



GAUTENG PROVINCE
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**GAUTENG BIODIVERSITY
STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME**
Conservation | Cooperation | Communities



Gauteng Biodiversity Stewardship Programme

Definition of Biodiversity Stewardship

“Stewardship” is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.
(www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stewardship)

Biodiversity stewardship is an approach to securing land in priority biodiversity areas by entering into agreements with private and communal landowners, municipalities and other government entities, led by conservation authorities. The objective of biodiversity stewardship is to conserve and manage high priority biodiversity areas through voluntary participation of landowners.

The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD), in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), has launched a dedicated Biodiversity Stewardship Programme which offers a range of conservation options. It is aimed at setting up positive, proactive partnerships with you, the landowner, to support and encourage you as you take on the responsibility of managing and protecting the natural assets that are in your care. Appropriate management support will be offered in respect of land that has been set aside for conservation. The EWT has over 40 years of conservation experience and has been instrumental in the implementation of biodiversity stewardship projects in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.



Why conservation of biodiversity is important in Gauteng

Gauteng is home to **globally unique** biodiversity. This is mostly attributed to the presence of the Grassland Biome which, in South Africa, is second only to the Fynbos Biome in terms of species richness. The Grassland Biome is a rich store of biodiversity assets, including 52 of South Africa's 122 Important Bird Areas, 15 of its endemic mammals, nearly 3,500 plant species and specialised habitats such as wetlands.

Grasslands play an important role in combatting climate change given their role in carbon sequestration and wetlands, drainage features and the ground water zone represent critical **ecological infrastructure**, supplying water to the region while maintaining water quality and ensuring flood regulation. Collectively these features contribute to the ecological integrity of the province, thus providing important ecological services to marginalised communities and protection from climate change impacts such as flooding.

South Africa is obligated to protect its temperate indigenous grasslands, firstly as a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (signed June 2008), and more specifically as a signatory to the Hohhot Temperate Grasslands Declaration (signed February 2010). The 2004 National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment identified the Grassland Biome as one of the most severely under-protected ecosystems in South Africa. Currently, only just over 2% of South Africa's grassland biome is under formal conservation within protected areas and over 40% is irreversibly transformed. Any efforts to conserve threatened grassland areas, therefore, need to involve private landowners and communities, and the support of provincial stewardship efforts is crucial in this respect.

Whilst the province contains globally significant biodiversity, it is also the economic centre of South Africa and the rest of Africa. The pressures of increasing economic development have led to significant habitat loss and fragmentation and pose a significant threat to the province's remaining biodiversity. Already 56% of the natural habitat in Gauteng has been lost.

There are four options for Biodiversity Stewardship

1. Conservation Area
2. Biodiversity Agreement
3. Protected Environment
4. Nature Reserve

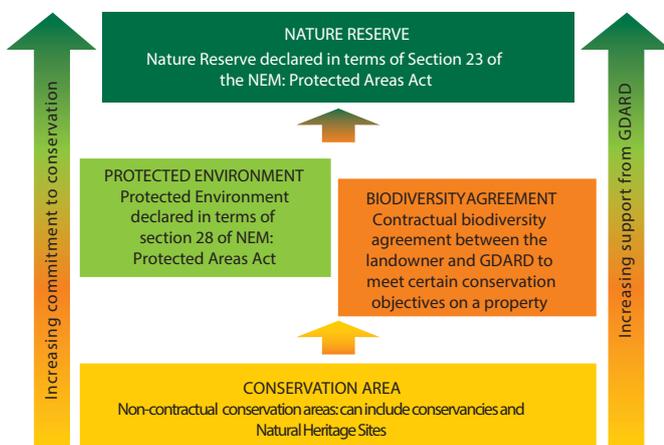


Figure 2: Different stewardship options

Critical Biodiversity Areas in Gauteng

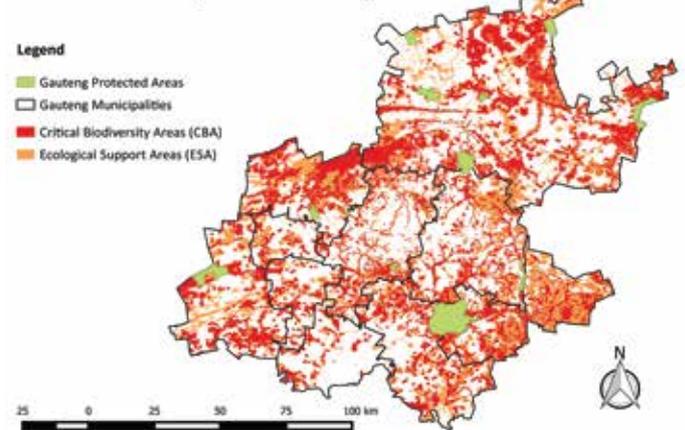


Figure 1: Areas of ecological importance in Gauteng

Critical Biodiversity Areas (including important and irreplaceable areas) are areas required to meet biodiversity targets for ecosystems, species and ecological processes, as identified in a systematic biodiversity plan.

Ecological Support Areas are not essential for meeting biodiversity targets but play an important role in supporting the ecological functioning of Critical Biodiversity Areas and/or in delivering ecosystem services



Photo credit: Bradley Gibbons

Characteristics of the various Biodiversity Stewardship options

- All options are voluntary
- Each one will be tailored to the needs of the landowner who will retain title to the property at all times
- The higher categories offer potential tax breaks and also increased extension services from GDARD, but come with more restrictions and require greater commitment from landowners
- All existing types of informal protected areas (e.g. Conservancies, Community Conservation Areas, and Sites of Conservation Significance) can be accommodated within the options.

OPTION	LEVEL 1 CONSERVATION AREA	LEVEL 2 BIODIVERSITY AGREEMENTS	LEVEL 3 PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT	LEVEL 3 NATURE RESERVES
Which option applies to your land?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural veld with conservation potential. Flexible option that can be used as a stepping stone to more security later on in the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for land that is considered viable for conservation purposes. Requires a higher level of commitment to improving the management of specific biodiversity features. Can be used as a stepping stone to more security later on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for single or multiple properties comprising connected landscapes considered viable for conservation purposes. Requires a higher level of commitment to conservation management, but allows for forms of extractive land use that are not detrimental to the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable for priority conservation areas, preferably adjacent to statutory reserves or large enough to be self-contained ecosystems. Requires the highest level of commitment to conservation management.
Legal status /duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal status No defined period of commitment Registration certificate provided by conservation authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has legal status by virtue of a legal contract between the landowner and the conservation authority Recommended minimum period of 10 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has legal status by virtue of a legal contract between the landowner and the conservation authority and a declaration as a Protected Environment under the NEM: PAA. Land use conditions are negotiated and registered on the title deed Recommended minimum period of 30 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has legal status by virtue of a legal contract between the landowner and the conservation agency and a declaration as a Nature Reserve under the NEM: PAA. Mandatory conditions are registered on the title deed.
Qualifying criteria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any landowner willing to conserve the natural systems on their land that can contribute to conservation targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site must have been assessed to the standard of the provincial agency and found to contain biodiversity features identified as important or as a priority for achieving the conservation targets of the province. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site must have been assessed to the standard of the provincial agency and found to contain biodiversity features identified as important or a priority for achieving the conservation targets of the province. The landowner must be willing to submit to the declaration of the area as a Protected Environment, to enter into a legal contract, and to manage the site according to the norms and standards laid down for a Protected Area, but with fewer restrictions than a Nature Reserve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site must contain significant biodiversity and/or ecological value to receive this status. The landowner must be willing to submit to the declaration of the area as a Nature Reserve, to enter into a legal contract, and to manage the site according to the norms and standards gazetted for the management of Nature Reserves. The landowner must be willing to rezone the relevant land portions to the appropriate conservation zoning
Possible land use limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape is maintained in its current condition and restoration activities are implemented where possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land must be managed according to an approved management plan that is negotiated between the landowner and conservation authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use limitations are those negotiated and published in the gazetting notice of the establishment of the Protected Environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use rights must be consistent with the provisions of the Protected Area legislation Land use limitations are those mandatory conditions registered on the title deed.
Benefits to the landowners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and support through basic extension services. Guidance with management plans and farm maps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and support through advanced extension services. Guidance with management plans and farm maps. Specific plans for fire, alien species, plant and animal management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice and support through advanced extension services. Guidance with management plans and farm maps. Regulate the use of the landscape through co-operation between various landowners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial assistance with habitat management through advanced extension services. Increased recognition and marketing exposure. Conservation authorities will be able to lobby for incentives on behalf of the contracted landowners.

Why should you get involved?

- You can assist the province in achieving its conservation targets for threatened species and ecosystems
- Improved management of natural resources will secure the future for society, through improved water quality and production in catchments, and reduced erosion and flooding
- By becoming involved in conservation on your land, you will have access to support and advice from relevant experts
- Your income-base can be diversified through ecotourism and conservation associated opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What do basic extension services include?

A: General advice, support and assistance, as well as input into the drafting of Environmental Management Plans.

Q: What do advanced extension services include?

A: Specific ecological advice and support in the implementation of the Environmental Management Plans.

Q: Who will bear the costs for drawing up the legal contracts?

A: GDARD will carry all costs for identified priority sites.

Q: What are the consequences for terminating the biodiversity agreement or withdrawing from the declaration process?

A: Anyone who withdraws and or terminated the agreement will be liable for the total cost of GDARD's management interventions and legal costs up to the date of termination.

Q: Will the agreement lead to the removal or relocation of existing infrastructure from the identified site?

A: All existing infrastructure may remain if it is in accordance with the zoning plan identified in the Environmental Management Plan. GDARD's Scientific Services will provide expert advice on how to optimally utilise the area in a sustainable manner.

Q: Will GDARD have unlimited access to my property if it becomes a Nature Reserve?

A: Specific terms and conditions within the legal contracts will be negotiated with the landowner.

Q: Will the restrictions stipulated in the contract of the Nature Reserve portion apply to the new owner if the land is sold/changes hands?

A: A new Management Agreement and Environmental Management Plan will be negotiated with the new landowner but the same restrictions will apply.

Q: Can I be assured that GDARD can support the terms of the contract in the future?

A: As a party to the contract, GDARD is legally obliged to honour the agreement.

Q: Will the general public have unlimited access to my property?

A: Specific terms and conditions can be negotiated within the initial agreement regarding specific rules and access by the general public.

Q: Can livestock graze in a Protected Area?

A: Livestock grazing is permitted as long as it is informed by ecological stocking rates (as opposed to commercial stocking rates). In such an instance, grazing is used as a management tool, provided it is not in conflict with management objectives, as contained in the Environmental Management Plan.

Q: Does this process have an impact on a land claim?

A: The existence of a land claim needs to be verified with the relevant Land Claims Commissioner because the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 stipulates that land should not be declared a Protected Area until such claim has been resolved.

Q: Can only a portion of property be declared a Protected Area as opposed to the whole property?

A: Yes, the stewardship mechanism allows an entire cadastre or a portion of a cadastre to be declared a Protected Area.

Glossary

Conservation Authority: GDARD

Ecological Infrastructure: Naturally functioning ecosystems that generate and deliver valuable services to people. It includes, for example, healthy mountain catchments, rivers, wetlands, coastal dunes, and nodes and corridors of natural habitat, which together form a network of interconnected structural elements in the landscape. Ecological infrastructure is the asset, or stock, from which a range of valuable services flow (SANBI, 2014).

Environmental Management Plans: The purpose of the management plan is to guide the development and management of the protected area in such a way that it meets the purpose for which it was declared, as required by Section 39(2) of the NEM: PAA

NEM: PAA.: National Environmental Protected Areas Act, nr. 57 of 2003

Protected Area: A protected area is an area of land or sea that is formally protected by law (Section 9 of the NEM: PAA) and managed mainly for biodiversity conservation.

Resources

www.kznwildlife.com
www.capestewardship.co.za
www.panda.org
www.sanbi.org
2013 Grassland Eco-system Guidelines

www.capenature.co.za
www.bwi.co.za
www.botanicalsociety.org.za
Gauteng C-Plan v3.3

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Main picture: Emily Taylor
Bullfrog: Tyrone McKendry
Grass close-up: Anton van Niekerk

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