



WESTERN HEADS / GOUKAMMA  
CONSERVANCY

# Western Heads-Goukamma Conservancy and Table Mountain Fund Fynbos Forever Programme: A Collaborative Project for the Protection and Restoration of the Critically Endangered Knysna Sand Fynbos



WESTERN HEADS / GOUKAMMA  
CONSERVANCY

## INTRODUCTION

The Western Heads-Goukamma Conservancy (WHGC) is proud to announce support and funding received from the Table Mountain Fund's (TMF) Fynbos Forever Programme to assist with the WHGC's efforts in the protection and restoration of the Knysna Sand Fynbos vegetation type and its flora and fauna. The TMF has to-date invested approximately R95 million into over 340 conservation projects that protect and restore the Cape Floral Region. The TMF's Fynbos Forever Programme aims to ensure that: (1) Priority ecosystems are safeguarded through formal and informal legal protection mechanisms, and (2) Appropriate resource management interventions are applied to reduce threats and build resilience in the natural fynbos ecosystems. The WHGC is a Non-Profit Organisation that was registered in October 2004 with the CapeNature conservancy programme. The conservancy's purpose is to promote the protection of important indigenous ecosystems, species, archaeological and paleontological sites, landscapes, and geological features within its jurisdiction.



The WHGC's 3750ha area of influence extends from the western bank of the Knysna Estuary to the eastern bank of the Goukamma Estuary, and from the beach (high water mark) inland to the N2 national highway. The development nodes of Brenton on Sea, Brenton on Lake, Belvidere, Buffelsbaai, and portions of Knysna and Sedgfield are included.



## CONSERVATION VALUE

The WHGC region is an important conservation area as it contains Knysna Sand Fynbos (FFd10), a critically endangered vegetation type of which only 17% (2 500ha) of its original 15 000ha is in an untransformed state. Furthermore, 75% (c. 1750 ha) of the remaining FFd10 occurs in the WHGC. The WHGC is well known as the home to several threatened and endangered fauna species; including three threatened butterfly species, of which the Brenton Blue Butterfly is best known; and two endangered mammals such as the Caracal and Honey Badger. It contains important ecological corridors along the dune cordons (east-west) and between the ocean and the Knysna estuary (north-south). Despite its high conservation value and that the area is a valuable local and international tourism asset, the area is under threat from inappropriate development, habitat fragmentation, uncontrolled fires, and from alien plant species invasion. The vegetation type was severely impacted by the Knysna fires of 2017 and is therefore at risk and more sensitive to any further disturbances. Protection and restoration interventions are critical, to ensure the future of this important conservation and tourism area. This WHGC-TMF funded project will assist with achieving this objective and will serve as a further catalyst for future conservation, protection, and restoration initiatives in the area

## OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

The WHGC-TMF project is a 3-year project, which runs from 1 September 2022 to 1 September 2025. The project will tackle issues around four themes:  
**(1) Conservation** – assisting landowners to establish formal or voluntary informal conservation biodiversity agreements, in partnership with SANParks or CapeNature;  
**(2) Threat reduction and biodiversity conservation** – by establishing a database of the natural and alien vegetation baseline status; by developing an alien eradication and fire management plan; and by recommending appropriate area development policies.  
**(3) Restoration** – by developing restoration plans based on model restoration reference sites and agreed upon restoration methods and outcomes; and  
**(4) Raising public awareness** – of the conservation value and tourism potential of Knysna Sand Fynbos, its flora, fauna, and ecosystems; alien plant control; fire management; conservation and protection; restoration; and development policies.



The project is a collaborative project, which will involve participation from multiple stakeholders including among others: local communities, landowners, SANParks, CapeNature, the Knysna Municipality, the Southern Cape Fire Protection Agency (SCFPA), SANBI's Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW), and the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa.

## STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME & INCENTIVES

Contract agreements, as proposed as one of the outcomes of this project, are agreements in which landowners maintain ownership of their land, but enter a contract with a protected area agency, i.e., with SANParks or CapeNature. These agreements are facilitated by provisions in the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 and are increasingly being used as part of biodiversity stewardship Programmes, as an important mechanism in the expansion of protected area networks.

In this mechanism, the land concerned remains in private hands with a **formal contract** between the landowner and a protected area agency. The landowner agrees to restrictions on use of the land and the protected area agency commits to various forms of management assistance. In the most secure cases, restrictions on use of the land are written into the title deed and thus remain in place if the land changes hands.

The landowner of such a contractual protected area is eligible for exclusion from property rates in terms of the Municipal Property Rates Act (Act 6 of 2004). Income tax incentives also apply.

A basket of other incentives is further offered to landowners in return for entering formal contract agreements, over and above the existing exclusion from municipal property rates and the income tax incentives that support the establishment of contractual protected areas.

Less secure **informal options**, also a proposed outcome of this project, are possible. These have fewer restrictions on the part of landowners and come with less ongoing management assistance from the protected area agency. These informal conservation areas are useful as 'entry-level' biodiversity stewardship Agreements.

To find out more on these incentives contact the WHGC.

## AGREED OUTCOMES

Outcomes fall within two broad themes:

### (1) Public Awareness/Stakeholders

Communications plan x 1 to generate landowner and community support
Conservation signs x 4 printed and erected
Public awareness videos x 3 produced
Project findings presented x 1 at Fynbos Forum
Veld & Flora article x 1 written
Notice of Intent (NoI) through Conservation Agreements with SANParks or CapeNature signed by landowners x 5
NoI landowners x 5 to become members of the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (SCFPA), commit to restoration plan and receive alien vegetation clearing assistance
Alien vegetation workshops x 4 to be provided to landowners and contractors
Identify conservation purpose properties x 2

### (2) Science

Landowner cadastral map and database x 1 to be maintained
Fynbos biodiversity surveys (Fynbos condition & alien vegetation status included) prepared for the NoI properties x 10
Restoration plans (botanical, alien vegetation, and fire included) x 10 to be developed for the NoI properties
Alien vegetation reduction coverage targets (based on baseline surveys) to be set for NoI properties x 10
Alien vegetation removal contract & methodology template x 1 to be developed with SANParks, CapeNature and the Knysna Municipality
Fire management strategy/plan x 1 is to be developed with the SCFPA
Development policy x 1 formulated to aid development decision-making
Project carbon footprint measured x 1 report



Contact: Western Heads Goukamma Conservancy  
Johan Labuschagne  
e-mail: [whgconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:whgconservancy@gmail.com)  
Web: <https://westernheadsgoukamma.co.za>

