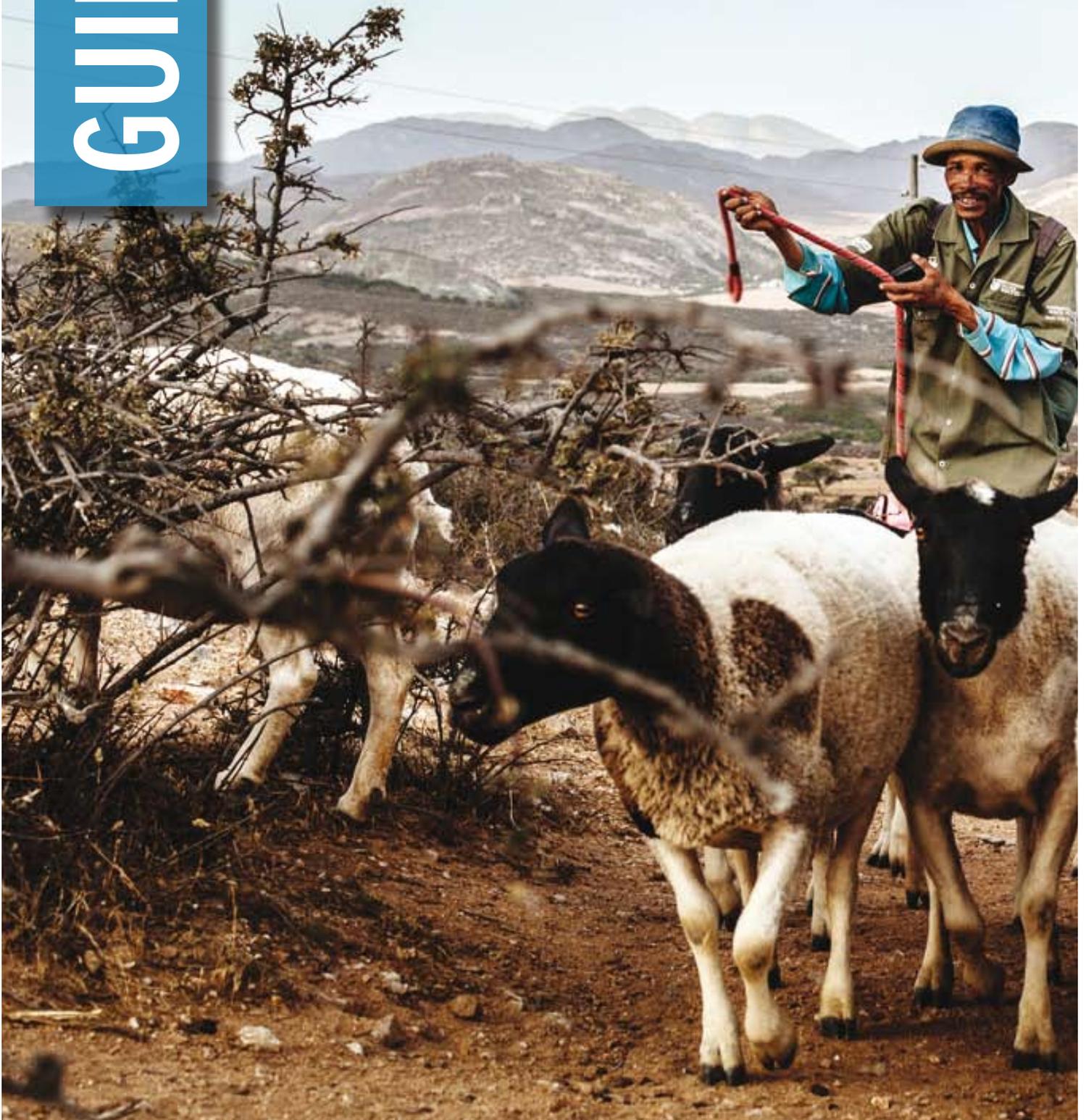


design - negotiate - implement

# CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS On Communal Lands

in South Africa



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## FOREWORD

Conserving globally significant biodiversity in a developing country context presents challenges and opportunities. Land stewardship and land management of South Africa's natural resources and ecosystem services are in the hands of both government and the land users. This presents an opportunity for improved livelihoods, job creation and conservation of biodiversity through partnerships.

The role of government is to create an enabling policy environment, to capacitate land users and promote a wise-use approach to natural resource management. NGO's like Conservation South Africa have made huge strides by working in partnership with land users and land owners to incentivise biodiversity conservation and improved land management while at the same time improving the livelihoods of participants. Because a large portion of South Africa's land is under private ownership, biodiversity stewardship, an approach to conserving biodiversity on private land through voluntary agreements, has been a focal point of the country's approach to biodiversity conservation.

CSA's Conservation Agreements now form part of the 2018 National Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline, a best practice approach on working with land users to implement the principles of biodiversity stewardship with land users and land owners. This guideline is an important tool to support the implementation of Conservation Agreements and biodiversity stewardship in South Africa.

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# OUR CONTEXT

Conservation South Africa works in areas that have been identified as important for biodiversity and ecosystem services yet are vulnerable to climate change and degradation from unsustainable land use practices.

**BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS**  
There are places on Earth that are both biologically rich — and deeply threatened. For our own sake, we must work to protect them.  
  
The Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot is one of 36 regions where success in conserving species can have an enormous impact in securing our global biodiversity.

Gertruida Cloete - Livestock farmer in Leliefontein - Photo by © Charlie Shoemaker

CSA works in areas that have been identified as important for biodiversity and ecosystem services, yet are vulnerable to climate change and degradation from unsustainable land use practices. Choosing where to work in Namaqualand was based on the following factors; 1) the best available science, 2) where investments would achieve the greatest environmental and social impacts at the lowest possible cost and 3) where there was the greatest need for our assistance.

In 2001 the Succulent Karoo was declared a Biodiversity Hotspot and in 2003 the South African government declared the Namaqua National Park (NNP) a protected area. The Park is approximately 495 km north of Cape Town. It has an area of 145,892.35 ha located within the semi-desert Succulent Karoo biome. 26% of plants located in the Park are found here and nowhere else on earth, with 17% listed as Red data species (IUCN, the World Conservation Union 1994).

The area's primary land use is livestock production, practiced on commercial and communal farmlands. The communal areas account for more than 25% of the region and support 45% of its population. Without recourse to the natural resources such as water and grazing the main livelihood of farming would collapse. With few agencies working in this region it was therefore critical that CSA find a way for farmers to continue with their livelihoods while helping to protect and improve the regions biodiversity.

Given this context CSA initiated, planned, negotiated and implemented a Conservation Agreement programme in the Leliefontein Commonage in 2008, and in 2016 expanded the programme to include the Steinkopf Commonage. The Steinkopf Commonage was added because it was a high biodiversity area with an important water catchment that was extremely vulnerable to climate change. These sites were further prioritized due to their potential as a buffer zone that, if managed correctly, could provide additional protection to the adjacent Namakwa National Park and Richtersveld National Park.

After 11 years based in the region CSA, through the Conservation Agreement approach, has protected 88,289.39ha and improved rangeland management on a further 151 320ha, an area 164% greater than the NNP protected area we set out to support.

In addition, 800 hectares of wetlands have been restored and maintained and 80% of land users across five villages have signed agreements to protect their land. Thanks to the variety of incentives provided in exchange for community conservation actions, livestock productivity has improved in a variety of ways. Through the introduction of climate resilient livestock breeds, lambs are reaching market ready weight three months earlier than "old" breeds, thus saving a minimum of 180 000 grazing days annually

Farmers have learned and adopted better livestock management practices such as regular vaccinations against diseases, switching to climate resilient breeds, keeping livestock out of wetlands during the rainy season and an increased willingness to practice seasonal grazing.

Through the capacity building programs offered by CSA, farmers are better skilled and are less reliant on state and external services in their farming operations. Through this programme farmers have been trained to do basic veterinary checks on their animals, can grade livestock, are able to do market selection and grazing management as well as monitor the condition of their veld and livestock.

Lastly, CSA has helped farmers establish their own local governance structures such as farmers associations and co-operatives to continue with this good work into the future. Under this model, land ownership was not affected, and multiple land uses continued whilst combining biodiversity protection and sustainable production

## Conservation Agreements Nationally + Globally

In South Africa's National Biodiversity Stewardship Guidelines (2018), Conservation Agreements fall under Biodiversity Stewardship Category 2: Conservation Area. According to the National Biodiversity Stewardship Guidelines (2018), "A conservation area is an area of land or sea that is not formally protected in terms of National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act; But has the following characteristics<sup>1</sup>:

- It is a geographically defined area with biodiversity value;
- It is governed, and thereby is under the authority of a specific entity or individual;
- It is managed for its biodiversity values, either directly or as part of a broader landscape management system;
- A formal agreement provides the foundation of an intention to conserve the area over the long-term. It is therefore recognised that there is a lower level of security associated with conservation areas and therefore are considered to have a reduced form of protection than protected areas. Conservation areas contribute towards the broader conservation estate but not the protected area estate."

Conservation Agreements also directly contribute to national objectives identified South Africa's Draft National Adaptation Strategy, namely, to build climate resilience and adaptive capacity to respond to climate change and vulnerability<sup>2</sup>.

All around the world, from forest to mangroves to rangelands to deserts, there are places where rich biodiversity thrives on the land of local communities. Identifying this, the Conservation Stewards Programme has led the design, negotiation and implementation of Conservation Agreements with communities and indigenous peoples in over 14 countries globally, resulting in the protection of over 1 million hectares of critical biodiversity habitat. They are a powerful tool for conservation and sustainable use in landscapes where communities are the owners and local stewards of their land.

<sup>1</sup> SANBI. 2018. Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline. A guideline produced for the Department of Environmental Affairs. Developed by Wilson, N., Kershaw, P., Marnewick, D. and Purnell, A.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs. 2019. Draft National Adaptation Strategy. Government Gazette number 42446.

# OUR TARGET AREAS

## Leliefontein + Steinkopf Commonage

### COMMONAGE LAND IN SOUTH AFRICA

#### Commonage

Farmland that is owned by a local municipality is known as Commonage land. It is land that should be made available to the local community for farming purposes but is managed by the municipality.

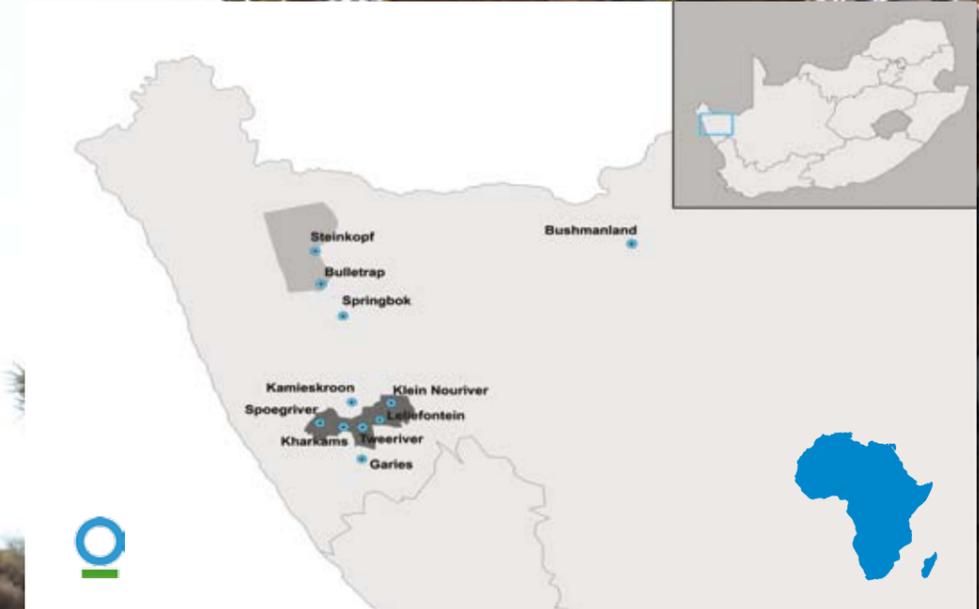


Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

Farmland that is owned by a local municipality is known as Commonage land. It is land that should be made available to the local community for farming purposes but is managed by the municipality.

Some 17,2 million hectares of land in South Africa is classified as commonages (DAFF 2011). Of these 14,5 million hectares are classified as agricultural land. This varies from 36% in KwaZulu Natal to 0.05% of land in the Northern Cape. In addition to this, there exists some 1.28 million hectares of communal lands in the Northern and Western Cape, the previous so-called Coloured Persons Communal "Reserves". In total, communal lands comprises 18.4 million hectares of the 122 million hectares of South Africa's surface (15.14%).

This system has its challenges especially where individuals within

a community act independently or selfishly misuse the shared land. This has often this has led to overuse and the degradation of the lands for the benefit of a few and at the expense of many.

Commonages present a unique challenge to good land management, as the management entities often lack either capacity, capital or a good management plan which would ensure wise management of the resource. Decades of neglect to maintain commonage infrastructure has led to a situation where, even if there were a good management plan, it cannot be put into practice. The heatmap on page 9 is an example of overgrazing occurring because ungrazed areas do not have maintained water infrastructure. This causes farmers to stay close to working infrastructure and graze in the same patterns until the rangeland is overgrazed.

Lenient or no enforcement of grazing regulations, has exacerbated this.

In the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot, desertification from overgrazing, as well as the degradation of wetlands are the biggest challenges for farmers livelihoods and food and water security. Inappropriate rangeland use combined with the growing impacts of climate change make these areas especially vulnerable to degradation. As more areas desertify, species loss will become an issue, so protecting commonages is also an important biodiversity protection measure.

The Leliefontein Commonage is 192 000 ha area set aside under Act 9 as land for communal use by farmers. 12 villages are in and around the commonage, which is bisected by the N7, main arterial road running on a north-south axis between Namibia and Cape Town.

The Steinkopf commonage encompasses a total of 329 000 ha under Act 9 for communal use. The Leliefontein Commonage falls under the Kamiesberg local Municipality and the Steinkopf Commonage falls under Nama Khoi local Municipality, both of which form part of the Namakwa District.

They have a history of over 2000 years of livestock farming, mainly with goats and sheep. Of the 16 villages in the Kamiesberg Municipal area, 12 falls within the Leliefontein Commonage and two villages fall within the Steinkopf Commonage, namely Steinkopf and Bulletrap.

The land for both commonages is held in trust by the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs, but it is managed by the Kamiesberg Municipality and Nama Khoi Municipality respectively. The Leliefontein Commonage western edge lies approximately 30 kilometres from the Namaqua National Park, and thus serves to act as a buffer to the formally protected area.

Both commonages form part of the Succulent Karoo Biodiversity Hotspot making them a local and global priority for biodiversity conservation.

  
**>3000**  
beneficiaries

  
**239,609 ha**  
rangeland protected

  
**800 ha**  
wetlands conserved



Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

# FARMING IN A VARIED CLIMATE

Two millennia of livestock farming have ingrained the practice of farming into every aspect of the local communities' lives. Not only is it their primary source of income but it has shaped their culture and influences how most of these Namaqualanders go about their day-to-day lives.

Farmers still follow a transhumance pattern, trekking their livestock between higher and lower ground during the winter and summer months. In the winter rainfall area winter wheat and oats was planted following good rains and in the Kamiesberg Uplands, wetlands were sometimes used to establish vegetable gardens and/or fruit orchards. Both of these practices have dwindled significantly due to a decrease in rainfall.

In the Kamiesberg Uplands pastoralists move their animals down the mountain from Leliefontein, to the vicinities of Tweerivier and Nourivier, to escape the extreme cold during winter. Within the Steinkopf Commonage seasonal grazing is still being implemented by farmers. Steinkopf farmers move their livestock to the Bushmanland in summer (predominately grasses). This ensures animals have a varied and healthy diet and can thrive during the icy winter months. Livestock is managed by herders, who take the animals out to graze during the day and return them to be kraaled at night at a stock post. Very few people have no livestock and numbers start as low as one unit of livestock per person and go up to one or two herds per person.

## Farming Challenges

### Ageing Infrastructure + inefficient Government Services

By 2008, 14 years after democratic elections, both commonages were already suffering from the deterioration of infrastructure vital to farming, such as wind pumps, water troughs, water pipes, fencing and roads. Simultaneously, supporting government services such as agricultural extension and state veterinarian services declined significantly. This lack of services led to the mistrust of the municipality by the community.

### Lack of Development

Rural villages of the commonage were largely by-passed by the technology of the time, such as internet and access to modern tools, techniques and information. Living in an information vacuum, resulted in a farming community left behind and unable to adapt their farming to the demands of the changing markets and climate.

## Break Down of Local Governance Structures

Community structures such as commonage committees were established to ensure involvement of local people in the management of the commonage. Over the years most dissolved and governance and communication with the municipality became dysfunctional. In Steinkopf there remained a commonage committee, with a few individuals trying to maintain decision-making structures within the community. Community cohesion and morale was low, and no development or training initiatives were taking place to unite the community in the management of the commonage.

## Lack of Market Access

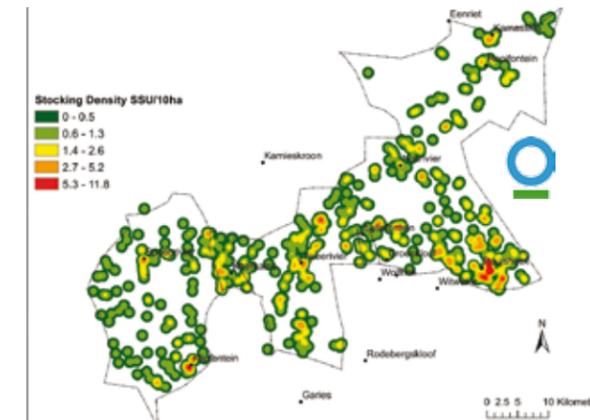
For market access, most farmers had little option but to sell to a small pool of livestock speculators at low prices and on non-negotiable terms. This resulted in low to zero profit making that contributed to and continued a cycle of overstocking and overgrazing to make up the shortfall to cover the essentials on which to live. This, during a changing climate that brought frequent and long droughts, led to the steady deterioration of grazing lands and wetlands.

## Migrations of Youth to Cities

Poverty is rife in the area and unemployment figures are high (30%). Results of Socio-Economic Surveys conducted by CSA indicated that the main income of Conservation Agreement farmers in the target areas were government grants, mainly old age pension and child grants. Most younger people were moving to larger cities or to the mines due to the inability to farm profitably in the region.

## RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS

Restoration of degraded lands represents half of nature's potential to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius and is the only technology available to remove carbon from the atmosphere at scale.



HEAT MAP : Grazing intensity in the Kamiesberg Commonage. Infrastructure in disrepair contributes to overgrazing.

# CHOSING A STEWARDSHIP MODEL

In the South African context, stewardship refers to the national model piloted in 2003. Further models have since been developed. They are as follows:

The national model follows a tiered approach of formal and legally binding stewardship agreements signed predominantly with private landowners.

- 1) A voluntary model that allows landowners to declare their property a private nature reserve. This allows for the land use to be registered against the title deed as conservation for a period of 30 - 99 years, or into perpetuity, a protected environment.
- 2) A biodiversity management agreement (5 – 10 years, and the only tier which is governed by the Biodiversity Act)
- 3) A biodiversity agreement (5 -10 years)
- 4) A biodiversity partnership agreement.

The first four are all contract agreements, whilst the last is an informal agreement.

More information on these models can be found at SANBI.

All the Commonages in the target areas (Leliefontein and Steinkopf) are state land, owned by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) and managed by the local government. The farmers themselves are land-users and are, by law, required to register as livestock farmers with the municipality, and to pay grazing fees for livestock kept on the land. It could be argued that a national model of stewardship agreement could be signed with the landowner, managed by the commonage management entity and implemented by the farmers themselves. However, due to capacity constraints both with the department and the local authority, CSA chose to follow the Conservation Stewards Programme (CSP) model. During this time no examples of stewardship had been tested on communal land in this region and thus we decided to adopt Conservation Internationals CSP Model that had been tested in similar environments across the globe.

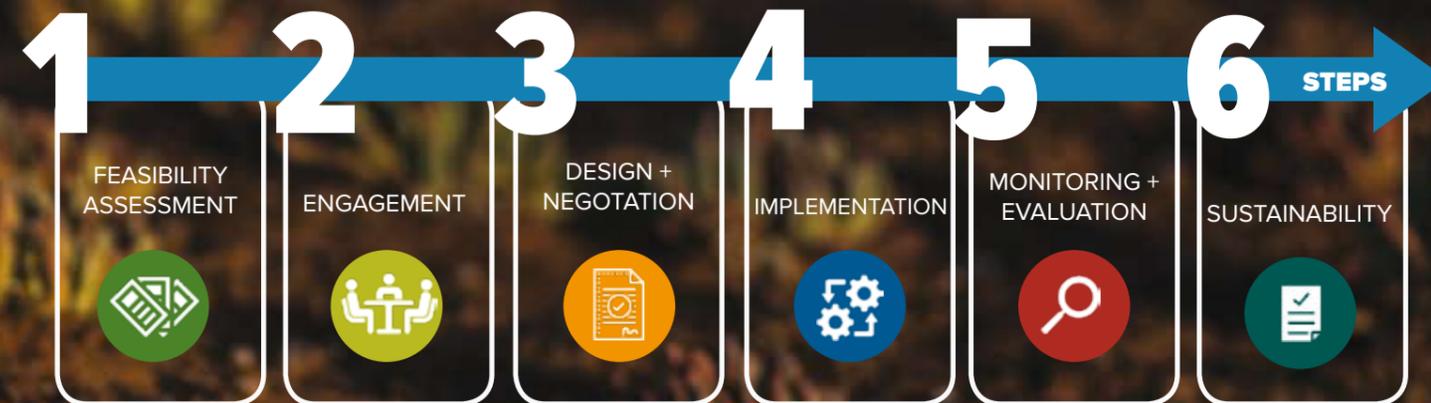
The CSP's Conservation Agreement model offers direct incentives for conservation through a negotiated benefit package in return for conservation actions by communities. This approach helps conserve biodiversity while improving the quality of life for local communities.

## Considerations for getting started

Conservation Agreement management and implementation is a hands-on, lengthy process, where the implementing agent (IA) should be visible and trusted within the community. It requires an agility and adaptive capacity which state entities have not acquired yet. An entity seeking to implement this model should not be constrained by lengthy decision making and procurement processes. Implementing Agents (IA's) must have the capacity to work with local government and with land users while ideally basing themselves within or near the area they plan to work in.

As the Conservation Agreement model agreement is not bound by legislation, and is a voluntary agreement between consenting partners, there is room for adjustment. As experience is gained in the implementation of the CSP Conservation Agreement, both parties can, and should, co-operatively revise the agreement, based on lessons learned from implementation. This informal model of stewardship allows for tailor-made agreements suited to the people and the land in any given area, which increases cooperation and buy-in. CSA adapted the model to accommodate South African cultural, legal, socio economic and environmental conditions.

To implement Conservation Agreements the following steps are recommended:



# STEWARDSHIP AS A TOOL TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE



1.8°C hotter (2040-2059)

3.9°C hotter (2081-2100)

less rainfall



improve soil for Carbon storage



adapt farming practices



rehabilitate rangelands



maintain ecological infrastructure



market access higher income



skills + education



jobs

# STEP 1

## FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Photo by © Lisa Boonzaier

The CSP model and process of stewardship is simple and straightforward. The first step is to conduct a feasibility assessment, which leads to a decision to implement Conservation Agreements in the area. This is a desktop exercise carried out by the Implementing Agent.

The following criteria should be tested to ground truth site selection:

- i. The site offers a valuable and measurable conservation outcome,
- ii. There is a funder with a strong interest in supporting an initiative at the site,
- iii. There is a capable implementer ready to commit to engagement, agreement design and project implementation,
- iv. There is a local resource user that can serve as a clear agreement counterpart,
- v. The actions needed to achieve the conservation outcome can be performed by the counterpart.
- vi. The site offers attractive characteristics.
  - The site is likely to score high on all feasibility criteria;
  - The potential agreement offers concrete contributions to human wellbeing;
  - There are potential synergies with other organizations;
  - The project offers a valuable learning experience regarding the potential of the model.

### PROFILE OF THE TARGET AREA

It is worthwhile investing some time in building a profile of the target area. An outline of the following can be useful for engaging the community and designing the agreement:

1. Identify biodiversity attributes
2. Identify land users
3. Understand land use
4. Understanding the social and economic landscape
5. Understanding institutional arrangements
6. Understanding the stakeholder landscape

#### 1. Identify biodiversity attributes

Implementers should decide what they want to protect, and this will be based on scientific studies that have been conducted in the area before. In CSA, studies from Desmet and Helme on the Kamiesberg vegetation, a study on the insects by Jonathan Collville and information from Nancy Job's study on the wetlands of the Kamiesberg were used. The information on these clearly indicated the value of stewardship intervention in a high biodiversity area, which is also a water catchment for the region.

#### 2. Identify land-users

Land users live on and use the biodiversity of their area to generate livelihoods. Identifying the most prevalent land-use forms the common denominator that binds the community to be engaged. These individuals, and not the entire population of the village or villages that will be worked in, will be the target audience.

They might be fishermen, farmers, medicinal plant harvesters or ecotourism practitioners, but they will be united by the land use that most of them engage in for their livelihoods. The target audience is the one that has the greatest impact on their resources and are referred to as bona fide land users.

It is necessary to involve as many bona-fide land-users as possible, since communal land use is typically unevenly dispersed. Communal livestock farmers could own as little as one head of livestock or own multiple herds. Most land-users own only a few head of livestock however together they impact the land similarly to one land-user with a large herd of livestock.

The bona-fide land users will support and influence other large sections of the community. The Conservation Agreements project will therefore reach well beyond those that engaged with directly. The primary stakeholders will be the ambassadors and champions for stewardship.

#### 3. Understanding land use

An important principle for successful engagement is one which is captured well in one of the CSA 's core principles – seek to understand before you seek to be understood. Once the most prevalent land-use has been determined it is necessary to understand the land-use itself, its opportunities and challenges. This is probably the most complex issue that will have to be dealt with.

Land-use always has a history and a certain set of circumstances it is practiced in. An investment of time to grapple with these matters and increase the understanding of them, will pay off handsomely and contribute to a stable engagement and implementation process. The greatest source of information to achieve this are the land users themselves. Land users will have a deep and rich understanding of aspects that have influenced land use over time.

A simple question can unlock a great deal of information i.e. “Tell me about your farming – what has happened in the past and what is happening now?”

The information gleaned from the land users themselves should be supplemented by any other entities directly involved. For instance, the management authority and any other big industries/entities operating in the area. Once more information on the main land use is available, visit the sites and assess the issues yourself. Land users will appreciate being asked to show you around and more information always comes to light from such field visits. Direct interactions with land users and their land will always be of utmost importance. Apart from increasing your understanding of the land and the land users, this is also how to build relationships and trust.

These steps serve to ground truth the feasibility study, familiarizing the implementing agent first-hand with the biodiversity, the land users and their land use practices and inform the Conservation Agreement design process.

# STEP 1

## FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT

### 4. Understanding the social and economic landscape

To augment the knowledge you received from land-users and for completing the feasibility assessment, other sources will need to be assessed to increase your understanding of the social and economic landscape. These could be from Statistics South Africa, the commonage management entity, the Department of Social Services, or any other body that can provide information on the social and economic landscape. This information will support the stewardship process.

### 5. Understanding institutional arrangements

As with the social and economic landscape, understanding the institutional arrangements, will help you determine who to engage with. The farmers themselves will be able to advise as to who manages the land and whether there are already organized bodies representing farmers on the commonage.

### 6. Understanding the stakeholder landscape

Should the feasibility study indicate positive conditions are present for success then the next step will be to move forward with engaging and negotiating a partnership and test the willingness of the community to participate in this model with the community mentioned in step 2.

# STEP 2



## ENGAGEMENT

Photo by © Lisa Boonzaier

Having finished all the baseline assessments and information gathering all the facts will now be on hand to start to engage with the target audience. The understanding which has been gained from step one will guide all the discussions and interactions moving into step two of building trust and negotiating partnerships that are mutually beneficial to all.

Due to the open aspect of commonages, as well as the multiple personalities that make up the target audience, engagement of communal land user stakeholders has entered the sphere of the mythical with many potential implementation agents. It is sometimes considered difficult, if not impossible, to implement a successful Conservation Agreement programme with communal land users, especially one which relies on trust and goodwill and is not legally binding. As with any myth, however, this could not be farther from the truth.

Our top 7 MYTHBUSTERS are:

1. It is very hard to get agreement on any issue when dealing with a community – False;
2. Open access land makes it difficult to manage Conservation Agreement - False;
3. The many stakeholders within the stewardship community make it difficult to implement agreements – False;
4. Everyone in the community must be engaged – False;
5. Benefits will be too expensive – False;
6. Without being legally binding, there is too little security in the long term – False;
7. Stewards will only do it for their own benefit – False;

### FIRST ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP WITH TARGET AUDIENCE

To initiate discussions and negotiations with the target audience, a first engagement workshop with the target group should be held to share information on the following:

- Who you are and what you or your organization do;
- The reasons why the area is important for conservation;
- The model of stewardship;
- The objectives of the project;
- The budget and timeframe of the project.

Below is some guidance on designing the right questions to prioritize joint actions in a future agreement. It is important to allow time for questions and reflection to ensure the future stakeholders are clear on the nature and outcomes of the project. At the end of this workshop stakeholders will know and understand your intentions and are able to indicate their willingness to engage with you further.

### PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

There are several principles that strengthen the engagement process:

#### *Be Transparent*

Consistent transparency is of the utmost importance to keep stakeholders engaged. Provide information and updates to stakeholders on budgets available for incentives, roles of stewardship implementation staff and what happens to information gathered from target audiences. Be clear from the earliest stages of engagement and stick to your undertakings throughout implementation. Find ways to regularly update stakeholders either through meetings, newsletters, notices at public gathering places or local radio updates.

#### *Manage Expectations*

Make it abundantly clear can and cannot be done. Stakeholders' needs will almost always be greater than what can be provided. Never promise anything that can not be delivered. When undertaking to explore some avenue for stakeholders make it clear that it does not mean you will deliver the desired incentive. It is better to undertake to investigate an opportunity on their behalf and providing feedback at a later date i.e. accessing government programs that could support farmers.

#### *Uphold the Objective of the Project*

Make your objective clear from the first engagement, i.e. restoration of rangelands and protection of biodiversity. Never try to water down the objective to something you feel might be more acceptable to land users. Rather show how working towards that objective could lead to improved livelihoods.

#### *Ensure Equality*

Internalization of the fact that the stakeholders are equal partners will help to avoid a top-down approach. It is important that staff working with your stakeholders understand that you are not doing stakeholders a favour but that stakeholders are critical partners without whom you would not have a project and will not achieve your objectives.

Adhere to the FPIC principles, of Free, Prior and Informed Consent throughout the engagement. Pay notice to gender equality and encourage women, youth and other marginalized groupings in the community to participate and try to actively involve them.

Engagement is less about trying to convince land-users that conservation is important, and more about convincing the target audience that the resources they use to sustain their livelihoods are important. This should be followed by engagements that help them understand how to use and manage that resource sustainably.

The land-users hold a deep cache of intimate information and knowledge of their resources. Engagement is also about accessing that knowledge and finding examples of existing and past sustainable land-use methods to which your organization can contribute and revive to achieve conservation actions. Most individuals will adopt a practice faster if they feel they have contributed to the design of that practice either from their own knowledge or experience – in other words, acknowledgement.

# STEP 3



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION

Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

Negotiations involve a process where the implementing agent and the steward's bargain for a set of conservation actions to be performed in return for a suite of incentives. These incentives can be either monetary or in-kind actions that compensate stewards for the opportunity cost they incur from complying with the agreed upon conservation actions.

Follow up the first engagement workshop with an **information gathering workshop**. By this time, word would have spread about the initiative and its intentions, and the appropriate people will be waiting for this next phase. Do not take this for granted though, and ensure that the invitations go out early and notices are posted in the most accessible areas for the community to see (the local shop, the municipality, the clinic, the church, the library, a village hall and the local school).

### INFORMATION GATHERING WORKSHOP

At this workshop the following matters will need to be agreed to:

1. Identifying the objectives
2. Identifying the reasons for the land use
3. Identifying conservation actions
4. Identifying Conservation Agreement incentives

#### Asking the Right Questions:

Using the Participan Method, design questions to be asked at the workshop. Questions must be designed to elicit inputs which can be grouped and ultimately, once prioritized according to do-ability, will form the conservation actions. Determine the benefits as well as the penalties or credit system for compliance of the conservation actions identified in the workshop.

For example: - if the target land-user group is livestock farmers, the following questions should be asked:

#### Question 1: Identifying the Objectives

##### What is good about farming?

This question will elicit inputs which identify peoples' motives for farming, why it is important to them and what positives exist that could be built on to promote sustainable practices.

! **Make sure you reiterate your objectives and the approach you are recommending to achieve them. Present this before you move into the facilitated part of the workshop.**

#### Question 2: Identifying the Reasons for the Land Use

##### What makes farming difficult?

This question will provide clusters of information on the difficulties of the land-use practice. This list of challenges generally results in the identification of the root causes of environmental degradation in the area. Follow this question up with a vote, asking land-users to vote for the most important challenges. Using the clusters that received the highest votes, ask land-users to rank those in order in which they can realistically be addressed.

#### Question 3: Identifying Conservation Actions

##### What could you do that would make farming better?

This question will provide inputs from which the conservation actions will be drawn. It is important to ask land-users what they can do, as it encourages ownership and a sense of responsibility, and it encourages an attitude of ability to take control of their destiny. Follow this question up with a vote, asking land-users to vote for the most important clusters.

#### Question 4: Identifying Conservation Agreement Incentives

##### What support do you need to improve your farming?

This question will identify potential benefits to cover the opportunity costs incurred by land-users. The question could also be framed to ask land-users to list everything they need to support their farming, assuming money was not a problem.

At this point, revisit the actual budget available for the benefits. Approximately estimate the costs of the clusters which received the highest votes. Tally them and compare them to the budget available. Usually it will be clear that the needs are much more than the money available. Now let the land-users choose what they would take which would fit inside the budget.

The proceeds of this workshop will provide all the information for formulating the conservation actions and benefits and should be used for a second information gathering workshop that provides a framework for a draft Conservation Agreement.



Photo by © CSAM Gardner

IMAGE: Participan Sheet - cluster the issues and use dots to vote on the most important issues stakeholders want to focus on.



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION

Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

The conservation actions and activities identified at this workshop will then be drafted and presented at a follow up Negotiations Workshop. During this workshop it may be possible to go a step further and agree on penalties or credits for compliance or the implementation agent can develop these alone. A few things to be considered whilst drafting the workshop programme and facilitated questions include;

- Fewer conservation actions are less overwhelming – choose the ones with the most impact,
- Stewards must fully understand WHY certain conservation actions are selected,
- There is a limit of what people are willing and able to do,
- A Conservation Agreement implementation agent will always have a finite budget and will therefore only be able to provide certain benefits,
- Often, the implementing agent might not have enough budget for incentives to cover the opportunity cost – this should not be a serious hurdle, as shall be seen in the next step,
- Should funding stop and/or the implementing agent withdraw, stewards must understand and be able to carry on with these same conservation actions without the help of external parties.

Both parties enter voluntarily into a Conservation Agreement and neither should sign it unless they are happy with the terms of the agreement. It can take anything from a few weeks to a few months to arrive at this point. Time can be saved by conducting a negotiation workshop with a group of potential stewards. A negotiation workshop is, however, not a replacement for time invested to understand and get to know the people that will be worked with and the environment they function in.

A useful facilitation tool we recommend for such a workshop is the Participlan method. More information can be found at [www.bpg.co.za/participlan](http://www.bpg.co.za/participlan)

### FACILITATION TOOL

CSA recommends the Participlan method because it allows for all participants to be heard regardless of language, gender or cultural barriers that may exist between stakeholders attending a meeting. The methodology ensures anonymity and allows for uninhibited feedback.

Using the Participlan method, scenarios are set and questions asked by the facilitator of the workshop. Questions are designed prior to the workshop to ensure the desired outcome achieved through the right questions. Responses are written on cards and the facilitator collects and arranges the responses with the help of participants. Where ideas are unclear the participants will be guided by the facilitator to agree on their meaning.



**WORKSHOP ATTENDEES  
AGREE ON CONSERVATION  
ACTIONS + INCENTIVES**

Participlan in Action - Photo by © CSA/H Muller

# STEP 3



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION

Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

### Asking the Right Questions:

Undesirable land-use practices will always influence land-users' wellbeing, either in the short or long term. By the time an IA has decided to engage in a priority area, degradation of land or water resources are usually already apparent.

Part of the information gathering process in step 2 is to understand the practices that are causing this degradation and design conservation actions that can rectify this situation. A series of well-crafted questions can help participants come up with solutions that they feel are achievable.

#### EXAMPLE 1:

- Farmers overgrazing a land area are threatening the biodiversity of that area but it is also detrimental to the amount of grazing their livestock can access.
- Livestock with less grazing available must stay on the veld longer before farmers can sell them or they will not be in good condition and therefore will fetch a lower price.
- Livestock may even succumb to disease as a result of too high a parasite load in the area where animals are always grazing.
- These factors will result in farmers losing livestock or getting lower prices for their livestock sold.

#### QUESTION 1: What is causing biodiversity loss on your land?

PROBLEM	SOLUTION	CONSERVATION ACTION
Overgrazing of rangeland	Reduce or eliminate overgrazing	1) Withdraw animals for a certain amount of time to let rangeland rest 2) Adapt farming to reduce grazing pressure

\*\* Once again, good knowledge of the area and the farmers' practices will come in handy here. Although it might be clear that overgrazing is causing degradation of rangelands, the question must be asked because the reasons behind the action are often not a simple matter — See question 2.

#### QUESTION 2: Why are farmers overgrazing?

##### ACTIONS

- 1) Infrastructure such as water points are out of order. Farmers therefore graze around the areas that still have working water points
- 2) Certain areas have a higher predator population and farmers avoid these areas. Grazing concentrates around a few areas where livestock are less likely to be predated on
- 3) Farmers do not have reliable herders or cannot employ herders consistently and therefore cannot implement better grazing plans
- 4) Certain areas contain poisonous plant species
- 5) No grazing guidelines exists for their type of rangelands
- 6) Farmers follow traditions and graze certain areas that were traditionally considered to have better grazing, meanwhile depleting the source
- 7) Livestock are unhealthy, and parasite infested and therefore graze intensively to rectify their malnutrition
- 8) Livestock breeds used by farmers are not suitable to the area and their impact on grazing is too high

\*\* A stewardship coordinator must be able to think strategically and ask more questions if the answers do not immediately point to identifiable solutions. It is equally important to get out in the field with the stakeholders and become familiar with the area and understand what the problems look like on the landscape.

#### QUESTION 3: What makes farming difficult?

This question identifies the PROBLEM

- 1) Overgrazing is everywhere - we must travel further to find fodder.
- 2) Infrastructure such as water points are broken - we must travel further to find water.

\*\* To arrive at the solution, trust the process and ask question 4

#### QUESTION 4: What can YOU do to make it better?

This question identifies the solution that becomes CONSERVATION ACTIONS

We can grade our livestock and sell all non-productive animals to save grazing

! It is important to ask the land-users what they themselves can do. It shows that it is trusted that they can help solve their problems and that they have something to contribute and take responsibility. These will be your conservation actions.

! It is important to remember the KISS principle (keep it simple stupid). If it quacks like a duck and walks like a duck — it is a duck.

### Troubleshooting

Once you have identified the Conservation Action in example 4 above, participants should be asked to vote on the most important action that they think is a priority to address the problem of overgrazing. Some land-users will put up an idea that will be unrealistic and others will not necessarily prioritize the action that is achievable and affordable. Sometimes these ideas will receive the highest support because they have been the most popular solution traded between land-users for a long time. In this scenario it is easy to spot unrealistic solutions as they have certain characteristics.

When this happens, it is important to unpack the proposed alleviating actions and interrogate each one to enable land-users to think them through. This kind of probing will point out the practicality of unrealistic ideas and will often have the following characteristics:

1. it has been tried several times, but did not work or did not happen (farmers applied for fodder several times, but either did not receive it, or it wasn't enough);
2. It cannot be sustained over the long term;
3. It does not require much contribution/effort from the land-users themselves (the easy way out)

Using the above guidelines, you can ask the following:

#### QUESTION 5:

- Does the Department of Agriculture give fodder regularly?
- Have you often received fodder from them?
- Will the Department of Agriculture be able to provide enough fodder for the next year?

\*\* This kind of probing will point out the practicality of unrealistic ideas

# STEP 3



Photo by © Charlie Shoemaker

Another question which could be asked is:

**QUESTION 6:**  
**What do you need to improve this situation (Overgrazing)?**

Instead of being concerned that land-users will identify too much rather encourage them to list everything they might need if money was not a problem. Land-users can be depended on to give you an extravagant list! Of course, the IA could never give the land-users everything they want, but the question is useful. In the Kamiesberg context, farmers could see how private farmers farm – private farmers have lots of equipment, good grazing and working infrastructure. This is often what communal farmers aspire to achieve but a lack of land ownership and knowledge or finances to achieve this can often create frustration.

Being able to say what they would want, without holding back, serves to get it out there and, more importantly, it gives the IA the bigger picture of needs of the community. This list can be used to engage with partners, such as government agencies It can also be used as a fundraising guide for future negotiations or to help farmers to develop their long-term business plans.

Most importantly, this list is useful for a prioritization exercise. Taking the big list of wants and isolating a few especially ambitious wishes, for instance, tractors, fencing, etc. and comparing what they would cost to what is available, is a good way to bring everyone back to reality.

Happily, once it is determined that certain needs are unaffordable within the available budget, land users will almost by default move to the next available, affordable needs. These things become the incentives in the agreement.

The Conservation Agreement model allows for anything which fits into the budget and which covers the opportunity cost to be an incentive.

A series of questions must now be asked to ensure the conservation actions identified by the group is practical and measurable. The following points can be used as a guide through this part of the process:

**a) Unpack actions and incentives to be measurable and quantitative**

In the information gathering workshop the question is asked, how will the stewards implement the conservation action? This will inform the implementer and steward of the achievability of the action.

**b) Clarify any obstacles or opportunities**

A conservation action which land-users might be willing to implement but which is practically impossible will lead to a situation where the stewards will not be able to comply. This is where troubleshooting conservation actions and alignment of incentives to conservation actions takes place.

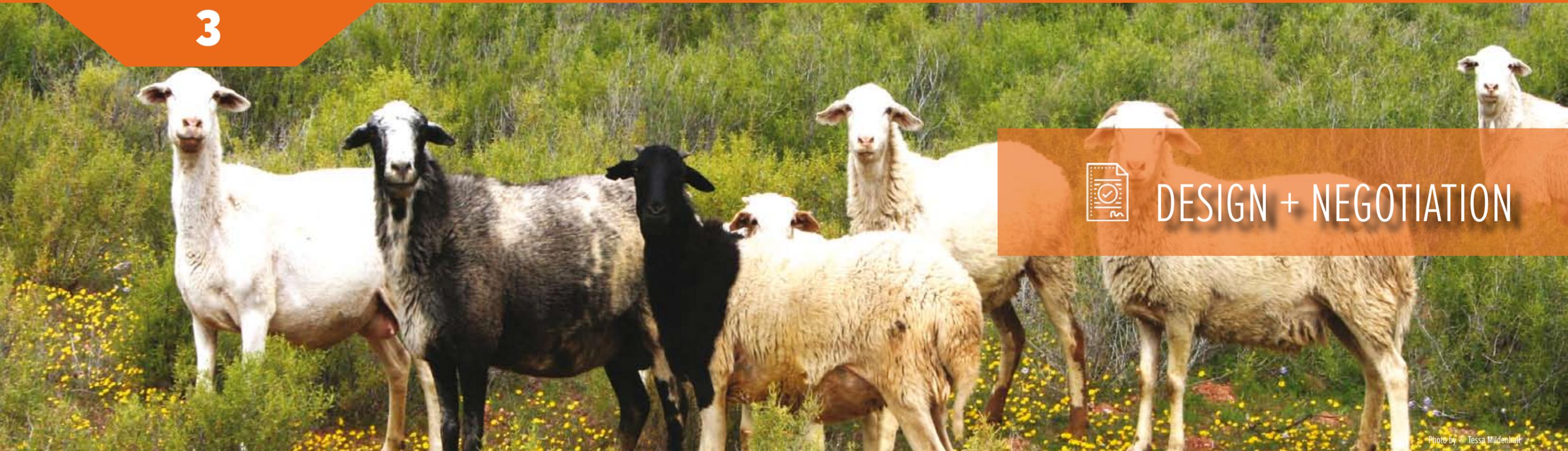


Participian in Action - Photo by © CSA

**NOTHING IS OFF THE TABLE  
IF IT GETS THE JOB DONE!**

One much loved story that is often repeated when illustrating the Conservation Agreement process is that of land users in China. The land user group the CSP team were working with indicated that they wanted body-building equipment in return for their conservation actions. They got the equipment and abided by their commitments to conserve the Chinese landscape. While it may seem like an odd incentive request the cost of the equipment matched what it would cost to do the conservation action that was required.

# STEP 3



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION

### c) How will compliance be measured?

A conservation action must be accompanied by a verifiable deliverable. For example, this could be that farmers dose their animals against parasites four times a year. The organization will supply a monitoring and evaluation framework for completion by the IA. The Implementing agency will go to the field to verify these results.

### d) Align incentives with conservation actions (optional).

When drafting the conservation agreement, check through the selected conservation actions and make sure the actions proposed will address the conservation needs.

#### For instance, will reducing livestock result in a decrease of overgrazing?

This is where it is important to know the root causes of a deleterious land-use practice.

- Is it too many livestock that is causing the overgrazing?
- Is it that farmers cannot move their livestock elsewhere because of a lack of working water points for livestock?
- Is it because they are farming with a breed that is harder on the grazing?

Once again, time spent to understand the area and context of land-use, as well as any studies and the feasibility report, can all support decision-making around this.

Once these issues have been addressed the workshop can be ended with an agreement to hold one final negotiations meeting where a draft agreement will be presented for review and sign off.

#### EXAMPLE: compliance report

IMPLEMENTING AGENT Provide Livestock Medicine Incentive	
Stewardship Signatory Organisation	Stewards
submit monthly records of stewards to implementing agent	submit monthly livestock records to organisation
receive livestock medicine and distribute according to credits earned	dose and inoculate livestock and submit records to organisation
provide implementing agent with proof of distribution	

The results of the workshop will be used to consolidate the draft Conservation Agreement. This can be done individually or with a team.

### Drawing Up the Draft Conservation Agreement

Once the set of conservation actions, opportunity cost and incentives are known the next phase is to design the agreement into which these must fit. Using Participian ovals, a flip chart or a data projector, put up ALL the proposed conservation actions and incentives and then go ahead and evaluate their potential for practicality and measurability.

#### \*\* CONSERVATION ACTIONS MUST:

- Address the conservation needs i.e. overgrazing, overharvesting, wetland deterioration, etc.
- Be *achievable*, given the available resources (not just funding, also the resources land-users need to implement them)
- Demonstrate how incentives might be aligned to ENABLE OR REINFORCE conservation actions
- Recommend which other stakeholders should/could be involved to support the agreement
- Match the incentives with the opportunity costs (some exceptions will be discussed in this chapter). Ensure land-users are clear on how the conservation actions could achieve the dual objectives of conserving biodiversity and enhancing livelihoods ensure the action can be measured by a compliance officer and/or the stewardship coordinator.



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION



Photo by © Charlie Shoemaker

When drafting a Conservation Agreement, it is essential to develop a corresponding compliance process to ensure both parties are honouring their commitments in the Conservation Agreement.

### DESIGN A COMPLIANCE PROCESS

Finally, in designing the Conservation Agreement, either sanctions or a credit system must be included. Sanctions, or penalties, are essential to address non-compliance. If sanctions are used in an agreement, it affects what kind of incentives can be given. The incentives should then always be material, so that they can be reversed in case of non-compliance. Therefore, in the penalty's scenario, training could not be an incentive, as once training has been given, it cannot be taken back. It should be stipulated clearly in the agreement which, or how much of, an incentive(s) will be reclaimed by the IA in case of non-compliance. Similarly, clear steps should be outlined on whether sanctions will happen immediately in case of non-compliance, or whether other steps, such as a warning, will be taken prior to reclaiming an incentive.

In Steinkopf sanctions/penalties were implemented. Compliance for each quarter would be calculated as a percentage of records required to be provided to IA, meetings attended, and ecological monitoring reports handed in. If the compliance percentage was below 40% stewards received a warning; if in the second quarter the compliance was still below 40%, stewards only received 50% of their incentives. Sanctions work best and are considered to be fairer by farmers when they are implemented in a phased approach and where a warning for remediation is given before action is taken by the IA. Any warning should be in the form of a written letter or notice.

An alternative to sanctions, or penalties, is a credit system. In this system, several credits can be decided upon, say 100, which translates to 100 percent of incentives. This number of credits can be broken down to match individual incentives. If there are five conservation actions stewards must comply with, credits can be prorated according to the importance of each action, for instance:

The credit system has the benefit that the onus for earning credits is solely placed on the stewards. They can earn the full complement of incentives by complying with all conservation actions. It excludes the scenario where incentives are given, stewards do not comply, and incentives must be taken back. With the credit system the steward first complies, compliance is verified by the IA and only then does the steward receive the benefit. Opportunity cost is thus covered for each conservation action complied with.

This step keeps stewards accountable to their commitments and it provides investors with the confidence that contracts are being adhered to.

	CONSERVATION ACTION	CREDITS
1)	Timeous submission of accurate livestock records monthly. This includes: -livestock numbers -Livestock losses and reason for losses -Number of livestock sold -Number of livestock treated for disease	50
2)	Monthly payment of membership fees to signatory organization. (Monthly fees are R20)	20
3	Participating in the Livestock Improvement Scheme	30
	<b>TOTAL CREDITS EARNED</b>	<b>100</b>



## DESIGN + NEGOTIATION

### HOSTING A NEGOTIATIONS WORKSHOP

The proceedings of the Information Gathering Workshop are used to populate a Conservation Agreement, called a Draft Conservation Agreement. The next step would be to host a Negotiations Workshop where the draft agreement is reviewed and agreed upon with the target group.

The stakeholders who attend this workshop will be the ones who sign off on the final draft. Those who are interested in participating will have known to attend this meeting from next steps communicated at the end of all meetings.

If the credits method is not being used, a key principle of the CSP model is that an incentive should be something that can be taken away as a penalty if stewards do not comply. Whilst these penalties are developed during a desktop exercise during the drafting phase it is important to achieve consensus on these at this negotiations workshop.

The negotiation workshop is held with all interested parties (all who can potentially be signed up as stewardship farmers). The results of a Negotiation Workshop are a final set of conservation actions, opportunity costs to implement those conservation actions and a matching set of incentives, as well as sanctions or credits.

At this workshop the draft Conservation Agreement must be presented to the community. Anything that is unacceptable or impractical must be identified and the necessary changes made to the agreement at this workshop.

Negotiation is a critical component of implementing stewardship in any given area. Openness, honesty, perseverance, patience and flexibility is needed to successfully conclude this phase. A solid relationship of trust that has been built prior to this phase will result in smoother negotiation and a more effective conservation agreement, as well as a better chance of compliance.

Once consensus has been reached the final Conservation Agreement will be ready for signing.

#### Example 1: Negotiating Incentives

In the CSA project, where the CSP model was employed, some adjustments were made with regards to incentives and sanctions at this workshop. In the Kamiesberg, a more suitable breed of animal was introduced, and a dosing and inoculation programme started. In a previous agreement, water hand pumps were an incentive, which enabled some stewards to move to areas that previously did not have working water infrastructure.

#### EXAMPLE 1: NEGOTIATING INCENTIVES

##### NEW BREEDING RAMS OFFERED AS AN INCENTIVE



- hardier breed
- long legs, can walk further
- less selective grazers
- less susceptible to parasites
- can tolerate warmer temperatures
- reaches market weight earlier

**CONSERVATION OUTCOME**  
Healthy adapted animals have less impact on rangelands.

**CONSERVATION ACTION**  
Breed 50% ewes with new breed of rams and treat livestock for parasites.

**INCENTIVE**  
New breed of rams provided and supply of livestock medicine for inoculations.



Photo by ©CSA/E Engelbrecht

### Example 2: Negotiating Incentives

**PROBLEM: OVERGRAZING**  
**CONSERVATION ACTION: REDUCE STOCKING RATE**  
**INCENTIVE: MARKET ACCESS**

#### KAMIESBERG EXAMPLE



IA negotiates with partner abattoir to buy livestock from stewards twice a year.

Abattoir supplies transport to collect livestock from the veld.

#### STEINKOPF EXAMPLE



IA holds livestock auctions for participating stewards.

Livestock sales became a conservation action and market access became an incentive.

### Managing Expectations

Honesty on budgets is essential. If an opportunity cost has been determined and an incentive agreed, and the budget exists, then commit to it. If there is a budget shortfall suggest alternatives. In CSA's ten years of stewardship in the Kamiesberg, budgets have often not been enough to cover the opportunity cost. Alternatives were often suggested and discussed with stewards and alternatives were decided upon.



Participian in Action - Photo by ©CSA/H Muller

STEP  
3



**ZAR160,000**  
INCENTIVES



**3000**  
PEOPLE  
BENEFITTING



**239,609 ha**  
RANGELANDS  
PROTECTED



**100%**  
INCREASE IN LAND  
MANAGEMENT  
AWARENESS



DESIGN + NEGOTIATION



# STEP 4



Photo by © CSA/ H Muller

## KICKSTART ACTION WITH AN IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

Once all agreements have been signed implementation can commence. To ensure all parties understand their commitments and that stewards understand how and when to make the changes required of them, it is helpful to have an implementation planning workshop.

It is a good idea to have a celebratory ceremony of the signing of the agreements as it marks the formal commitment of all parties embarking on stewardship. It also communicates to the signatories and the wider community the start of implementation of the agreement.

Implementation is certainly not leaving stewards to get on with it. Each party has clear obligations in terms of the agreement, and this includes the implementing agent. A Conservation Agreement is a collaborative effort and mutual communication, discussion, planning and adjusting does not stop with the signing of the agreement. It will be, and should be, ongoing throughout the lifetime of the agreement. Stewards should be active participants in this process.

At the onset of implementation, an Implementation Workshop can be held with stewards. The purpose of this workshop is twofold, 1) to ensure all stewards know exactly what each conservation action is; and 2) to do a planning exercise with groups of stewards to simplify

compliance. They can then use this information to plan for themselves how each conservation action should be approached and implemented.

The approach to implementation and mentoring should be a holistic one. Focusing on multiple issues relating to a particular land-use.

Using Participlan, the stewards, can be asked a series of questions to help them think through the planning process they will need to follow.

Some recommended questions are:

- 1) What are the conservation actions in the agreement you signed?
- 2) What do you already have in place to enable you to implement these conservation actions?
- 3) What might make it difficult to implement these conservation actions?
- 4) Knowing what you have in place and what might make implementation difficult, how do you plan to use this information to ensure successful implementation?

It is laborious to go through each one of the conservation actions, so from the second question it might be best to choose one or two conservation actions and focus on those.

The workshop is not necessarily meant to do the actual planning, but to show stewards a method they learn and follow in their own planning process. Working through the exercise once or twice familiarizes them with the method.



Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

## Support Meetings

Support meetings serve as a platform for open communication and allow for troubleshooting and adaptive planning where needed. Ideally, monthly support meetings should be held with stewards, where both parties provide feedback on various issues pertaining to the agreement.

These include:

- Planning for when conservation actions need to be implemented,
- Putting in place infrastructure or agreements for implementation to begin and progress
- Updating of progress on implementation
- Discussing unexpected challenges
- Finding and discussing opportunities to augment resources or amplify activities through other existing programs
- Carrying out compliance monitoring and providing feedback
- Delivery of incentives

Land use of any kind does not always follow a predictable path. For instance, the Conservation Agreement might state that farmers must use new rams on 50% of their flocks but a drought might result in farmers not letting their livestock breed at all. They would do this to prevent a food shortage for their animals during this time. Feedback on progress, opportunities and challenges can be given by both parties in support meetings. In short, support meetings are what keeps the stewardship programme on track.

If individual agreements were signed with land users, support meetings could be held twice a month to ensure a good start, for the first third of the total period of the project. After that they could be held once a month. If an umbrella agreement was signed with a land-user representative organization, then meetings with the management committee of the organization and meetings with the stewards themselves could be alternated.



As can be seen above, the conservation action of rotational grazing requires a host of actions to take place. It is not about the implementation agent taking on all these challenges on their own but a collaborative effort by land-users, the implementation agent and other role-players to achieve these conservation actions successfully. Achieving each conservation action can often be complex and costly and it is therefore important to remember to limit and prioritise conservation actions .

Throughout the implementation phase of the stewardship agreement there will be, and should be, discussions and activities to put all of these into place. Rigidity and an inflexible approach are not hallmarks of this model of stewardship. The implementation agent might want to safeguard one species of plant growing in wetlands and therefore want grazing pressure on the wetlands to be reduced but it is not as simple as just formulating a conservation action of rotational grazing and assuming that will achieve the desired results.

# STEP 5

## MONITORING + EVALUATION



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### DESIGNING A MONITORING + EVALUATION PROCESS

To measure the impact and results of implementing conservation actions, monitoring protocols must be developed. This allows for innovation, creativity and collaboration.

In CSA's Namaqua Conservation Agreement project, the following monitoring protocols have been developed and implemented:

#### Socio-Economic Survey

This survey measured the impact of stewardship on stewards' and their families' social and economic status.

#### Compliance Monitoring

Measuring compliance with conservation actions, providing data on livestock numbers, sales, mortality and health. This data informs the design of the benefit packages.

#### Three Tier Monitoring

A simple monitoring protocol developed by CSA and the Agricultural Research Council to enable stewards to measure grazing impact and livestock condition



Photo lhs and rhs by © Lisa Boonzaier



Photo by © CSA/ H Muller

## MONITORING + EVALUATION

In the Conservation Agreement model followed in the Kamiesberg and Steinkopf, the Conservation Agreements are renewed each year. In some instances, no adjustments were required and in other areas some incentives were changed according to updated priorities and needs. To determine whether the Conservation Agreement of the past year was appropriate and successful and to make the necessary changes to the new agreement, a Lessons Learned workshop is held.

### LESSONS LEARNED WORKSHOP

All stewards as well as the organizations they signed conservation agreements with should attend this workshop. Representatives of the IA directly involved in the stewardship programme should also participate.

Goals of the lessons learned include:

- To determine whether the conservation actions are effective
- To adjust or remove those that are not effective
- To design new actions for those that needs replacement (or not) – you simply might want to drop totally ineffective or unrealistic conservation actions)

Apart from renegotiating a second term it is a great opportunity to understand how to strengthen partnerships

At the Lessons Learned workshop, the following questions can be asked:

- 1) **What has worked well? (conservation actions to be kept in the agreement)**
- 2) **What has not worked so well? (conservation actions needing to be adjusted/removed)**
- 3) **How can it be done better? (either new conservation actions or new ways of approaching existing ones)**

Stewards must prioritise their responses to all three questions.

It is important to note that with the second question, stewards might emphasise a conservation action/s they found particularly difficult or unpopular.

These should not simply be removed from the Conservation Agreement for that reason. These might be important conservation actions that should not simply be discarded.

Unpack the results by asking questions such as:

- **Why did it not work well?**
- **What could we do to make it work?**
- **How can we adjust it?**

Allow time for discussion, even when using the Participian method to ensure that the reasons why the conservation action is considered too difficult or very unpopular is fully understood. This conservation action could then be adjusted to make it more achievable or acceptable.

Answers to the last question will contribute to adjusting difficult conservation actions. However, If stewards are adamant that the conservation action is not achievable and they give valid reasons for it, it might be preferable to leave it out, and look at an alternative action.

The results of the Lessons Learned workshop provide the information necessary to adjust the existing agreement or to populate a renewed Conservation Agreement.

In a second year of engagement the lessons learned workshop functions as the Information Gathering Workshop.

The following steps are then repeated to complete a follow-on renewal agreement:

- 1) Collate and confirm the results of the lessons learned workshop
- 2) Adjust or draft new agreement from the lessons learned workshop
- 3) Hold negotiations meeting for agreement on the draft amended agreement (note this is just a meeting and not a full workshop as is held in the year one negotiations workshop)
- 4) Hold a signing ceremony for the renewed agreement

Photo by © Tessa Mirdenhal



## MONITORING + EVALUATION

Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

### STAFFING SUPPORT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT

The justification for rolling out a stewardship project is usually an environmental one. It might be that an entire area is a center of endemism or that it has one or more iconic species which are threatened by land use. A Conservation Agreement programme's outcome will be to conserve the area/species or prevent further degradation or to alleviate threats to it. To achieve this, stewards will need to change their own behaviour. Furthermore, a stewardship programme must be underpinned by defensible, credible science and it needs to be monitored to determine the impacts of the programme.

When staffing a stewardship programme, human resources are needed to address all these needs. It is strongly recommended that an IA does not try to combine all these roles into one person. Stewardship often calls for innovative thinking to solve difficult problems and the cross-pollination of ideas and disciplines is needed.

Three dedicated positions are recommended, an ecologist, a stewardship coordinator and a compliance officer. The ecologist is responsible for identifying environmental challenges and recommends alleviating actions. The ecologist will also monitor the impacts of the conservation actions taken on the ground.

The stewardship coordinator negotiates and supports the agreements which include alleviating actions during implementation. The Compliance Officer ensures and verifies compliance with the Conservation Agreements.

It is recommended that candidates applying for these positions possess the following skills and experience:

#### An Ecologist

- the ability to translate ecological needs into actions
- the ability to monitor impact of conservation actions linked to the environment
- the ability to see linkages
- adaptive management skills
- GIS, Microsoft Office
- drivers' license

#### A Stewardship Coordinator

- is people orientated
- has strong negotiation skills
- is a strategic thinker
- can innovate
- is a good communicator
- is realistic
- can build partnerships
- can see linkages
- can think on his/her feet
- Microsoft Office
- drivers' license

#### A Compliance Officer

- is people orientated
- is a good communicator
- is detail orientated
- can see linkages
- can think on his/her feet
- can balance good relationships and ensuring compliance
- can process data
- can compile and write reports
- attention to detail
- Microsoft Office
- drivers' license



MONITORING + EVALUATION

Photo by ©Green Renaissance

**Understand the Place and the People**

No two places are the same and communities each have their own unique characteristics. It is therefore vital for stewardship staff to allocate enough time and devote enough attention to enable a good grasp of the environment, the people and how they interact.

Preconceived ideas of the community will not serve you in achieving a successful stewardship programme, nor will making your focus too narrow help. Understanding not only how land-users operate, but why, is important. A specific land-use might be driven by factors lying outside the ambit of the area of concern. For example, bark from a threatened tree species harvested for its medicinal value in a certain area might be sold to customers that drive the demand but live hundreds or thousands of kilometres away from the actual location of harvesting. Local authorities, land-use legislation, market demand, the array of livelihood options, education levels and many more, will determine why land-users are doing what they do.

Finer details will also weigh in, such as the culture of the people. For example in the Kamiesberg, feral donkeys are a problem but it has proved enduringly difficult to address this issue with the local land-users as the main religion is Christianity and there is a local religious superstition that it is taboo to kill donkeys because Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

Once these realities are known and understood, it is important never to ridicule them or to take the attitude that it is wrong to do things a certain way. In other words, do not be judgmental. Understanding the bigger picture will clarify what is possible and where intervention would be the most strategic.



Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

**Build Trust and Nurture Relationships**

Building trust and relationships is based on a few simple principles. In the words of Carlos Fernando, the compliance officer working with Kamiesberg stewards: “If you say you are going to do something, do it.”

One of the most paternalistic behaviours is the withholding of information from stewards. There is no justification for it.

**Relentless Honesty And Transparency**

Be honest about budgets and about what can and cannot be done.

**Encourage openness and promote mutual respect**

Never raise expectations that cannot realistically be fulfilled. Treat stewards as your equals and never take sides.

**Encourage Collaboration**

When challenges arise, encourage stewards to work together to help find mutual and peaceful solutions to issues.

**Be Courageous**

Take on the difficult tasks and questions by addressing issues head on. It is better to address these quickly before they turn into a bigger issue than they need be. This should always be done in a sensitive manner.

**Never Be Judgmental**

Every undesirable land-use activity is an opportunity to engage, discuss, educate and adapt. Land-users should not be shown or told that what they are doing is “wrong”, but should rather be encouraged to amend the methods they are using for their own betterment (make the link to this new behaviour to their livelihoods and their environment). Ultimately the only way to make stewardship sustainable in the long run is to change behaviour.

✓ SUSTAINABILITY



Photo by © Tessa Mildenhall

**Expand Your Impact**

Once a stewardship project is in its implementation phase, it presents an opportunity to design an entire programme around it. The engaged stewardship community could become a go-to group to roll out other projects. Such project opportunities usually come from the stewardship activities themselves. For instance, it might be clear that, for stewards to benefit more from market opportunities they need to gain basic finance skills. In CSA's case an existing green economy project was eventually expanded to train stewards in business related skills and assisting them with business mentorship. This also included writing business plans as well as legal assistance that helped them identify the most suitable governance structure for the future.

The Natural Resource Management project (NRM), a public works project funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs, and implemented by CSA, was also rolled out in this area to restore gully and sheet erosion on communal areas where stewardship projects are implemented. The result of this is a more holistic approach, where supportive projects are beneficial to both the stewards and their environment. Partnerships can also be built with other entities, such as research institutions which would like to conduct studies. Research could be carried out on elements that would enlighten the stewardship process and provide new and useful information to the stewards.

Such projects could also serve as benefits in the agreement. Training, research, jobs created, land restored, and mentoring have all flowed to stewards as part of this suite of projects centering around Conservation Agreement.

Building an entire programme around this model also channels other funding toward those activities that cannot be covered under the actual Conservation Agreement budget. This approach expands the pool of expertise and addresses many more external challenges that restricted conservation funding cannot help address.

**TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTERS**

**Embrace Change and Challenges**

The ability to be flexible and innovative in the face of change is an important ability when implementing stewardship. Making sure that a Plan B is in place at the outset is useful, but even this might be affected by changes in the stewardship environment. Drought, floods, changes in political spheres, fall or rise in demand for a local product and many more, can influence or affect a stewardship programme.

It is important to acknowledge changes and challenges, but more importantly, to address it with the stewards and solicit their participation in addressing the impacts

of these. This can often lead to better ways of implementing stewardship, through flexibility and innovative thinking.

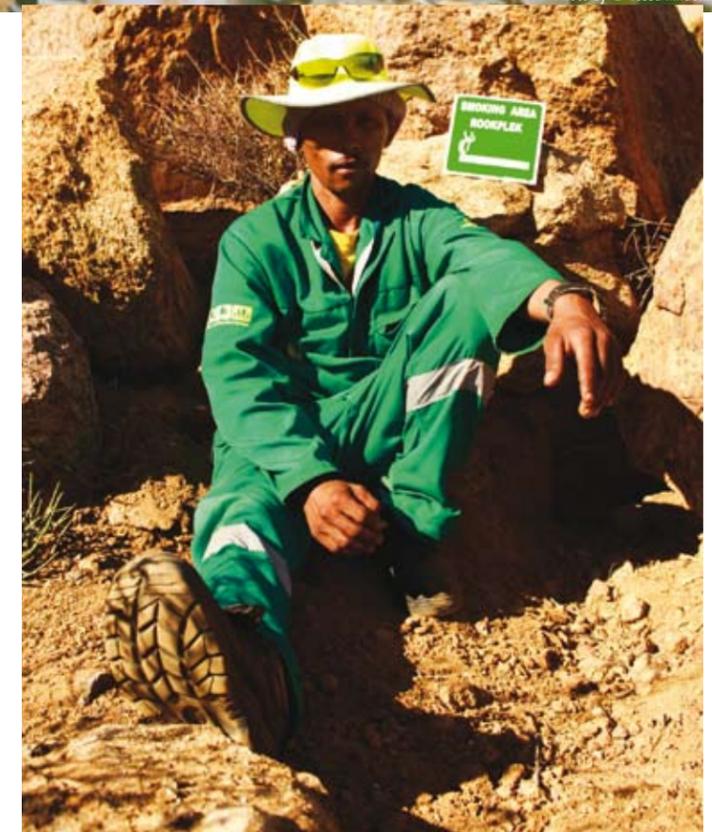
**Maintain Momentum**

To maintain momentum in a Conservation Agreement project requires the ability to maintain enthusiasm, visible dedication, building the capacity, and the acknowledgement of achievements and results.

Maintaining enthusiasm is closely linked to the kind of people employed to roll out Conservation Agreements. You cannot in-still enthusiasm if you are not enthusiastic yourself. Visible dedication is being there, being on time and putting in the time and staying the course despite difficult-ties and challenges.

Any stewardship programme should have built-in opportunities for building stewards' capacity through training, mentorship and assistance with forging useful partnerships. These can be formalized in a Conservation Agreement as part of the benefits.

Achievements can be acknowledged through small "bonus" benefits (solar lights, airtime voucher, t-shirt, for example) and using opportunities such as the signing ceremony and Lessons Learned workshop to highlight achievements. For example, acknowledging a steward in a meeting who has gone the extra mile can also be appreciated.



**CSA successfully applied for government funding to restore degraded lands in Namaqualand. Hundreds of local people were trained + employed to help us get the job done.**

# CONCLUSION

In 2008 Conservation South Africa (CSA) began to use a new approach to do conservation on communal land. The Conservation Agreement approach had previously been used successfully in South Africa with private farmers but had not been adapted to address the many challenges associated with working on communally owned lands. At the time there was no manual or reference for CSA to use in tackling this challenge — and so we learned by doing.

Increasingly unpredictable conditions caused by climate change is having a negative effect on the country's food and water supplies. Where commonages overlap with critically endangered and high biodiversity areas, water catchments and vital ecosystem services, finding ways to help change degradation from farming will become a national priority. If it is not addressed increasing poverty and ecological decline will continue.

Engaging with commonage land users on Conservation Agreements presents a great opportunity to halt these deleterious impacts, restore rangeland management, build resilience to climate change and foster human wellbeing.

This guideline is a compilation of 11 years of lessons in Namaqualand that have led to, what CSA believe are, the basic steps for implementing communal Conservation Agreements successfully.

It is hoped that our experiences and lessons will help others to replicate this process and contribute to a safer, healthier climate for all.

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CONSERVATION  
SOUTH AFRICA



Member of the CI Network



## OUR MISSION

To promote and support conservation, restoration, and sustainable land use in South Africa's biodiversity hotspots as an essential element of sustainable food production, building resilience to the impacts of climate change, and promoting regional economic development that values nature.

[www.conservation.org/csp](http://www.conservation.org/csp)

**PEOPLE NEED NATURE TO THRIVE**