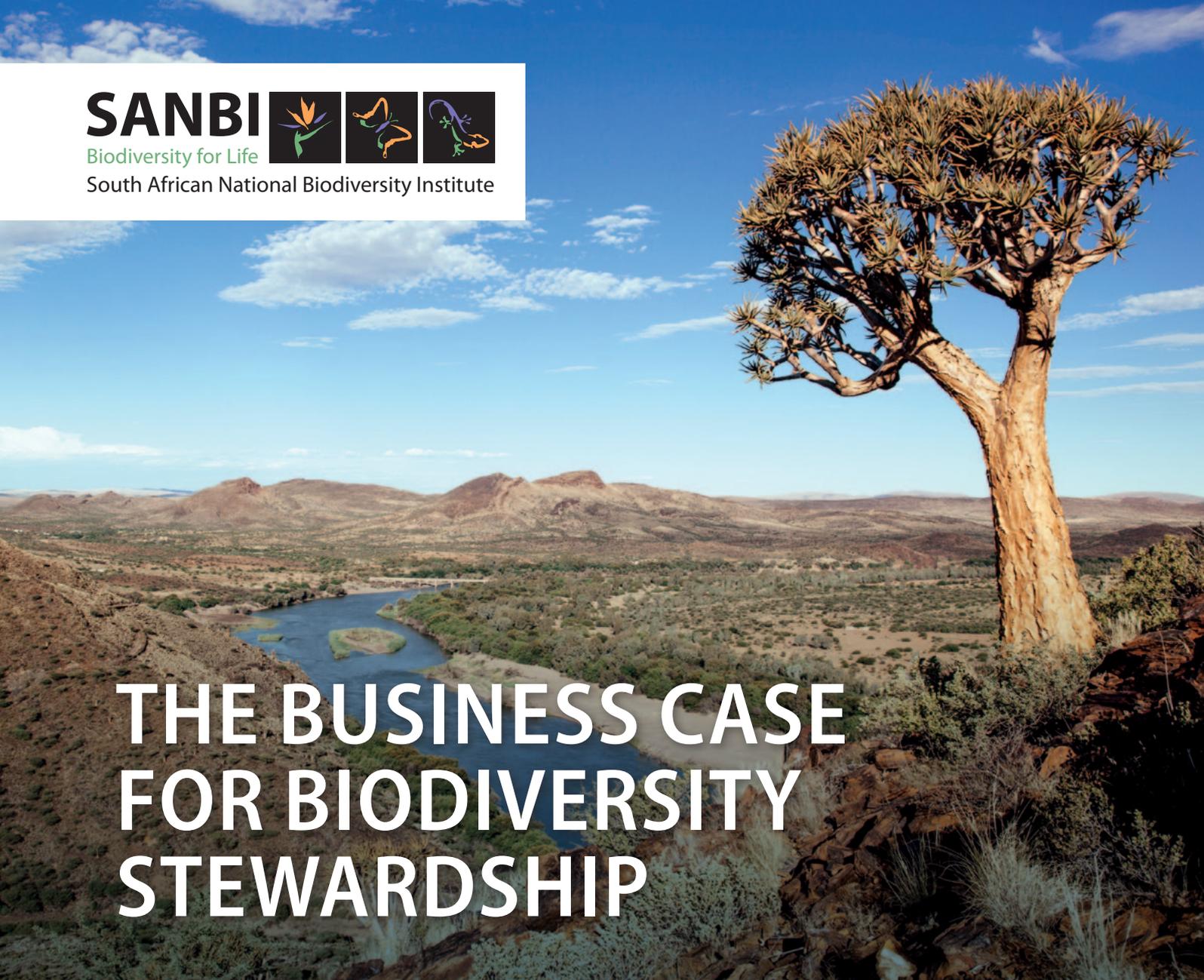


The logo for SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute) features the acronym 'SANBI' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Biodiversity for Life

South African National Biodiversity Institute

A large, gnarled tree with a thick trunk and a dense canopy of small, spiky leaves stands on a rocky outcrop. In the background, a wide river flows through a dry, hilly landscape under a clear blue sky with scattered clouds.

# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR BIODIVERSITY STEWARDSHIP

## THIS FACT SHEET

- Makes the business case for biodiversity stewardship programmes, showing how small investments can reap considerable conservation, land reform, and rural development returns
- Shows how biodiversity stewardship agreements contribute to meeting national targets for expanding South Africa's network of protected areas
- Explains how biodiversity stewardship programmes work
- Shows the many benefits of government working with private and communal landowners, and sometimes also with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to collaborate in the conservation of the country's natural heritage

## STEWARDS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S NATURAL WORLD

Private and communal landowners have a chance to partner with government in order to conserve biodiversity priority areas around the country. In return for a small financial investment by the state in biodiversity stewardship programmes, these public-private partnerships help the country meet its conservation and development objectives, while boosting rural livelihoods and creating a healthier natural environment.

### Landowners partnering with the state

Government is the primary custodian of South Africa's rich natural heritage, on behalf of the people of the country. A great deal of conservation effort happens through formally protected areas that are owned and run by the state.

There are still many parts of the country, though, that have high conservation value and need formal protection, but which fall on private or communally-owned land. In fact, almost 80% of the country's land is owned by private farmers or communities,



## RANDS AND CENTS: SAVING GOVERNMENT MONEY

**ESTABLISHING A PROTECTED AREA:** It is between 70 and 400 times less costly to establish a protected area through biodiversity stewardship than through state acquisition of land. The dramatic cost saving comes primarily from savings on land purchase.

**MANAGING A PROTECTED AREA:** The cost of supporting the ongoing management of biodiversity stewardship sites is between four and 17 times lower than state managed areas.

## TAKE HOME MESSAGE



Biodiversity stewardship programmes are a good investment for government.

A modest increase in budget for biodiversity stewardship programmes, to increase the state's capacity to enter into biodiversity stewardship agreements with landowners, would bring exponential returns in terms of expanding South Africa's protected area network, leveraging conservation investments by private landowners while also addressing land reform and rural development needs.

some of which is economically important farmland. This makes these landowners equally important custodians of the country's shared biodiversity heritage.

The biodiversity stewardship approach was designed as a way to bridge this gap, allowing government to work with private landowners and communities, in a successful and highly cost-effective conservation management scheme.

This approach has allowed the state to make great strides in terms of meeting its protected area targets, with very little increase in its conservation budget. It is also proving successful as a way to address land reform and rural development.

## Protected area expansion and sustainable livelihoods: small investment, huge returns

South Africa's goal is to have 17% of its land surface formally protected by 2020. This is to ensure the survival of the many charismatic animals and plants that live here, and maintain the important natural 'services' provided by different ecosystems: clean, reliable water flow; pollination services for agriculture; soil and grasslands for growing food and grazing livestock; a buffer against approaching climatic shifts; and so forth.

The biodiversity stewardship approach is part of government's broader conservation strategy, and is designed specifically to bring private and communal landowners into the protected area estate. It allows landowners to enter into agreements with the state, in order to formally protect land that has been identified as a biodiversity priority area, either because of the unique species and habitats found in the area, or because of the services and benefits the area provides to people.

## A business case for biodiversity stewardship

Biodiversity stewardship programmes have been established in some provinces, and are emerging in others. They have exciting potential to yield many benefits, including huge cost savings for government.

There are many more landowners who are eager to enter into biodiversity stewardship agreements than provincial biodiversity stewardship programmes are currently able to deal with. Hence the need for a business case to government, to show the value of additional investment in provincial biodiversity stewardship programmes.



## A little goes a long way

A provincial stewardship programme typically needs: a programme manager with administrative support; several conservation officers; technical support from ecologists for site assessments; and legal specialists to assist with contracts and declarations.

There is also a need for an operations budget, for example to allow for visits to landowners' properties, providing them with technical support for selected farm operations like fence maintenance or erosion control, and costs related to the legal declaration process such as surveying costs to survey the new protected area and advertising costs for public participation.

A budget of as little as around R9 million per province per year, is enough to support these needs. Such investment would allow the state to meet its national and international targets for protected area expansion, and support ongoing management of protected areas declared through biodiversity stewardship.

## The nitty gritty: how stewardship agreements work

Biodiversity stewardship agreements are negotiated between a provincial conservation authority and a landowner. In the case of communal land, this is with a group of landowners. The state authority gives on-going technical assistance to the landowners, and conducts annual audits to see that they comply with the conditions of the agreement. This support has proved to be an important incentive for landowners to sign up for the programme and remain committed to their involvement.

There are five biodiversity stewardship agreement options. In all cases the landowner retains title to the land, and is largely responsible for managing it. Each type of agreement allows different benefits to the landowner, and entails different kinds of restrictions on how they may use their land.

These agreements often draw on the support of conservation NGOs, which have scientific and conservation management expertise.

## A cascade of benefits

The returns on this investment are three-fold: they ensure conservation of important ecosystems; they bring economic returns in terms of local development in often marginal rural areas; and they bring many social benefits.

## Meeting conservation targets

So far, biodiversity stewardship programmes have been effective in contributing towards meeting national and international protected area targets. Between 2008 and 2016, roughly two-thirds of protected area expansion in South Africa was as a result of biodiversity stewardship agreements, often providing protection for ecosystem types that previously had little or no protection. In so doing, biodiversity stewardship programmes have contributed to achieving the targets set in the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy of 2008. With adequate financial resourcing, they will continue to contribute to the targets in the National Protected Area Expansion Strategy of 2016.

## WIN-WIN FOR GOVERNMENT



Provincial conservation authorities are already stretched, in terms of their conservation budget and personnel. Biodiversity stewardship contracts allow for significant savings to the conservation authorities, while also helping to meet protected area targets.

Biodiversity stewardship programmes run by provincial conservation authorities have achieved impressive gains in terms of numbers of hectares conserved, in spite of limited numbers of staff and small budgets for this work. In 2014, only 25 full-time staff across all nine provinces were dedicated to biodiversity stewardship. While donor funding has been significant in establishing the initiatives and achieving these gains, this may not be sustainable in the long-term.

## WIN-WIN FOR FARMERS



It might seem risky for farmers to set aside productive land for conservation purposes, and forego the potential income. In return, though, landowners get expert advice and scientific support for land management; they may be encouraged to branch out into new business or livelihood enterprises, such as tourism or game farming. The ecosystem services on their land might be restored, thus providing better water management or crop pollination, for instance. They also become eligible for significant tax incentives.

These stewardship initiatives have proved so successful, and attracted such interest from landowners, that there are more landowners interested in entering into biodiversity stewardship agreements than government currently has the capacity to manage.

## WIN-WIN FOR RURAL LIVELIHOODS



Several of these agreements are between the state and communities living in economically marginal rural areas, where livelihood alternatives are scarce. They can help to diversify rural economies, broaden livelihood options and boost local development, while supporting job creation and skills development.

As communities diversify their operations through such partnerships, they see jobs typically coming from land management and restoration initiatives, or through commercial activities complementary to biodiversity stewardship, such as game farming and eco-tourism.

## HOW THEY WORK: THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE AGREEMENTS



The landowner retains the title deed to the property, and takes on the day-to-day management and cost of running the protected area.

The state does not have to buy the land, or pay for the management of the protected area. Its role is to give technical support to the landowner, and audit and monitor each agreement. This means that a small investment by the state, in capital and personnel, has significant conservation and development returns.

## THE FIVE AGREEMENTS



Biodiversity stewardship programmes have five types of agreements. A state conservation authority leads the contracting process, while the landowner retains the title deed, and is responsible for the management and running costs. Each type of agreement allows different benefits to the landowner, and entails different kinds of restrictions on land use.

The structure of the agreements allows for landowners to settle on voluntary commitments which support conservation and sustainable use of their land's resources. This approach is proving to be effective in multiple-use landscapes, since landowners own and manage their own properties, and can thus combine biodiversity management with other compatible land uses. A biodiversity stewardship agreement can apply to a whole property or to a portion of a property, and if a landowner chooses to do so, the title deed for the property can be altered to provide long-term security for the protection of the land, even if its ownership changes hands.



### environmental affairs

Department:  
Environmental Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## Land reform and rural development

Dovetailing land reform needs and biodiversity stewardship helps create agreements between communal landholders and conservation authorities, and can provide access to the economic opportunities associated with protected areas through the wildlife economy.

Conservation authorities and local communities are collaborating with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform to boost rural development and job creation, while meeting the government's various sustainability and development goals.

Several thousand land reform beneficiaries already benefit from more than 100 000 ha of land reform areas that are in stewardship agreements, all of which fall in areas of high biodiversity value.

	TYPE OF AGREEMENT	MAIN FEATURES
<div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Increasing biodiversity importance</div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Increasing support from conservation authority</div> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Increasing landowner commitment to conservation</div>	Nature Reserve*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable for sites with highest biodiversity importance</li> <li>Binding on property: declaration of Nature Reserve, and a title deed restriction</li> <li>Binding on landowner: for 30–99 years/in perpetuity**</li> </ul>
	Protected Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suitable for declaration over multiple properties</li> <li>Less restrictive land use than Nature Reserve</li> <li>Binding on property: declaration of Protected Environment</li> <li>Binding on landowner: usually for a minimum of 30 years</li> </ul>
	Biodiversity Management Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less restrictive than protected area declaration</li> <li>Must have a Biodiversity Management Plan (in terms of Biodiversity Act) on all/part of the property</li> <li>Binding on landowner: minimum of 5 years, or longer</li> </ul>
	Biodiversity Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less restrictive than protected area declaration</li> <li>Binding on landowner: minimum of 5 years, or longer</li> </ul>
	Conservation Support Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-binding partnership</li> <li>May include a Memorandum of Understanding</li> </ul>

\*Or National Park

\*\* Eligibility for tax incentives requires 99 year title deed restriction

## For more information

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