of land or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats to meet the requirements of specific species)
- Category V: Protected Landscape/Seascape – managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation or recreation (area of land, with coast or sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area)
- Category VI: Managed Resource Protected Area – managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources (area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while also providing a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs)

The WCPA actively promotes the systematic planning of protected areas. According to these guidelines such processes must be data-driven and goal directed. This organisation is also involved in promoting technology exchange on protected area systems planning, including best practices such as the C-plan, a conservation planning tool developed by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service.

2. Core Issues

The following issues have a direct bearing on the planning of a protected area system for indigenous forests in the country. These are the main issues deduced from a study of research and workshop documents, as well as from strategic planning sessions and policy documents:

- Although indigenous forests cover less than 1% of the country's surface, their ecological importance far outweighs their extent – it may therefore be inappropriate to simply use the international target of 10% protection for the biome.
- 24 forest types have been identified, and these have unique and distinct features with differences in the composition of flora and fauna and different physical characteristics – a protected area system should therefore aim to protect representative samples of all the forest types.
- The forests occur in widely scattered patches, the majority of which are less than 50ha in size – the aim should therefore be to protect forests in their wider landscape and setting, of which they form an integral part (forests may also form part of broader landscape level conservation initiatives). State forests cover much more mountain terrain than indigenous forests. Island biogeography plays a role here, and the establishment of corridors for migration of fauna and flora is important.
- Some forest areas are more important than others, depending on criteria such as vulnerability of the ecosystem, uniqueness or rarity, species diversity, the occurrence of rare fauna or flora species, recreation potential, landscape value etc. – protected area planning should prioritise forest areas, and appropriate criteria should be selected to help determine the relative importance of forest areas for protection, and to determine the main purpose for protecting each area. Many State forests were not proclaimed according to a rationale or conservation criteria, and some of these may no longer be worth managing given current resources.
- The threats facing forests vary greatly in their nature and in their extent – the nature and level of threats should be taken into account, combined with the relative importance of forest areas, to determine conservation priorities.
- Many of the forests occur in the poorer, mostly rural areas of the country, where they play an important part in the local socio-economy and culture of the people. The dilemma facing conservation planners and managers is to reconcile the needs of people (including heavy consumption of forest resources such as bark harvesting) with the needs to conserve ecosystems and biodiversity – protected area planning should attempt to integrate and reconcile the aims of sustainable resource use and conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity (inter alia through allowing for resource use areas in the protected area system). Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is an important part of current forest policy in South Africa, and must be taken into account in the planning.
- Some forests are of special spiritual, cultural or historic value, especially to certain local communities – such social values, which are particularly prevalent in this country where forests are often an integral part of the local culture, must be taken into account in protected area planning.

- There are wide differences in the availability of information and management capacity among the indigenous forest areas – protected area planning should therefore be flexible, taking these differences into account. Protected area planning may not proceed at the same rate for all areas.
- Manpower and resources to manage indigenous forest resources are limited – this is another incentive to prioritise areas for protection, and to seek innovative alternatives such as community forestry agreements and partnerships to complement formal protection.
- Forest-based recreation and ecotourism is growing, but requires a range of facilities provided by the State, private sector and partnerships, with potential benefits to local communities. It also requires careful management to limit the impact of recreation activities on the forests. Ecotourism benefits are concentrated in a few areas, while other areas with high potential are neglected – protected area planning should take the ecotourism potential of forests into account.
- The following fundamental issues relating to the concept of protected areas (PA) are listed in the IUCN guidelines for protected area management categories, and are very relevant to the South African situation as well:
 - Size (scale): the size of a Protected area should reflect the size of land required to accomplish the purpose of management;
 - Zoning: At least three-quarters of the area must be managed for the primary purpose of protection and maintenance of biological diversity;
 - Management: The designated management authority must be capable of achieving the management objectives;
 - Ownership: The ownership of the land should be compatible with the achievement of management objectives for the area;
 - Multiple classification: Protected areas of different categories are often contiguous; one category may even nest within another;
 - Surrounding management: Protected areas are not meant to be islands; so the planning and management of these areas must be incorporated within regional planning and supported by policies for the wider areas in which they occur.

3. Forest Policy and Objectives for Protected Areas

Policy

Within the framework of national and international policy, and in response to the core issues, the broad policy approach to protected area planning is proposed as follows:

- The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry is the custodian of the nation's indigenous forests, and in accordance to its mandate must act as lead agent for the protected area system planning for indigenous forests, in cooperation with relevant international agencies such as DFID;
- Such planning should take cognisance of the total national system of protected areas, and the strategic conservation frameworks of other national and provincial government agencies

- Protected area system planning for indigenous forests must be done in co-ordinated fashion according to objectives and targets, with prioritisation of forest areas for protection according to these aims and to the threats facing them. Such planning must include a review of the relevance of existing State forests and protected areas according to the aims and targets;
- The protected area system for indigenous forests must contain a range of protected areas that will accommodate a variety of conservation aims, from strict protection to resource use areas;
- The planning must strive to create an efficient network of protected areas within the constraints of available financial and manpower resources;
- Forests must be protected within their wider landscape setting, including corridors for the migration of forest fauna and flora;
- The protected area system for indigenous forests should attempt to integrate and reconcile conflicts between resource use and protection aims, with due consideration of the importance placed on community needs and participation on the one hand, and on the conservation of habitats and biodiversity on the other;
- Protected area planning must allow for flexibility in planning due to differences in the availability of information for various areas (including the up- or downgrading of an area's status as more information becomes available); and
- An approach of adaptive planning and management of protected areas should be taken, given the incompleteness and varying quality of information and rapid changes in the physical and socio-political environments.

Objectives

The overall vision is to develop a co-ordinated and efficient system of forest-related protected areas based on national conservation goals and targets.

This protected area system must aim at achieving the following objectives:

- protection of representative examples of all forest types;
- conservation of biological diversity;
- maintenance of important ecosystems and habitats;
- protection of the character of outstanding landscapes;
- conservation of natural forest resources and ensure their sustainable use;
- protection or enhancement of the amenity value of forests (carbons sinks, hydrological role, erosion prevention etc.);
- protection of areas that will facilitate ecological research ;
- protection and management of areas for their recreation, cultural or spiritual value; and
- protection of sites of historic value.

4. Conservation Goals/Targets

What do we set targets for? The targets are set for the objectives listed above, and to achieve the strategy flowing from that.

Conservation targets may include the following:

Biodiversity Element

a) Minimum Area Protection Target

National

- The protection of a minimum of 20% of all indigenous forests under all protection classes

Forest Type

- The protection of a minimum of 1% of each forest type under strict conservation and a minimum of 10% under all protection classes with the following exceptions:
 - strict protection of at least 10% of the Licuati sand forest, mangrove forest and swamp forest with a minimum of 70% included under all protection classes.

b) Old Growth Forest Target

- Maximise number of selected forests with old-growth present

c) Species Targets

Red List Species

- A minimum of 5% of the known locations of each forest fauna and flora species classified as critically endangered or endangered protected within strict protection areas, with a minimum of 30% of the locations protected under all protection classes
- A minimum of 2% of other Red List category forest species protected within strict protection areas, with a minimum of 15% of the locations protected under all protection classes

Endemism

- A minimum of 20% of the known locations of endemic forest species protected under all protection classes

Keystone Species

- Maximise the number of selected forests with keystone species

Protected Species

- Maximise the number of selected forests with protected species

Process Elements

a) Ecotones

- Maximise the number of selected forests with favourable ecotones
- b) Vulnerable Ecosystems
- Maximise the number of selected forests containing, or occurring within, vulnerable and threatened ecosystems (eg. Forests occurring on escarpments, along estuaries etc)
- c) Connectivity
- Maximise the number of connective linkages among forests
- d) Resilience to Climate Change
- Minimum of one altitudinal gradient for each forest type where possible

Socio-cultural Elements

- a) Outstanding Landscapes and Wilderness Character
- Ensure the inclusion of forests with outstanding landscapes and wilderness character in selected forests
- b) Outstanding Recreational, Cultural or Spiritual Value
- Ensure the selection of forests of outstanding recreation, cultural or spiritual value

5. Minimum Planning Unit

A decision needs to be taken on the Minimum Planning Unit. Should we use the Patch, Forest Estate, Forest Management Unit, or State Forest Area as minimum planning unit? The general size of the planning unit chosen will, to some extent, affect the level of detail and complexity of the planning process.

6. Potential Data Sources

Potential data sources relevant to determine the conservation status and potential of indigenous forest areas include:

- Botha, JH; 1994. Departement van Waterwese en Bosbou Bewaringsgebiede (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry Conservation Areas) – Non-registered Administrative File.
- Cooper, KH; 1985. The Conservation Status of Indigenous Forests in Transvaal, Natal and OFS; Wildlife Society of SA, Durban.
- Cooper, KH & Swart, W; 1992. Transkei Forest Survey; Wildlife Society of SA; Durban

- Von Maltitz, G et al; 2002. Classification System for South African Indigenous Forests: An Objective Classification for the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry; CSIR Environmentek, Pretoria.
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry; Forest Nature Reserve Setting Aside Notices: Non-registered Administrative File.
- Department of Water Affairs and Forestry; Register of DWAF Protected Areas: Non-registered Administrative File.
- Geldenhuys, CJ; 1991. Richness, Composition and Relationships of the Floras of Selected Forests in South Africa; CSIR, Pretoria.
- Von Breitenbach, F; 1990. Reports on Indigenous Forests Part 1: Introduction and Methods – South-eastern Transvaal Forests: Kaapsehoop Forests, Uitsoek Forests; Department of Environment Affairs: Forestry Branch, Pretoria.

Further guideline documents

- Howison, D; Undated. Guidelines for Selecting Areas of State Forest Land for Entrenchment as Protected Areas. Directorate of Forestry, Pietermaritzburg. Unpublished document.

Preliminary list, more to be added

7. Stakeholders

The following stakeholders are important for protected area planning for indigenous forests:

National Government and National Agencies

- DWAF Directorates
 - Indigenous Forest Management
 - Forestry Regulation
 - Community Forestry
 - Forestry Restructuring
- Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism
- South African National Parks
- National Botanical Institute

Provincial Authorities

- Provincial Departments of Environment Affairs for:
 - Western Cape
 - Eastern Cape
 - KwaZulu Natal
 - Mpumalanga
 - Limpopo Province

International Agencies

- Department for International Development (UK)
- Danida
- IUCN

Non-government Bodies

- Wildlife Society of Southern Africa

Research Institutions

- CSIR

Preliminary list – more to be added
