

# CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA IMPACT REPORT 2022-2024







It is clear that conservation must be prioritised and receive significant additional resources and political will globally.

**PENNY LANGHAMMER**

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF RE:WILD

Conservation South Africa supports economic development that values nature because people need nature to thrive. Our approach is simple yet transformative.

## OUR VISION

A South Africa where growth and development are catalysed through the sustainable stewardship of nature.

## OUR MISSION

Restore and secure key reservoirs of nature across South Africa for the benefit of all.

## OUR ORGANISATION

Conservation South Africa is an independent affiliate of Conservation International, legally registered as a Section 18A public benefit organisation in South Africa. As an affiliate, Conservation South Africa subscribes to the aspirational vision and mission, strategic framework, and operational requirements of Conservation International, but is enabled to adapt language and specific policies and goals to the unique context of South Africa.

**CONSERVATION  
SOUTH AFRICA**  
Member of the CI Network







# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Conservation South Africa continues to expand its footprint. Over the past 20 years, we have evolved from conserving 8,000 hectares with 12 indigenous farmers to 137,000 hectares with agreements covering 53 villages. This is conservation with tangible financial benefits to communities: better grazing practices and herd health, improved access to water and jobs for hundreds of people.

## CONSERVATION IS FOREVER

The land preserved under conservation agreements has generated significant financial and social benefits. It is this success that gives us hope for the future, ensuring that these programmes remain sustainable because conservation is not a temporary project, it's forever. Land regeneration restores water to springs, birds have returned, indigenous grasses are recovering and communities have a growing sense of pride.

Our scope of work will continue to expand. We are active in xx neighbouring countries and are aiming to reach 500,000 hectares across XX countries. We are also scaling up our ocean's programme, to conserve 320,598 km<sup>2</sup> along the west and east coasts of Southern Africa.

Our cutting edge scientific research includes papers on carbon sequestration achieved through our grazing practices, which enables communities to benefit financially from carbon credits.

Growth, as always, comes with change. After six extraordinary years of leadership, Julia Levin has transitioned to a regional role at Conservation International as Vice President for Southern Africa. Julia will remain on our board and continue to share her expertise and wisdom with our teams. We are delighted to welcome Peter Shisani as our Acting Executive Director. Peter has led our field programmes for the past five years and has played a key role in driving their growth.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone who works in this incredible organisation. Their passion and dedication have resulted in these transformative outcomes.

To our donors, without whose support none of this would be possible, we extend our heartfelt thanks. We raise funds in South Africa, Europe, and the United States from donors who share our commitment to large-scale, sustainable conservation for the benefit of thousands of people.

Lastly, we would like to thank Conservation International, our parent organisation. Their guidance, financial support, and practical advice continue to be invaluable to our programmes.

### **SIMON SUSMAN**

Chairperson, Conservation South Africa

**In landscapes where people and natural systems co-exist and intermingle, conservationists must go beyond protection and work to develop community-level incentives for wildlife conservation through sustainable and locally managed use.**

### **FRED NELSON**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, [MALIASILI](#)

## BOARD MEMBERS: CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA

### **Simon Susman**

Chairperson

### **Independent directors:**

Dr Reuel Khoza

Loyiso Pityana-Ndlovu

Owen Henderson

### **Kelvin Alie**

Conservation International Senior Vice President, Africa Field Division

### **Lee Gillespie White**

Conservation International General Counsel

### **Julia Levin**

Vice President, Southern Africa, Conservation International





## A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

Over the past two years, our footprint has grown to its largest ever, both in reach and impact. We worked with 53 villages across three district municipalities, secured 137,000 hectares under conservation agreements with 1,400 farmers, and created 2,980 jobs for unemployed, rural based, women, youth and marginalised/ previously disadvantaged community members in ecosystem restoration and climate action.

We focused on empowering the people closest to nature to sustain themselves and the ecosystems they depend on. We aimed to create independent villages that restore ecosystems and generate financial benefit on their own. This success has allowed us to grow and reach new beneficiaries – we could only scale once our initial beneficiaries were doing well on their own.

We also took on new opportunities by adding a portfolio focused on oceans and coasts and established cross-border conservation efforts in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, spanning Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Regional partnerships across 16 sites in seven African countries have strengthened our financial stability and expanded our impact.

The past two years taught us the importance of accessing larger, multi-year funds with partners to sustain and grow our work. However, we recognised that delivering on these funds required strengthening our internal teams, while building strong relationships with implementing partners to enhance delivery capacity. After a period of stabilisation, we pushed forward, raised funds and grew.

Now, we are the most financially stable we have ever been. As our focus shifts from fundraising to implementation and delivery, we remain mindful of the organisational risks and challenges that accompany growth.

We look to the future with excitement. Under the leadership of our new Acting Executive Director, Peter Shisani, and through Julia Levin's new role as Vice President for Southern Africa, we will continue to expand and deepen our impact across the region.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

**JULIA LEVIN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA (2018 – 2024)

**JABULANI PETER SHISANI**, ACTING COUNTRY  
DIRECTOR, CONSERVATION SOUTH AFRICA

53 VILLAGES  
3 DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES  
175,703 HECTARES UNDER CONSERVATION  
AGREEMENTS WITH 1,641 FARMERS

Photograph: ©Envato





Photograph: Ami Vitale

# TAKING CONSERVATION TO SCALE

WIDER. DEEPER. FASTER.

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## RANGELANDS IN 2030:

IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF  
**10 MILLION HECTARES OF  
RANGELAND ACROSS AFRICA**  
THROUGH THE HERDING FOR HEALTH PROGRAMME\*

**IMPACT INDICATORS:**  
LAND AREA, CO<sub>2</sub>E AND BIODIVERSITY

\*target for CI and Peace Parks

## OCEANS IN 2030:

**320,598 SQUARE KILOMETRES**  
OF LARGE-SCALE OCEAN CONSERVATION

**IMPACT INDICATORS:**  
OCEAN AREA, FISHERY TRANSFORMATION  
AND BIODIVERSITY



# THE ART OF SCALING

## GETTING GROWING RIGHT

In the world we envisage, our impact has multiplied, and resonates across communities and regions. Our approach to conservation continues to prioritise participation of rural women and youth in governance of landscapes and seascapes.

We have chosen to explore the theme of scaling in this report as a way to measure our progress. Although scaling can be difficult to measure because it is both multidimensional and exponential, it is this complexity that helps us give definition to the pathways we need to navigate to take conservation to scale and ensure that we stay true to our vision and mission. How can we measure the growth of interventions and guarantee that they keep addressing the problems they are designed to solve?

We are concentrating our efforts on Africa's rangelands and oceans with their massive potential for natural climate solutions and building protection-linked livelihoods.

An essential part of our strategy that remains is partnering with local communities, leaders, NGOs, and government to blend traditional knowledge with conservation science, for people-centered conservation. With financial and technical support, these partnerships enable grassroots scaling that can bring about reform at a national level and influence global climate forums.

With this growth, and scaling innovations in science, new financial instruments, smart, coherent policy, and sustainable and regenerative approaches to productive systems can accelerate progress and reduce barriers to realising impact.

## HOW WE GROW

Conservation South Africa (CSA) works with communities and partners across Africa to implement nature-positive interventions backed by research and supported by sustainable funding models.

This report looks at eight areas in which Conservation South Africa has demonstrated its ability to scale and at the impact of interventions.

### WHAT WE ARE DOING

- **Rangelands:** Improving rangeland management by implementing [Herding for Health](#) in 7 countries and on 16 sites.
- **Oceans:** Increasing our footprint in Africa in transboundary areas and oceans.
- **People:** Jobs and enterprises that help nature and people.
- **Partnerships** with other conservation organisations to increase impact and take conservation to scale.
- **Science:** Findings to empower people with evidence to enable conservation.
- **Governance:** Policy and community governance structures that favour a nature-positive environment.
- **Conservation technology:** Tools to measure impact.
- **Finance:** Implementing existing conservation finance strategies and designing new ones.

FUNDING  
SECURED FOR  
SOUTHERN AFRICA  
IN 2024

**R361 MILLION**  
APPROVED

**R44.5 MILLION**  
IN DISCUSSION



# SCALING ACROSS AFRICA

## NAMAKWA DISTRICT

**Area:** 12,683,600 hectares

**Location:** Namakwa District Municipality in the Northern Cape province. The Namakwa seascape adjacent to the terrestrial stewardship area focuses on coastal communities in Port Nolloth and Hondeklipbaai.

## UMZIMVUBU CATCHMENT

**Area:** 2,874,800 hectares

**Location:** The Alfred Nzo District Municipality and the area that runs along the northern boundary of the Eastern Cape Province. It extends from the Lesotho escarpment to the northern Wild Coast adjacent to the Indian Ocean within the [Maputaland–Pondoland–Albany Biodiversity Hotspot](#)

## KRUGER TO CANYONS (K2C)

**Area:** 1,073,100 hectares

**Location:** Western border of Kruger National Park into Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. Part of the site falls within the [Maputaland–Pondoland–Albany Biodiversity Hotspot](#).

CSA is also scaling across the transboundary landscape. K2C forms part of the [Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park and Conservation Area \(GLTFCA\)](#) which includes the Inhambane Seascape.

Photograph: ©Envato



# 827,603 hectares

## OF RANGELAND UNDER BETTER MANAGEMENT

The rangeland management methods piloted by Conservation South Africa in Namakwa District in Northern Cape, the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region and in the Umzimvubu Catchment in Eastern Cape are being scaled into Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Madagascar and Zambia – countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – as well as in Kenya.

[Read more about the sites in Africa where our rangeland programme, Herding for Health, is being rolled out.](#)

## CATALYSE CONSERVATION OF 320,598 km<sup>2</sup> OCEAN AND COASTLINE

A range of studies have been conducted to determine the feasibility of establishing a seascape in the ocean and coast adjoining the land-based areas in Namakwa District where our stewardship programmes are implemented. In Mozambique, CSA is working with the government in partnership with African Parks to strengthen protection of Tofo, Great Bazaruto and the Pomene coast, vital biodiversity areas within the broader Inhambane Seascape.



MVENYANE CLIMATE CHAMPIONS:  
BENEFITS FOR  
PEOPLE AND NATURE

NUMBER OF COMMUNITY GROUPS  
THAT PARTICIPATED

7

1  
YOUTH  
GROUP

5  
FARMER  
GROUPS

1  
WOMEN'S  
GROUP

COMMUNICATION CHAMPIONS

21

14  
WOMEN

7  
MEN



[WATCH THE VIDEOS](#)

Photograph: ©Envato

# SOUTH AFRICA AND BEYOND

Between 2021 and 2023 CSA, CI Liberia and CI Madagascar collaborated to convene stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, policymakers and local communities to share learnings on community-led nature-based solutions in rural communities. Community members communicated directly with policymakers in each country and learnings were shared with other Sub-Saharan African countries to inform global policy negotiations under the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) and subsequent revisions of [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans](#). The work was financed through [SwedBio](#), a programme for biodiversity and equitable development at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

## KWAKTHI KE KALOKU KA NTSOMI – AND SO THE STORY BEGINS

*Written by Zinathi Jikeka*

In the rural community of Mvenyane, ten climate champions – the Mvenyane Climate Women’s Group – brought the SwedBio project to life through powerful storytelling. Participants shared how climate change threatened their livelihoods and how nature-based solutions, such as the 2021/2022 [War on Wattle](#) project, restored grasslands by clearing 2,310.11 hectares of rangeland infested with wattle. This effort revived critical water sources, such as the Vatrue River, and created jobs for 770 community members, transforming lives and building resilience.

These lived experiences became the foundation for a [policy brief](#) that shaped South Africa’s contribution to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework – a testament to the power of people-led solutions.

**RIGHT:** A Yes4Youth participant captures the story of one of Mvenyane’s climate champions.

**Photo:** Danisa Mazinywana





# PARTNERS FOR NEW FRONTIERS

In the period covered by this report, our commitment to attaining the 30 x 30 global biodiversity goals was deepened through partnerships with governments, academia, NGOs, local enterprises and the communities that strengthen our efforts and broaden our reach.

## RANGELANDS

Our flagship programme, Herding for Health, founded with Peace Parks Foundation, has enabled us to scale across Africa into seven countries on 16 sites. While our implementation partners – Meat Naturally, Wild Entrust Africa, CLAWS, WildTrust, BigLife Foundation, Government of Botswana – and training partners – Southern African Wildlife College, AfriVet, Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) – are essential to expanding our work across the continent, none of the progress we have made would be possible without strong partnerships with local communities.



Photograph: Emily Nyrop

## OCEANS AND COASTS

The Namakwa Seascape is a marine area adjacent to CSA's terrestrial stewardship programmes in the [Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot](#) in Namakwa District Municipality. At the local level, CSA is working closely with fishing cooperatives and community members, with a focus on women and youth, and with local and district governments. We are also co-developing a business plan with the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), and with academia (University of Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology).

Finance is being secured to pilot two value chains: sustainably harvested kelp and line fish, which is processed and frozen in Port Nolloth, and sold at market.

In the same way as partnering with other organisations is taking our terrestrial work across borders, our oceans work is helping us to extend our footprint into Mozambique, where CSA and African Parks are supporting the government to strengthen protection of Tofo, Great Bazaruto, and the Pomene coastline, vital biodiversity areas within the broader Inhambane Seascape.

## CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Conservation South Africa is partnering with nine organisations to support the 10-million hectare [Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area](#) which includes Banhine and Zinave national parks, the Massingir and Corumana areas and interlinking regions in Mozambique, as well as private and state-owned conservation areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe on its borders. [Transfrontier Conservation Areas](#) (TFCAs), are protected areas that span the borders of multiple countries. Their purpose is to conserve biodiversity by unifying ecosystems, support sustainable economic development, promote regional peace and stability, and allow wildlife and tourists to move across borders.



# JOBS FOR NATURE

Nature-based solutions have the potential to address accelerating climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, as well as unlock investment and create jobs. When youth and women in rural areas gain skills for nature-positive jobs, impact and scaling are exponential.

- Livelihoods improve
- Opportunities for new enterprises open up
- Local NGOs, businesses and communities benefit
- Investment flows into the area
- Nature benefits
- Awareness of climate change and conservation practices increases
- New scientific knowledge helps communities advocate for improvements to policy
- Government partners with organisations that boost local conditions and improve ecosystem services

## PARTNERING TO INCREASE OUR IMPACT

Conservation South Africa is partnering with the [Social Employment Fund](#), [Groen Sebenza](#) and [Youth Employment Service](#) to increase its impact, especially in the youth employment sector. Youth who join these programmes learn skills that set them up to grow; some start their own businesses and become employers themselves, while others discover new interests and talents.

The [Decent Work in Nature-based Solutions 2024](#) report estimates that targeted investments could increase nature-based solutions employment by up to 32 million jobs globally. The report recommends strengthening policy frameworks, investing in skills development, enhancing worker productivity, promoting worker rights and inclusiveness in the sector and strengthening research and data collection.



Globally, more than

# 60 MILLION PEOPLE

work in activities categorised as nature-based solutions: actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems.

[Decent Work in Nature-based Solutions 2024](#)

Photograph: Emily Nyrop



# NATURE-POSITIVE ECONOMIES

## Three pro-nature enterprises in the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region

Jobs for Nature equips women and youth with skills and experience in the green economy, and opportunities for climate-smart careers. It also enables scaling of nature-based solutions through strategic partnerships with organisations like [YES4Youth](#), [Groen Sebenza](#) and [Be the Change Africa](#) and the [Social Employment Fund](#).

## EATTFRESH AQUAPONICS

Evolutionary Aquaponic Technology and training (EATt) Fresh in Acornhoek, Mpumalanga is a climate-smart commercial aquaponics and demonstration pilot, and an education and training site. Not only is [EaTtfresh](#) a source of direct employment; members of the community can also supplement production for EATtFresh as outgrowers with potential spin-offs for the local and regional green economy.

**Photo:** Fabian Mdhluli



## WHY AQUAPONICS?

Aquaponics has the potential to reduce the carbon footprint of the agricultural sector while providing a year-round growing season. Because it does not require land, aquaponics can easily be scaled to meet the needs of a family, community or mass market.

Compared with traditional soil-based farming, aquaponics systems generate 7 to 10 times more produce per acre (4,046 m<sup>2</sup>), use 96 percent less water and almost 100% renewable energy. Nutrient recycling means there is no need for harmful pesticides or fertilizers.

## VUGIMAMUSI ART AND CRAFT COOPERATIVE

[Vugimamusi Women's Cooperative](#) in Welverdiend has increased its product range and boosted sales under the mentorship of [The Kulani Collective](#). They sell their handicrafts at the monthly Hoedspruit Farmers Market. The next step is from the Region for the Region (fRfR) certification, in collaboration with the Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region.

## HLAYISANI NATURE BUY-BACK CENTRE

The Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Region is steadfast in its support of local enterprises that work towards climate mitigation and its mandate to create green jobs and foster a circular economy.

[Hlayisani Nature Buy Back Centre](#) in Utah Village, Acornhoek collects and sorts waste from rangelands, rivers, communities and businesses and sells recyclable materials. They also coordinate and facilitate cleaning campaigns in neighbouring villages.



**ABOVE:** Women from Hlayisani Co-operation take delivery of 105 waste bulk bags which will help waste management and provide livelihoods to communities. Recycling enterprises contribute significantly to a more sustainable and climate-resilient future.

**Photo:** Thobani Dlamini





Photograph: Dalton Dingjestad/MM Pictures

IMPACT TO DATE:  
**286,123**  
TONS OF CO<sub>2</sub> EQUIVALENTS REMOVED  
FROM THE ATMOSPHERE  
across all Herding For Health sites

IMPACT INDICATORS:  
LAND AREA, CO<sub>2</sub>E AND BIODIVERSITY

# HERDING FOR HEALTH

## NATURE-POSITIVE LAND MANAGEMENT

Herding for Health uses herding and livestock management to regenerate Africa’s grasslands, savannas and shrublands and enhance climate resilience in the communities that depend on them. Communities sign Conservation Agreements and professional herders – ecorangers – implement combined herding and corralling, or planned grazing depending on the local context, and herd health practices.. Participating farmers receive training and access to markets with key market readiness interventions (legal requirements and market systems) to ensure income flow.

### HERDING FOR HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

- Safeguard ecosystem function
- Ensure socio-economic development
- Support collective governance
- Promote and facilitate sustainability.
- Improve animal health

Herding for Health leverages a range of tools to support implementation which include [Africa Rangeland Watch](#), [EarthRanger](#), [H4H Toolkit](#) and H4H Standards.

Photograph: Matthew Robinson, Trevely Films



What I notice about [our indigenous goats] is they are mobile, so they don’t stand on one spot and eat the field up there. They move and then they eat here and then they move up into the mountain. So you don’t have the problem that the soil will be trampled where they are.

### MARIANA BEUKES-JOSEPH

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE HOLDER,  
NOURIVIER, KAMIESBERG LOCAL  
MUNICIPALITY, NAMAKWA DISTRICT



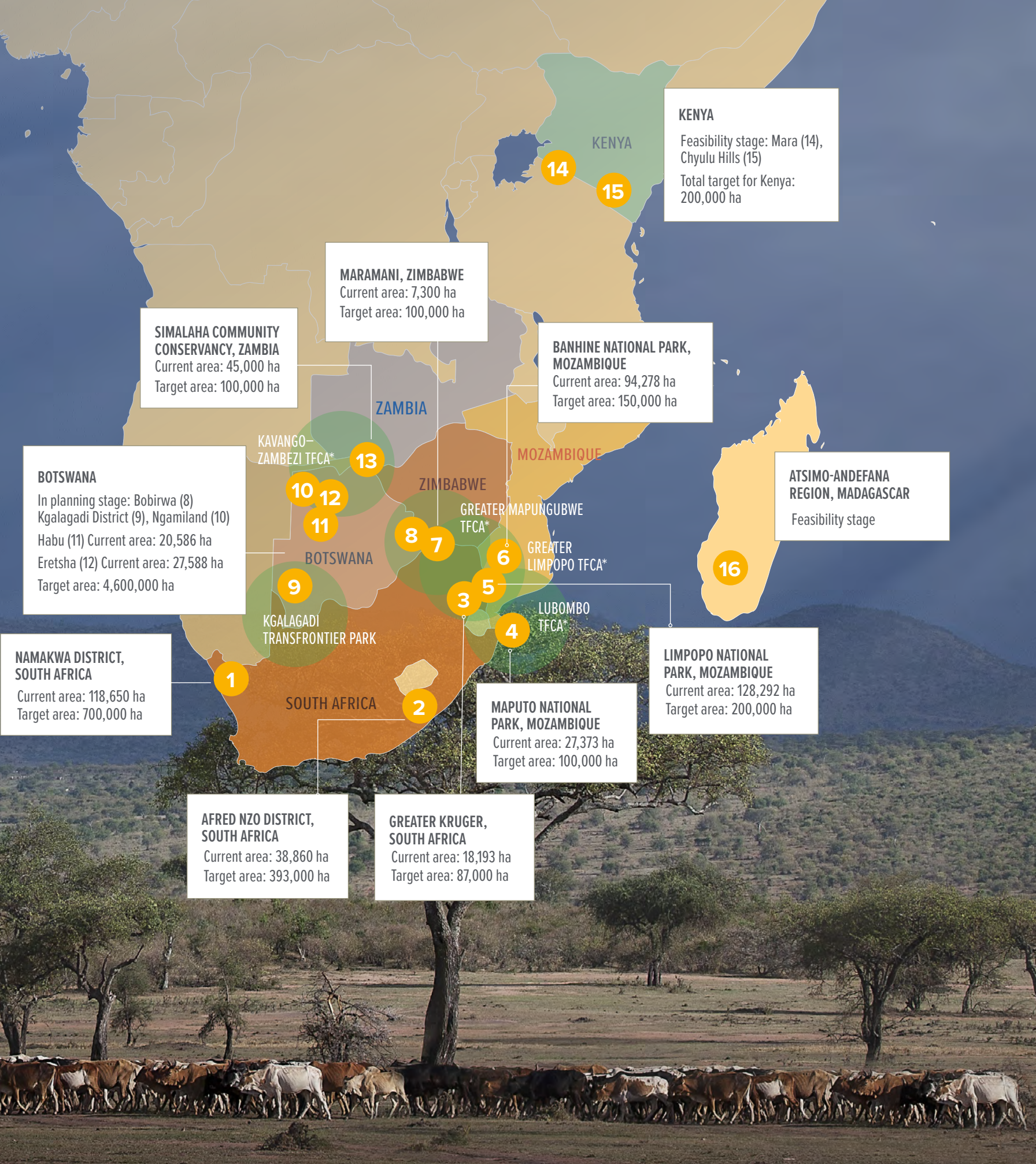
IMPACT TO DATE:

IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF

827,603 HECTARES

IN 7 COUNTRIES

ON 16 SITES





By partnering we have scaled from  
**12 people on 8,300 ha to 3,000 people**  
on **175,703 ha** in under two decades

When conservation actions work, they really work.  
In other words, they often lead to outcomes for  
biodiversity that are not just a little bit better than doing  
nothing at all, but many times greater.

**JAKE BICKNELL**

CONSERVATION SCIENTIST, UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Photograph: Matthew Robinson

## THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

*WRITTEN BY MALINDA GARDINER*

In 2009, 12 communal farmers signed individual conservation agreements with CSA (then Conservation International) at a ceremony at Leliefontein, a tiny village in the Kamiesberg Uplands, Namaqualand.

Less than 20 years later the Biodiversity Conservation Stewardship Programme has grown to more than 3,000 communal farmers on three more biodiversity hotspots – Alfred Nzo District in the Eastern Cape, Kruger to Canyons Landscape in Mpumalanga, and the Steinkopf commonage in Namakwa – a total of 175,703 hectares.



*The 12 farmers from Leliefontein communal lands who signed the first conservation agreements.*

Photo: Tessa Mildenhall



HERDING FOR HEALTH

BALANCING ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY

WRITTEN BY POLLEN TIBANE

Livestock farmers in the heart of foot-and-mouth disease buffer zones in the Kruger to Canyons Biodiversity Region, have a difficult time balancing productivity with environmental conservation. Conservation South Africa and [Meat Naturally](#) are working together to provide the tools and processes they need to produce healthier livestock while contributing to preserving local ecosystems by adopting sustainable practices such as rangeland restoration and rotational grazing.

In the dry season, the 12 villages that have signed conservation agreements for 13,896 hectares receive fodder and supplements to ensure that animals stay healthy. These farmers, who practice sustainable farming such as rotational grazing and rangeland restoration are also given access to premium markets.

Five Kruger to Canyons farmers (right) recently generated an annual turnover of R481,816 from sales through Meat Naturally.

Photograph: Daniel Erasmus



TURNOVER  
2022 – 2024

KRUGER-TO-CANYONS  
BIOSPHERE  
REGION

R3,174,808  
FROM THE SALE OF  
469  
LIVESTOCK

EASTERN  
CAPE

R4,562,300  
FROM THE SALE OF  
1,616  
LIVESTOCK



# PEOPLE

## DIRECT BENEFICIARIES

2,042

FARMERS HAVE SIGNED  
CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS  
WITH CSA

2030 TARGET

500,000

## JOBS

1,484

TO DATE ON SITES IN  
SA (INCLUDING GROEN  
SEBENZA, YES, SEF)

2030 TARGET

10,000

## PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO MARKET

136

IN SA

TO DATE

20,000

BY 2030

ALMOST  
R3 BILLION

IN SITE-BASED INVESTMENTS

As farmers, we have gained the skills to solve our problems and we are willing to orgainse because it is necessary and beneficial.

EGLINGTON COOPERATIVE ANNUAL CONSERVATION  
AGREEMENTS REVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNED SESSION



# TELLING NATURE’S STORY

When Kgaugelo Ngomane joined CSA he was sent to the Kruger to Canyon’s (K2C) Biosphere Region for his 12-month work experience. Part of his job with YES implementation partner [Wild Shots Outreach](#) was to tell community, wildlife, and conservation stories through photography.

But it was 2019 and COVID was about to turn the tourism sector on its head. CI policy allowed our teams in the veld to carry on working, so he and fellow photographers – [Rifumo Mathebula](#) and [Vusi Mathe](#) – snapped dramatic portraits of isolation and village roads devoid of humans.

Each of these YES graduates now owns media companies in local

villages and collectively employ seven young people, which translates to support for at least 35 community members.

There have been accolades too: in November 2024, as Wild Shots Outreach’s Programme Director, [Rifumo](#) won the SANParks Kudu Award for Youth Leadership at South Africa’s conservation Oscars and in October 2024, Kgaugelo

was voted one of [Top 35 Under 35 Youth Changemakers](#) a national Daily Maverick/YES competition, that honours the achievements of former YES Youth.

465  
JOBS  
(2022-2024)



*Ngomane’s photograph, Desperate Measures, which won him the [Young Environmental Photographer of the Year](#) award in 2019.*

# A COMMUNITY-OWNED PLAN FOR CLIMATE RISK AND RESPONSE

*Written by Malinda Gardiner*

In ten villages in the semi-arid rangelands of Namakwa District, local communities, are leading conservation and climate resilience efforts with place-specific Climate Risk and Response plans for their villages and rangelands. Planning what to do to mitigate climate risks – and how to react and recover – are essential to the survival of vulnerable local communities at the climate change coalface.

In November 2024, the community organised workshops to consolidate their input and update their plans. They noted, for instance, an increase in wind speed in Kamieskroon from 14 to 16 metres per second, which is considered a moderate gale. They also added ideas on how to shelter during extreme weather events, deal with damage to homes and speed up

search and rescue if people go missing during an extreme weather event.

Community members also discussed the importance of rangelands to their culture: a degradation of rangelands, worsened by the impacts of climate change, would erode their way of life. Restoring rangelands is one way to ensure its survival.

[Kamiesberg Municipality](#) has invited communities and Conservation South Africa to include their plans in the municipality’s [Integrated Development Plan](#), which shows how communities are being empowered to advocate for changes to policy and how local wisdom can enrich and inform our collective knowledge.



10  
CLIMATE RISK AND  
RESPONSE PLANS

2,515  
JOBS (2022-2024)

*Community members in Nourivier update the Climate Risk and Response Plan for their village and rangelands. Photo: Conservation South Africa*



**BY 2030:**  
Catalyse conservation of  
**30 percent** of Africa's  
continental marine area  
(320,598 km<sup>2</sup>)



# SEASCAPES FOR AFRICA

## SECURE THE OCEAN'S BOUNTY

Conservation International's Ocean Conservation star is about protecting, managing and restoring key marine areas.

Conservation South Africa's ocean flagships lie adjacent to terrestrial stewardship programmes in the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot in Namakwa and in Mozambique, CSA and African Parks are supporting the government to strengthen protection of Tofo and Great Bazaruto, vital biodiversity areas within the broader Inhambane seascape.

## NAMAKWA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY: PORT NOLLOTH AND HONDEKLIPBAAI

Feasibility assessments and business plans have been carried out to explore value chains for:

- Wild kelp as a biostimulant and ingredient in livestock feed.
- Partnering with [Abalobi](#) to process line fish locally to create jobs and improve market access for small-scale fishers.
- Abalone and aquaculture.

Socioeconomic baselines, climate response planning and skills assessment studies further support viability of the seascape approach for this area.

**SEASCAPE:** A large, multi-use marine area in which coalitions of stakeholders cooperate to conserve and restore the diversity and abundance of marine life and promote human well-being and sustainable use of natural resources.

## IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Sustainable management of marine resources, which includes aquaculture projects to support **restoration and enhancement of kelp ecosystems** and their marine life.
- **Enhanced capacity of fisher cooperatives and communities.** Communities (small-scale fishers) realise their rights and heritage, and access to livelihoods, jobs and food security improves.
- **Climate-resilient communities.**
- **Science, skills development and job creation** empower communities to co-manage their resources sustainably.
- An **enabling policy platform** for the blue economy and locally managed marine spatial planning.
- **Scaling** biodiversity conservation and management that connects habitats on land and at sea.
- Sustainability of the seascape and value chains through **innovative finance mechanism(s)** like [blue carbon](#).



# PEOPLE

**100 PART-TIME  
JOBS\***

CREATED TO DATE

\*beach clean up, restoration of dunes, vegetable gardening with kelp and recycling

**BY 2030:**

**ENTERPRISES** ESTABLISHED TO  
HARVEST KELP SUSTAINABLY

**MARKET ACCESS** FOR LINE  
FISH OUTSIDE OF NAMAKWA

MORE THAN

**180 JOBS**

FOR FISHERS, YOUTH AND  
WOMEN



# THE FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S KELP MARKET

A growing interest in diversifying South Africa's kelp market with methods like aquaculture could boost profits and realise its economic, social and ecological potential. Studies indicate good feasibility for sea-based kelp farming, particularly in Saldanha Bay on the West Coast. Although commercial kelp farming does not yet exist in South Africa, ongoing experiments in Saldanha Bay may lead the way for its development.

**R 9.8 MILLION**

TOTAL MARKET VALUE OF KELP  
USED FOR ABALONE FEED

## FURTHER READING

1. [Abalone farming in South Africa: an overview with perspectives on kelp resources, abalone feed, potential for on-farm seaweed production and socio-economic importance](#)
2. [Kelp value chain analysis, market assessment and roadmap for development of kelp farming in South Africa](#)

Photograph: Emily Nyrop



# MEANS, MAPPING AND MONITORING

FASTER. BROADER. DEEPER.

## **FUNDING** TO GET THERE: OUR FINANCING STRATEGY

Conservation International's Nature Finance Division (NFD) employs innovative funding strategies, financial instruments and business models to unlock nature investments at scale and address the climate and biodiversity crises.

Large-scale finance to key landscapes and seascapes enables protection-linked livelihoods and builds the capacity of communities and governments.

Most funding for natural climate solutions (NCS) is untapped; less than 3% of all climate funding goes to NCS initiatives. The Nature Finance Division team is working to increase this percentage.

**ONLY 3% OF CLIMATE  
FUNDING GOES TO NATURAL  
CLIMATE SOLUTIONS**

## SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR CONSERVATION

Support conservation work in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) and oceans in South Africa and Mozambique with sustainable financing mechanisms that facilitate conservation activities to unlock long-term sources of finance.

## PROTECTION-LINKED LIVELIHOODS

Empower and support village-led climate responses and biodiversity protection processes through appropriate conservation financing mechanisms.

## CAPACITY AND GOVERNANCE

Support partners, both external (NGOs, government) and internal, to develop sustainable finance capacity and governance structures to mobilise conservation finance flows.







We establish grazing areas through a mapping process that considers the regions with pasture and located very close to water sources. The professional herders were selected from the communities, and trained by the Southern African Wildlife College. They are teaching their communities and implementing rotational grazing techniques.

DELICIO JULIAO, HERDING FOR HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER LIMPOPO NATIONAL PARK

<https://www.peaceparkstv.com/herding-for-health-celebrates-five-years-in-limpopo-national-park/>

# TECHNOLOGY TO GUIDE AND MONITOR

## AFRICA RANGELAND WATCH

Africa Rangeland Watch (ARW) is being developed by CI to monitor rangeland impact. The aim of ARW is to help users to quantify land-use and climate impacts on rangelands over time and space, using remotely sensed satellite imagery and supplemented by ground-based rangeland monitoring. ARW can thus be used in rangeland management as a decision support tool, as well as to inform science and policy.

## CLIMATE POSITIVE LAND USE STRATEGY

Climate Positive Land Use Strategy (CPLUS) is a framework and decision support tool created by Conservation International and Conservation South Africa to bridge the gap between project planning and high-level nature and climate goals. CPLUS generates multi-stakeholder support for landscape initiatives by identifying high quality nature-based solutions for potential funders, and scales science-driven action aligned with global strategies.

With CPLUS, teams can develop a strategic and unified landscape vision, prioritise the most impactful and cost-effective interventions, and determine where to take action to achieve the vision. A well-crafted landscape plan can also support the development of strong proposals by demonstrating to funders the potential for significant, scalable impacts and how funding can contribute to broader environmental and socio-economic benefits, such as improved water quality, carbon sequestration and enhanced livelihoods.

**A key feature of CPLUS is its flexible approach. CPLUS recognises that different stakeholders will have unique perspectives on the importance of various outcomes, be it climate mitigation, biodiversity, livelihoods, or others. Rather than prescribing rigid judgments on which outcomes should be prioritised, CPLUS allows stakeholders to define their own desired outcomes. CPLUS serves as a roadmap of where activities could be scaled up, rather than guidance on how.**

THE CPLUS GUIDEBOOK



# HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

*WRITTEN BY ZINATHI JIKEKA*

Natural springs are vital sources of water for more than half of rural South African communities. When they are damaged and degraded by drought, pollution and land-use changes, water security is threatened and the inequality in access to water is deepened.

Conservation South Africa (CSA) works with communities, local leaders and government to rehabilitate community springs by fencing them off to prevent contamination by livestock, installing pipes to transport clean water to storage tanks, and ensuring sustainable access to safe drinking water. These efforts align with the national objectives of comprehensive catchment management and building resilience to climate change.

Mvenyane community member, Mama Nophumzile Gunundu says access to clean water has been restored in Upper Mvenyane Village: "We no longer struggle, and the water is beautiful and clean."

In Thaba Chicha, communities in Mapoleseng and Nicefield used to endure long waits at communal water tanks that often ran out of water. The rehabilitated spring now provides water to approximately 25 households in Mapoleseng and 27 households and a primary school in Nicefield. "One can fill up as many buckets as they wish without having to wait in long queues," said one of the residents.

At schools in Ndakeni, [Yes4Youth](#) has been installing tippy taps – simple yet effective handwashing stations that improve access to clean water and help prevent the spread of germs and illnesses among children.



*Community members collect clean water from a communal tap connected to a rehabilitated spring.*

*Photograph: Anelisa Boo*



*A learner from Ndakeni Primary School using a tippy tap*

*Photograph: Zuko Ndwengula*

# SCIENCE FOR EVERYONE

*WRITTEN BY MOLEBOHENG MAKASHANE*

A quiet revolution is unfolding in Mvenyane, a tiny rural village in Eastern Cape province, South Africa, as local women and youth are learning the science of stream monitoring, a domain usually reserved for distant experts.

They were initially hesitant but soon took to their newfound roles as environmental stewards with skills that include measuring water quality, identifying pollutants and tracking changes in aquatic life.

Not only has the health of the stream been transformed, but the shift in perceptions has also shown that science belongs to everyone.

Today, these citizen scientists continue to monitor their environment empowering their community to protect its natural resources and breaking norms in the process.



*Photograph: Fezile Matandela*





■ [Mycelium\\_growth,\\_Chapeltoun,\\_North\\_Ayrshire.jpg](#)

### CLIMATE-FRIENDLY FUNGI

Vast underground networks of mycorrhizal fungi – fungi associated with root systems – are found in soil everywhere on the planet, from forests to grasslands to croplands. Even after they die, they play an essential role in retaining carbon in soil where about 75 percent of Earth’s terrestrial carbon is stored.

A groundbreaking [study](#) led by CSA scientist, Heidi Hawkins, quantifies the amount of carbon plants pull out of the atmosphere and send to mycorrhizal fungi. Hawkins says their potential to keep climate-warming carbon out of the atmosphere and in the soil is massive and may play a bigger role in the carbon cycle than anticipated.

**We always suspected that we may have been overlooking a major carbon pool. Understandably, much focus has been placed on protecting and restoring forests as a natural way to mitigate climate change. But little attention has been paid to the fate of the vast amounts of carbon dioxide that are moved from the atmosphere during photosynthesis by those plants and sent below ground to mycorrhizal fungi.**

**HEIDI HAWKINS,** [FUNGI: OUR NEW CLIMATE ALLIES?](#)

## PUBLICATIONS

**Arena G, Hawkins H-J. (2024)** Nearly six decades of grazing research published by the Grassland Society of Southern Africa: trends, recommendations and gaps. *African Journal of Range & Forage Science*, 41 (1): 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.2989/10220119.2024.2397952>

**Bennett J, Marandure, T, Hawkins H-J, Mapiye C, Palmer A, Lemke S, Wu L, Moradzadeh M. 2023.** A conceptual framework for understanding ecosystem trade-offs and synergies, in communal rangelands. *Ecosystem Services* 61, 101533, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2023.101533>

**Hawkins, H-J, Cargill RIM, Van Nuland, ME, Hagen S, Field KJ, Sheldrake M, Soudzilovskaia NA, Kiers ET. 2023.** Mycorrhizal mycelium as a global carbon pool. *Current Biology* 33, R560-R573. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.02.027>

**McGregor S, Cromsigt JPGM, te Beest M, Chen J, Roy D P, Hawkins H-J, and Kerley GIH. 2024.** Grassland albedo as a nature-based climate prospect: the role of growth form and grazing. *Environmental Research Letters* 19, 124004. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/ad8765>

**Simba LD., Te Beest M, Hawkins H-J, Larson KW, Palmer AR, Sandström C, Smart KG, Kerley GIH, Cromsigt JPGM. 2024.** Wilder rangelands as a natural climate opportunity: Linking climate action to biodiversity conservation and social transformation. *Ambio* (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-023-01976-4>

**Palmer A, Weideman C, Hawkins H-J, Rajah P, Marandure T, Mapiye C, Wu L, Gwate O, Bennett J. 2023.** An evaluation of three evapotranspiration models to determine water fluxes over hillslopes encroached by invasive alien plants in Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. *Water SA*, 49, 211-219. <https://doi.org/10.17159/wsa/2023.v49.i3.3964>

## CASE STUDIES AND POLICY BRIEFS

**CSA (2024)** [Kelp as a Natural Climate Solution: Highlighting Kelp Adaptation and Mitigation Opportunities and Gaps](#)

**CSA (2023)** Policy Brief: [Achieving South Africa’s 30x30 target through strengthened local governance and traditional leadership](#)

**CSA (2023)** Policy Brief: [Voices from Africa – Individual stories from Mvenyane’s Women’s Climate Group](#)

**CSA (2023)** Policy Brief: [Essential role of community voices in biodiversity policymaking: examples from South Africa](#)

**Khomotso Mokono, Petra Holden, Graham von Maltitz, Mlungele Nsikani, James Gambiza, Barney Kgope, Jane Turpie, Amber Abrams, Gina Arena, Norman Mathebula, Vincent Mokoka, Lutendo Mugwedi, Alanna Rebelo (2024).** [Research themes for Ecosystem-based Adaptation in South Africa](#). University of Cape Town. Poster.



# OUR PARTNERS

Conservation South Africa’s work is wholly dependent on partnerships with government, civil society and the private sector. We are deeply grateful for these collaborations and would like to thank the following organisations:

### NATIONAL GOVERNMENT



forestry, fisheries  
& the environment  
Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



science, technology  
& innovation  
Department:  
Science, Technology and Innovation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### TRAINING



SA College  
of  
TOURISM



South African  
NATIONAL PARKS



SOUTHERN AFRICAN  
WILDLIFE COLLEGE  
TRAINING BEYOND BOUNDARIES



GORDON AND BETTY  
MOORE  
FOUNDATION



SANBI  
Biodiversity for Life  
South African National Biodiversity Institute

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT





UMZIMVUBU  
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

MATATIELE  
LOCAL MUNICIPALITY







Nama Khoi  
LOCAL  
Municipality



### UNIVERSITIES



University of  
Sheffield



IMPERIAL



WAGENINGEN  
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH



NELSON MANDELA  
UNIVERSITY



SLU



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD



### NON-GOVERNMENTAL





UMZIMVUBU  
CATCHMENT  
PARTNERSHIP  
PROGRAMME



ENVIRONMENTAL  
NGO COLLABORATION  
A shared commitment to nature & people

Photograph: Will McGarry

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# PARTNERING WITH DONORS

Aligning with donors whose missions overlap with our own drives greater impact; they push us to grow, hold us accountable to our communities and encourage innovation. Long-term donor commitments build trust and belief within communities that inspires action. Communities that can see the results of their efforts take ownership, continue the work independently and encourage others to join them. Our sincere gratitude goes to all the individual donors, foundations, corporations and governments that sponsor our work so generously, and without which none of what we do would be possible.

Agence Française de Développement  
AKO Foundation  
Anglo American Foundation  
Arnhold Foundation  
David E. & Mary C. Gallo Foundation, The  
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany – Pretoria  
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Foundation for Biodiversity Conservation BIOFUND  
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Hainebach, Michael  
Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust  
Inditex  
Industrial Development Corporation  
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)  
Italtile and Ceramic Foundation  
Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)  
John and Katie Hansen Family Foundation

Johnson, Sarah  
Kering  
Kruger to Canyons Biosphere region  
Lima Rural Development Foundation  
McCormack, Jon  
Mitsubishi Corporation  
Moore Family Foundation  
One Tree Planted  
Oppenheimer Generations  
Patrick J. McGovern Foundation  
Peace Parks Foundation (PPF)  
Rob Walton Foundation  
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)  
Susman, Simon  
SwedBio/Stockholm Resilience Centre  
Toyota South Africa Motors  
Waverley Street Foundation  
World Bank  
World Wildlife Fund (WWF) South Africa  
Youth Employment Service (Y4Y)

**BY 2026:** Transform a million hectares of crop and rangelands in fashion supply chains into regenerative agricultural spaces



## REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE AT SCALE

The Inditex Group, Kering and WWF are supporting an initiative in the Eastern Cape to supply eco-friendly wool to the fashion industry while improving farmer livelihoods. Regenerative agriculture combines conservation actions that increase wool quantity and quality while restoring biodiversity and improving livelihoods. This partnership illustrates how the global fashion industry and local farmers can work together.

*Photograph: Paulus Mfazwe*



# INVESTMENT AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## REVENUE

Conservation South Africa receives generous support from a wide range of foundations, individuals, businesses, governments, and multilateral agencies. This diversity of funding sources allows us to continue our work in our three landscape demonstration sites with the assistance of research and technical teams, as well as strategic support staff located in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

- In FY23, our revenue (R65 million) decreased by 34% compared to FY22 (R98 million), primarily due to the conclusion of the Jobs for Nature Programme, which supported over 700 beneficiaries through a short-term initiative in FY22.
- In FY24, our revenue (R112 million) increased by 72% compared to FY23 (R65 million), due to the Jobs for Nature Programme, which supported over 1,400 beneficiaries.

The most significant contributions in FY24 were from the Presidential Stimulus Fund, R41 million in total comprising 36% of our total revenue for FY24, as well as R15 million from NGOs and universities providing 13% of our support in FY24.

## EXPENSES

We strive to ensure that Conservation South Africa has robust systems in place to effectively manage and support our complex work across the landscapes and that it is fully accountable to a wide range of donors with rigorous compliance requirements, while carefully managing our costs to maximise funding of our programmes and partners.

- Expenditure in FY24 totalled R112 million, an R18 million increase from R94 million in FY22. This significant increase in expenditure was the result of programme costs associated with the Jobs for Nature programme.
- Our largest investment in FY24 was in our landscape demonstration sites, amounting to R73 million, or 65% of total expenditure. Additional investments were made in our support portfolios of research, policy, regional integration, and conservation finance.
- 81% of expenditure during the period under review is linked directly to implementation and management of project activities and only 2% of funding was allocated to overhead costs.

# INVESTMENT AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

	2024	2023	2022
REVENUE			
Grants, Contracts & Contributions	R 108,903,528	R 61,495,021	R 86,335,814
Foundations	R 34,471,006	R 21,291,432	R 17,786,228
Individuals	R 3,310,076	R 7,032,309	R 4,394,832
Corporations	R 12,868,694	R 12,291,936	R 6,107,374
NGO / University	R 15,543,993	R 11,117,703	R 23,630,054
Multilateral	R 784,747	R 511,004	R 448
US Govt	R 39,493	R 0	R 0
Non US Govt	R 41,885,519	R 9,250,637	R 34,416,878
Other income	R 4,032,757	R 3,999,665	R 12,626,158
Miscellaneous Income	R 3,822,908	R 3,806,592	R 12,463,078
Investment Income	R 209,849	R 193,073	R 163,080
TOTAL REVENUE	R 112,936,285	R 65,494,686	R 98,961,972
EXPENSES			
Landscape Demonstrations	R 73,676,918	R 32,938,377	R 55,752,302
Namakwa Landscape	R 19,038,052	R 6,626,349	R 7,960,977
Umzimvubu Landscape	R 25,187,433	R 12,542,422	R 27,511,015
Kruger to Canyons Landscape	R 29,451,433	R 13,769,606	R 20,280,310
Regional Support Costs	R 20,325,976	R 17,138,590	R 14,096,037
Research and Technical Support	R 10,860,664	R 10,225,080	R 10,170,412
Executive & Leadership	R 4,887,918	R 4,268,673	R 12,502,770
Management & Operations	R 3,028,371	R 1,631,422	R 1,935,643
TOTAL EXPENSES	R 112,779,847	R 66,202,142	R 94,457,165
Change in Net Assets before Non-Operating Activity	R 156,438	R -707,456	R 4,504,807
Finance Costs	R 4,494	R 2,300	R 1,752
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS			
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	R 3,032,846	R 3,742,601	R -760,454
Changes in Net Assets	R 151,944	R 709,756	R 4,503,055
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR			
	R 3,184,790	R 3,032,846	R 3,742,601





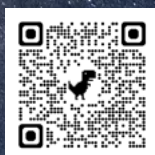
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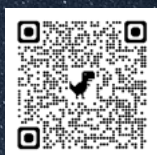
[www.conservation.org/south-africa](http://www.conservation.org/south-africa)



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