RAMSAR CONVENTION

Ramsar National Report to COP15

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Section 1: Institutional Information

Important note: The responses below will be considered by the Convention on Wetlands Secretariat as the definitive list of your focal points. All individuals listed below agree that the submitted information will be used to update the information in the Secretariat's contact database and will be published on the public website here Contacts on website.

Name of Contracting Party

The completed National Report **must be accompanied by a letter** in the name of the Head of Administrative Authority, confirming that this is the Contracting Party's official submission of its COP15 National Report. It can be attached to this question using the "Manage documents" function (blue symbol below)
Link to sample National Report Submission Letter: https://www.ramsar.org/document/national-reports-cop15-sample-letter
››› Republic of South Africa

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

Letter_to_Ramsar_Convention_Secretary_General_RSA.pdf - Letter: Submission of South Africa's National Report to COP15

Designated Administrative Authority for the Convention on Wetlands

Name of Administrative Authority
››› Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Head of Administrative Authority - name and title
››› Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala: Director-General

Mailing address
››› Private Bag X447, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa

Telephone
››› +27 12 399 9008

Email
››› dg@dffe.gov.za

Designated National Focal Point for the Convention on Wetlands

Name and title
››› Mr Stanley Tshitwamulomoni, Director: Water Sources and Wetlands Conservation

Mailing address
››› Private Bag X447, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa

Telephone
››› +27 12 399 9587

Email
››› stanleyt@dffe.gov.za

Designated Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) National Focal Point

Name and title
››› Ms Nancy Job, Lead: Freshwater Biodiversity Programme

Name of organisation
››› South African National Biodiversity Institute

Mailing address
››› Private Bag X7, Claremont, 7735, Cape Town

Telephone
››› +27 21 799 8474

Email
››› n.job@sanbi.org.za

Designated Government Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)Programme National Focal Point

Name and title
››› Ms Jackie Jay, Control Biodiversity Officer: Water Sources and Wetlands Conservation

Name of organisation
››› Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Mailing address
››› Private Bag X447, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa

Telephone
››› +27 12 399 9369

Email
››› JJay@dffe.gov.za

Designated Non-Governmental Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) Programme National Focal Point

Name and title
››› N/A

Designated National Focal Point on Strengthening the Convention on Wetland’s Connections through Youth

Name and title
››› N/A

Section 2: General summary of national implementation progress and challenges

In your country, in the past triennium (i.e., since COP14 reporting)

A. What have been the five main achievements of the implementation of the Convention since COP14?

1)
››› Designation of four new Ramsar Sites, namely Ingula Nature Reserve (2021), Berg River Estuary (2022), Middelpunt Nature Reserve (2023) and De Berg Nature Reserve (2024) and the accreditation of the City of Cape Town as a Ramsar Accredited City (2022)

2)
››› Finalisation and approval of guidelines, strategies and tools for improved wetland management. This includes the revision of the Guidelines for the Development and Implementation of Estuarine Management Plans (DFFE, 2023), the approval of the National Wetland Management Framework (NWMF), a comprehensive strategy for inland wetlands outlining 18 strategic objectives under 7 themes (DFFE, 2021) and the development of a wide range of Citizen Science tools for monitoring water-related ecosystems and an online learning tool

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Online citizen science learning tool

3)
››› Development of the 6th version of the National Wetland Map for South Africa, which contains an update of the location, extent and types of wetlands in South Africa and includes wetland potential extent modelling, remote sensing and review by multiple stakeholders. The National Wetland Map project is furthermore in the process of generating automated wetland condition assessments. South Africa has also been selected as one of several pilot countries to participate in the Global Wetland Mapper initiative led by DHI and UNEP.

4)
››› Rehabilitation of 128 000ha of rivers and 52 244ha (or 283 individual) marshes from 2021-2024

5)
››› The re-establishment of the estuaries task team composed of scientists and policy implementers to deliberate on the effective management of estuaries (coastal wetlands) and the hosting of the annual National Wetlands Indaba Conferences and Provincial Wetlands Forum meetings for each of South Africa's 9 Provinces. The Indaba, which happens each year in October, is a key mechanism through which South Africa has developed and strengthened its wetland field of practice. Beyond the Indaba, regional/provincial wetland forums have been active since 2000. The forums serve as platforms for discussions on key topics relevant to the province and for the co-ordination of cooperative governance issues relating to wetlands. These forums have further taken on the responsibility to rotate the organising and hosting of the National Wetlands Indaba, with support from South Africa’s National Wetland Society.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

http://
South African Wetland Society - SAWS website, with links to information on the Provincial Wetland Forums, amongst many other resources

B. What have been the five main challenges in implementing the Convention since COP14?

1)
››› Securing of adequate sustainable funding for the implementation of the convention, in particular for: mapping and monitoring of Ramsar and other priority wetland ecosystems and species, the further development and maintenance of the National Wetland Inventory, conducting fine scale long-term studies related to the functioning of wetlands and producing Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) facilities and materials suited to different audiences, in different languages and for the various Ramsar Sites.

2)
››› Removal of the Orange River Mouth from the Montreux Record, sourcing sufficient funding to implement and upscale restoration efforts of wetlands and lack of sufficient resources to aid local landowners and communities to restore and clean their wetlands and ensure they are sustainably utilised

3)
››› Ensuring co-ordinated, streamlined implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of inland wetland related actions across multiple role-players

4)
››› Controlling increased pressures on wetlands such as overexploitation; water pollution; flow modification; destruction or degradation of habitat; and invasion by exotic species. This includes pressure from coastal developments that threaten the integrity of coastal wetlands and estuaries, and pressures that have led to the increase in the number, extent and duration of peatlands and other wetlands becoming desiccated

5)
››› Lack of a coherent cross governmental policy on inland wetlands

C. Please outline five priorities for implementing the Convention in your country during the coming triennium (2026-2028)

1)
››› Removal of the Blesbokspruit Ramsar Site from the Montreux Record, managing threats to other sites, and implementing measures towards rehabilitating the Orange River Mouth (ORM) Ramsar Site (a long-term objective is to remove the ORM from the Montreux Record).

2)
››› Designation of 3 new Ramsar Sites and updating outdated Ramsar Information Sheets

3)
››› Development of a National Wetland Policy

4)
››› Rehabilitation of wetlands through governmental and non-governmental programmes (aligned to the Global Biodiversity Framework Target 2) and the expansion of the formal protection of wetlands (aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3)

5)
››› Expansion of South Africa’s National Wetland Monitoring Programme to include additional indicators and wetland monitoring sites.

D. Does the Administrative Authority have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention Secretariat?
››› Yes, to identify measures and options, including potential financial mechanisms, to strengthen assistance to Contracting Parties for implementing national priorities, particularly for Ramsar Site management needs.

E. Does the Administrative Authority have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention’s International Organization Partners (IOPs) (including ongoing partnerships and partnerships to be developed)?
››› IOPs should enhance partnerships with Contracting Parties

F. In accordance with paragraph 21 of Resolution XIII.18 on Gender and wetlands, please provide a short description about the balance between genders participating in wetland-related decisions, programmes and research.
››› In South Africa, there is a balance between men and women participating in wetland-related decision making, programme implementation and research initiatives. Many of the research programmes in South Africa involve and promote female researchers. There has also been an increased involvement of citizen scientists and volunteers in interventions, this includes a recent initiative by the Department of Water and Sanitation and the South African National Biodiversity institute to engage and train traditional healers in citizen science tools, of which 70% of the trainees were women. The National Working for Wetlands programme implements work through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) prescripts which employs 65% women, 55 % youth and 2% persons with disabilities

H. Please describe lessons learnt in the context of wetlands and gender equality work in your country.
››› Risk assessments should address the roles of the various genders in relation to the work required to be undertaken. Programs should be designed to allow for individual strengths and weaknesses and include a broader spectrum of roles in which all genders can be involved. Highlighting success stories of women in wetlands management is a powerful tool to inspire and lead future generations

I. If possible, please list gender-related policies, strategies and action plans in place relevant to wetlands in

your country.
››› South Africa’s National Gender Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (2010) outlines the country’s vision for gender equality. The main objective of this framework is to create an enabling policy environment for translating government commitment to gender equality into a reality. The Frameworks recognizes 3 pillars for action which include social, economic and political inclusion. The Gender Equality Strategic Framework (GESF) for Public Service (2009), which is premised on the promotion and protection of human dignity and human rights of women, including women with disabilities. The Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2013) which establishes a legislative framework for the empowerment of women and enables the representation of women in decision-making positions and structures by ensuring that all government departments and private companies fill a minimum of 50% of all senior and top management positions with women. It also emphasizes access to opportunities and issues of education and training for women. The Gender Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (2019) (GRPBMEAF) aims to introduce a gender lens gradually and systematically within the overall management of public finances.

J. If applicable, identify examples of strategies and actions your country is implementing to support youth participation in the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan or in wetlands management (Resolution XIV.12 on Strengthening Ramsar connections through youth, paragraph 21).
››› South Africa has a number of examples of actions that are being implemented to support youth participation in wetlands management.
Numerous government departments and research institutions in South Africa have Professional Development Programmes for the youth through which the youth become involved in projects and research related to wetlands. This includes for example the Groen Sebenza programme which is a Jobs Fund Partnership Project aimed at developing priority skills in the biodiversity sector to create sustainable job opportunities for unemployed graduates and non-graduates for a period of two and a half years. Other initiatives include the Candidate Mentorship Programme which is implemented by the South African Wetland Society and funded by the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions. Since 2020, 10 young scientists have been trained within the field of wetland science though this mentorship programme. The society furthermore sponsors a number of students to attend and present at the National Wetlands Indaba (conference) of South Africa, with 30 student receiving sponsorships in 2023. The society is responsible for the National Wetlands Awards, which take place on an annual basis and are presented at the National Wetland Indaba each year. One of the categories that the organisation has deemed vital is the recognition of young professionals and their contributions within the wetland science field. In addition, through the wetland society and provincial wetland forums, various platforms are provided for youth to become involved in wetland related meetings, events and projects and to present their work. For example, the Western Cape Wetland Forum has implemented career days as well as student presentation days to build up the capacity within the sector and provide a platform where projects and studies can be presented and discussed with peers and specialists within the field of wetland science.
Another example is the “Enviro-Champs” initiative. Enviro-Champs are young people trained as citizen scientists, gathering, analysing and reporting their findings to find solutions. They also work to create awareness in their communities. The Enviro-Champs initiative was developed as a community driven, citizen science initiative in Mpophomeni township in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN), South Africa. Over time, the scope of work done and data collected by the Enviro-Champs has expanded. There is now recognition both locally and globally that the Enviro-Champs initiative shows great promise for national and global upscaling. UNICEF South Africa supports the scale-up Enviro-Champs across the country, including by recognizing and incentivizing their impact through the Youth Agency Marketplace (YOMA). Diamonds on the Soles of our Feet (DSF) is another citizen science project that has gained considerable acclaim at the National and International levels. It is an exemplary citizen science project, engaging with seven schools (410 learners) to promote water literacy inside and outside the classroom. DSF is a disruptor model that takes science out of the library and laboratory, equipping young learners through a ‘learning with the heart’ model that blends science communication and water literacy with poetry, dance, storytelling and song.

K. Please list the names of the organizations which have been consulted on or have contributed to the information provided in this report.
››› Agricultural Research Council
BirdLife South Africa
Buttonshope Conservancy Trust
CapeNature
City of Cape Town
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
Department of Agriculture
Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, Gauteng Provincial Government
Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism, Limpopo Provincial Government
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
Department of Water and Sanitation
Eskom Holdings (Biodiversity Division)

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
Isimangaliso Wetland Park Authority
Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency
Nelson Mandela University
North West Parks and Tourism Board
South African National Biodiversity Institute
South African National Parks
South African Wetland Society
University of KwaZulu-Natal
University of the Western Cape
Water Research Commission
Western Cape Wetlands Forum

Section 3 - all goals: Indicator questions and further implementation information

In responding to each of these questions, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide links, references/ upload documents where applicable and relevant.

Section 3 - Goal 1. Addressing the drivers of wetland loss and degradation

In responding to each of these questions, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide links, references/ upload documents where applicable and relevant.
[Reference to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15]

Target 1

Wetland benefits are featured in national/local policy strategies and plans relating to key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, urban development, infrastructure, industry, forestry, aquaculture, fisheries at the national and local level.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 14]

1.1 Have any actions been taken since COP14 to integrate wetland protection, wise use and restoration, or wetland benefits, into other national strategies and planning processes, including: {1.1}
Please select only one per square.

a) National policy or strategy for wetland management	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) Poverty eradication strategies	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
c) Water resource management and water efficiency plans	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
d) Coastal and marine resource management plans	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
e) Integrated coastal zone management plan	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
f) National forest management plan/strategies	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
g) National policies or measures on agriculture	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

h) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans drawn up under the CBD	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
i) National policies on energy and mining	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☑ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☐ A=Yes
j) National policies on tourism	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
k) National policies on urban development	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
l) National policies on infrastructure	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
m) National policies on industry	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☑ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☐ A=Yes
n) National policies on aquaculture and fisheries {1.3.3}	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
o) National plans of actions (NPAs) for pollution control and management	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
p) National policies on wastewater management and water quality	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
q) National policies, strategies or plans on sanitation	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
r) National policies, strategies or plans on food security	☐ Y=Not Relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

1.1 Additional information

››› Building on strides in scientific knowledge of wetlands in South Africa, since the development of the National Ramsar Report to COP14, a number of new and updated policies and high-level strategies been developed which recognise the importance of wetlands and set forth several strategies to protect aquatic

ecosystems and maintain and restore South Africa's ecological infrastructure. In December 2021, South Africa completed a National Wetland Management Framework, and has subsequently initiated a process to develop a National Wetland Policy. This is a joint initiative across several national government departments, including the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Agriculture.
In early 2022, South Africa approved its National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF) which specifically incorporates wetlands and their benefits to society. The NSDF recognises that national ecological infrastructure networks sustain all life and livelihoods, and puts forth that these ecosystems should be protected and well managed through a range of mechanisms including through formal protection, sound spatial planning and land-use management and where necessary, through restoration. Similarly, South Africa's National Infrastructure Plan 2020 (NIP 2025), which was published in March 2022, encourages strengthened investment in protecting and rehabilitating ecological infrastructure, defined here as functioning natural ecosystems that 'catch' and supply water in and from important water catchments.
In March 2023, South Africa's third National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS3) was released which recognises the intrinsic value of wetlands for water security and sets forth several strategies to protect aquatic ecosystems and maintain and restore ecological infrastructure. The National Sanitation Framework (NSF) was also published in March 2023. It provides a basis for the revision of the norms and standards for sanitation providing equitable sanitation provision; strengthening monitoring and compliance and sets out measures to improve service delivery and reverse service delivery lapses. Furthermore, other instruments to support sanitation provision were developed and include the approval of the National Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) Strategy in October 2023. The Strategy guides the sector on safe management of faecal sludge to enhance operation and maintenance of on-site sanitation systems, prevent groundwater contamination, safeguard public health and protects the environment from pollution throughout the sanitation service value chain. South Africa furthermore, in June 2023, published the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity which provides an overarching framework to inform policies, legislation and practices involving biodiversity within terrestrial, aquatic, and marine ecosystems, managed by the state, and within communal and on privately-owned land. It provides guidance in the conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable access and benefit sharing of South Africa's biodiversity, in order to contribute to the transformation of society, the well-being of people and nature, and to the prosperity of society. The White Paper sets the scene for a number of policies and strategy revisions for Biodiversity, including the revision of South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), set to take place in 2025. In July 2024 South Africa adopted the Climate Change Act (Act 22 of 2024). The Act recognises that impacts arising as a result of climate change will affect, amongst other things, human health, access to food and water, biodiversity, habitats and ecosystems, the coast and coastal infrastructure and human settlements and sets out to enhance South Africa's ability and capacity over time to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build climate resilience, while reducing the risk of job losses, and promoting opportunities for new job opportunities in the emerging green economy. Lastly in October 2024, the second White Paper on Tourism Development and Promotion in South Africa was published. Recognising that South Africa's diverse ecosystems, national parks, and wildlife reserves are significant tourist attractions, the emphasis placed on sustainable and responsible tourism by the Tourism Paper underscores the need for environmental conservation being at the forefront of tourism development in South Africa.

You have attached the following documents to this answer.

National_Wetland_Management_Framework_Report_Final_Updated.pdf - South Africa's National Wetland Strategy for Inland Wetlands

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

http://
National Water Resource Strategy

Target 2

Water userespects wetland ecosystem needs for them to fulfil their functions and provide services at the appropriate scale inter alia at the basin level or along a coastal zone.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 7, Sustainable Development Goal 6, Indicator 6.3.1]

2.1 Have the Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands and the additional guidance on tools and methodologies been brought to the attention of national ministries and/or agencies at different levels of territorial organizations (Resolutions VIII.1, VIII.2)? {2.1}
☑ A=Yes

2.1 Additional Information
››› The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), supported by its agencies (Catchment Management Agencies) is responsible for determining and allocating water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands in South Africa. The principles and provisions of South Africa's national water policy and the guidelines for the determination of ecological water requirements (known as the Ecological Reserve in South African terms) are very well aligned with the Ramsar STRP's 2002 Guidelines. Principle 9 of the National Water

Policy (1997) defines the Ecological Reserve as “the quantity, quality and reliability of water required to maintain the ecological functions on which humans depend” and stipulates that this “shall be reserved so that the human use of water does not individually or cumulatively compromise the long-term sustainability of aquatic and associated ecosystems”. South Africa has a long history of developing and applying processes, methods and tools to determine the ecological water requirements (both in terms of water quality and quantity) for wetlands. This includes the development of a methodology to determine the portion of groundwater which is essential for sustaining surface water ecosystems and methodologies for perennial and non-perennial estuaries, rivers and “marshland” types of wetlands. Stakeholder engagements at various stages in the process of determining EWRs for aquatic ecosystems are included in the approach.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Methodology for the determination of Environmental Water Requirements in South Africa

2.2 Have assessments of environmental flow been undertaken in relation to mitigation of impacts on the ecological character of wetlands? {2.2}

☑ A=Yes

2.2 Additional Information

››› The volume, frequency, duration and quality of water that wetlands require to enable them to sustainably provide a wide range of ecosystem services are addressed in Chapter 3, Section 14-17 of South Africa’s National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998). The first Environmental Water Requirements (EWRs) determined by South Africa date back to the early 1990’s, during the method development process. Since then, the EWRs for a large number of aquatic ecosystems (rivers, estuaries, inland wetlands (marshes) and aquifers) have been determined across the country. When selecting and prioritising wetlands for assessments, Ramsar Sites are afforded particular priority in recognition of their international importance. The latest of which includes the Orange River Mouth, for which a study has recently been commissioned by the Orange-Senque River Basin Commission to determine its ecological flow requirements (in addition to those of the Lower Orange River Catchment). Reserve determination studies conducted by the Department of Water and Sanitation for the wetlands in Nylsvlei, Makuleke, Isimangaliso wetland park, Ndumo, Ingula, Natal Drakensberg, Verlorenvlei Nature Reserves and Ramsar sites have recently been completed/are in progress.
The results are based on assessments undertaken by specialists where various options for allocatable amounts (and their implications) are communicated and discussed with stakeholders prior to the final outcomes being published in the South African government gazette, making them legally enforceable. Whist well established for rivers and estuaries, this is still a growing body of work for certain inland wetland types. Recent research related to the study of hydropedology have contributed new ways of understanding the movement of water through soil profiles, an aspect of the hydrological cycle on which many hillslope wetlands rely. Whilst South Africa has assessed the ecological water requirements for many water resources and are continuing to do so for those who still require assessments, there are a number of challenges that persist in ensuring that the responses of the ecosystems are adequately monitored to assess whether the flow requirements have been optimal, and to facilitate early intervention in case it wasn’t.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Hydropedological guidelines for wetland management

2.3 Have the designation or management of Wetlands of International Importance (“Ramsar Sites”) improved the sustainable use of water (e.g. reduced drainage, reduced use of pesticides, controlled pollution etc.) in your country?

☑ C=Partially

2.3 Additional Information

››› Noting that for small islands which are Ramsar sites, this is not necessarily applicable (for example for Geyser and Dyer Islands); for inland and coastal sites the designation of wetlands as Ramsar sites has improved the sustainable use of water in their catchments in many, but not all cases. In many cases designation has elevated the importance of these sites during the development and implementation of water and land use plans and strategies, this includes the prioritisation of Ramsar Sites for studies to determine environmental flow requirements and for rehabilitation initiatives. Designation has also helped to raise awareness on the importance of these sites and the benefits of their resources with surrounding land users. Recent experiences have shown that designation status can significantly improve the sustainable use of water upstream of Ramsar Sites in cases where this status has led to the formation of transdisciplinary cross sectoral, cross governmental mechanisms to ensure co-ordinated and aligned planning, implementation, monitoring and accountability at a catchment scale

2.4 Have the Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining ecological functions of wetlands (Resolutions VIII.1 and XII.12) been used/applied in decision-making processes? {2.3}

☑ A=Yes

2.4 Additional Information

››› The principles provided in the Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining ecological functions of wetlands have been incorporated into national water legislation, policies and strategies. The implementation of Integrated Water Resource Management, applying an ecosystem-based approach, is included in water resource planning activities on a national, provincial and local government level. At a water resource systems level water resource plans (known as reconciliation strategies) aim to reconcile future water demands with supply and take account of ecological water requirements when determining future interventions. Similarly, water quality management plans take account of the water quality requirements of ecosystems when determining source- and resource-based water quality interventions. Where towns are highly dependent on groundwater, Aquifer Management Plans are developed which take account of the groundwater contributions to wetlands. These plans are of particular importance in informing decisions concerning groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, and land to sea management, including decisions concerning future water allocations. In addition, national wetland programs such as Working for -Wetlands, -Coast and -Water use the environmental flows as a target to work towards when implementing mitigation and rehabilitation measures

2.5 Have projects that promote and demonstrate good practice in water allocation and management for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands been developed {2.4}

☑ A=Yes

2.5 Additional Information

››› South Africa has made significant strides in developing and implementing projects that promote and demonstrate good practice in water allocation and management for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands.

Through South Africa’s Department of Water and Sanitation, approximately six studies have been undertaken since COP14, to determine the ecological water requirements (the Reserve) for wetlands in large catchment areas. These studies generally involve multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, research institutions, and environmental consultancies, focusing on integrating wetland conservation into water resource management strategies.

Another key project implemented by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to promote and facilitate good practice is the Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security (EI4WS) Initiative. This is a national project, running from 2021-2025, which aims to transform the way people think about, value and invest in water and ecosystems, and aims to lead to increased investment in the management of ecological infrastructure in the future.

Other examples include:

• Integrated Water Resources Decision Support System (INWARDs): Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) has been accepted internationally as a paradigm for integrative and sustainable management of water resources. One constraint however is the lack of integrative decision-support systems (DSS) for good governance. In response, AWARD has developed an Integrated Water Resources Decision Support System (INWARDs) for the Olifants River Catchment which is being used to train various stakeholders.

• Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) Studies: This is a growing field of work globally, in which South Africa is an acknowledged leader. Since 2018, Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) has collaborated with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in developing ecosystem accounts and related thematic accounts in line with SEEA Ecosystem Accounting (adopted by the UN in March 2021). The Sub-national Water Resource Accounts, 2015 to 2021 brings together elements of water accounts and ecosystem accounts, acknowledging connections between the landscapes and ecosystems upon which precipitation occurs and the resulting flows and stores of water that are important for supply to and use by the economy. In essence, this acknowledges the connections between built water infrastructure and ecological infrastructure, as indicated in South Africa’s National Infrastructure Plan 2050 (released in March 2022).

• The Living Catchments Project is a partnership project between SANBI and the Water Research Commission (WRC). Through funding from the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) this project produced the Good Practice Guide for Policy Advice Practitioners working towards water security at the nexus of built and ecological infrastructure

• In 2022, the South African Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) appointed the Water Research Commission (WRC) to develop the National Siltation Management Strategy for Large Dams in South Africa, more commonly known as the Natsilt Programme. The programme represents a collaborative, transdisciplinary approach to tackle the wide spectrum of dam sedimentation and storage capacity challenges in South Africa. This includes the development of a Digital Siltation Dashboard for major dams in South Africa and proposing appropriate living lab locations for implementation and monitoring of Ecological Infrastructure interventions to improve siltation management

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

DWS Environmental Water Requirements Website - Repository for studies to Determine Environmental Water Requirements in South Africa
National Dam Siltation Management (NatSilt) Programme

2.6 Does the country use constructed wetlands/ponds as wastewater treatment technology? {2.8}
☑ A=Yes

2.6 Additional Information
››› South Africa has 303 wastewater systems out of 850 using either ponds or lagoons as treatment technologies. Several examples also exist where wetlands have been constructed that use vertical flow (VF) and horizontal flow (HF) methods. This is an emerging practice in South Africa, typically designed for small community (sewage), stormwater or industrial applications.

Target 3

Public and private sectors have increased their efforts to apply guidelines and good practices for the wise use of water and wetlands.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 7, 10, 15, 16 and 18]

3.1 Additional Information

Please specify if it was applied for policy formulation or in implementation of good practice.
››› The private sector mostly engages on wetland related issues through applications for the authorisation of developments that affect wetlands in terms existing national legislation (Environmental Impact Assessments and Water Use License Applications). As part of this process, to support the private sector in applying the wise use principle, various guidelines and tools have been developed (https://sawetlandsociety.org/wetland-resources). In recent years this includes the publication of:
• A buffer zone guideline for wetlands, rivers and estuaries (McFarlane and Bredin, 2017),
• Wetland and riparian area identification and delineation guideline (DWS, 2018),
• Hydropedological assessment guidelines (Van Tol et al., 2023)
• National biodiversity offset guidelines (DFFE, 2023).
A number of best practice wetland management guidelines aimed at specific sectors have also been developed, including dairy farms (Dabrowski and Bredin, 2023), sugarcane (Scotcher et al. 2019) and mining (DFFE, 2013). Various guidelines have also been developed on specific management practices such as burning and grazing, clearing of invasive alien species and rehabilitation of wetlands (including guidelines on setting realistic restoration goals (SANBI,2023) and the management and rehabilitation of peatlands and a protocol on how to handle peat fires (le Roux et al, 2023). A number of additional guidelines are currently under development in South Africa, including a landowner's guide to wetland management which is being developed by BirdLife South Africa. The private sector, through the tourism sector, also implement best practices as concessionaires in South Africa's protected areas. To aid in this, the South African National Parks (SANParks) management agency, who host the majority of protected areas in the country, has developed a concession manual to guide private sectors on the use of water resources and management of wetlands
South Africa also has a number of platforms where business is engaged in water related issues and are able to share information on best practices, this includes the Business and Biodiversity Network (NBBN), hosted by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). Through the NBBN, various tools to mainstream biodiversity into business have been developed. The EWT also publishes a periodic review of biodiversity performance of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Various other platforms exist in South Africa where businesses can become involved to participate in joint catchment initiatives and planning, this includes the various Catchment Management Forums (CMFs) which have been established through the Department of Water and Sanitation and its Catchment Management Agencies.
Lastly a number of businesses engage in best practices and are incentivised to do so through various certification schemes. This includes for example the Forest Stewardship Council and the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative (BWI). Voluntary nature commitments by global companies have also been made through the International Council of Mining and Metals (ICMM). The commitments to a nature positive future were approved by ICMM's Council and apply from 1 January 2024.
References:
Dabrowski, J. and Bredin, I. 2023. Best practice guidelines for improved wetland and river management on dairy farms in South Africa. The implementation of sector-specific buffer zones and wetland enhancement. Milk SA.
Department of Environmental Affairs, Department of Mineral Resources, Chamber of Mines, South African Mining and Biodiversity Forum, and South African National Biodiversity Institute. DEA et al. 2013. Mining and Biodiversity Guideline: Mainstreaming biodiversity into the mining sector. Pretoria
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). 2023. The National Biodiversity Offset Guideline. Government Gazette 48841, No. 3569, published ion 23 June 2023. South African Government Printers, Pretoria, South Africa.
le Roux, J., Gangathele, A., Rebelo, A., Gibson, L., Stephenson, R., Kotze, D & Grundling, A. 2023. Development of management and rehabilitation protocols for peatlands in South Africa: Case studies of peat fires. Water

Research Commission project number 2019/2020-00098.
Macfarlane, D.M. and Bredin, I.P. (2017). Part 1: technical manual. Buffer zone guidelines for wetlands, rivers and estuaries.
Scotcher et al. 2019. Sustainable Sugarcane Farm Management System (SUSFarms). South African Sugercane Institute.
Van Tol, J., Job, N., Bouwer, D., Murugan, S., & le Roux P. 2023. Hydropedological assessment guidelines: Theory and application in a South African wetland management context. Report to the Water Research Commission WRC Report No. TT 925/23.

3.2 Has the private sector undertaken any activities or actions for the conservation, wise use, and management of (a) Ramsar Sites or (b) wetlands in general? {3.2}

Please select only one per square.

a) Ramsar Sites	☐ Y=Not relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☑ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☐ A=Yes
b) Wetlands in general	☐ Y=Not relevant ☐ X=Unknown ☐ D=Planned ☑ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☐ A=Yes

3.2 Additional information

››› Although a comprehensive study on private sector contributions towards wetlands and Ramsar Site management has not been undertaken, there are several known examples. The private sector has for example contributed funds towards wetland research and have also funded wetland conservation associations (commonly known as “Friends of” a wetland, nature reserve or open area) and have lobbied for the wise use of wetlands in their communities. An example of this is the Klipriviersberg Sustainability Association (KLIPSA), a multi-stakeholder collaboration aimed at coordinating a series of projects to improve water quality and security for Klip River residents and businesses. Several Ramsar Sites are also supported by “Friend of” associations, this includes for example the Friends of Nylsvley, Friends of Verloren Valei and Friends of Verlorenvlei associations. A "Friends of Barberspan" is also in the process of being established.
Volunteers from the community and private sector participate in and assist with funding of monitoring programs (for example some of the Langebaan Ramsar Site monitoring is funded by the private sector).
Various businesses have also funded numerous activities as part of international environmental celebrations such as World Wetlands Day and have contributed to activities at specific sites to raise awareness, including funding of signage and awareness materials. The private sector has also contributed towards the hosting of the National Wetland Indaba (South Africa’s National Annual Conference on Wetlands) and play a large role in the day-to day management of wetlands through Water and Biodiversity Stewardship Programmes.
Among other private sector led initiatives, the National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent business movement of nearly 100 South African and multi-national member companies, which has a specific focus area on the environment and facilitate the implementation of collaborative projects and practical solutions in areas related to water, climate change, energy, waste, biodiversity and the green economy. Other examples of private sector contributions include the activities of the Strategic Water Partnership Network (SWPN), which consists of members from the public and private sectors together with civil society who work in partnership to find solutions for South Africa’s water challenges. The private sector have also been encouraged to contribute to various wetland related projects through the Biodiversity Sector Investment Portal.
Further investments by the Private Sector are typically as per the legislative requirements where rehabilitation of wetlands by the private sector has taken place. It also includes the monitoring of the wetlands as per specified monitoring indicators.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

South African Biodiversity Sector Investment Portal

3.3 Have actions been taken to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands? {3.3}

☑ A=Yes

3.3 Additional information

Please specify the types of incentive measures (loans, tax breaks, or others).
››› South Africa’s biodiversity stewardship model provides a unique opportunity for the private sector to contribute towards the wise use of wetlands. Biodiversity stewardship is an approach to entering into

agreements with private and communal landowners to protect and manage land in biodiversity priority areas, led by conservation authorities in South Africa. It recognises landowners as the custodians of biodiversity on their land. Biodiversity stewardship is based on voluntary commitments from landowners, with a range of different types of Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements available to support conservation and sustainable resource use, and landowners are supported by government at different levels depending on the level of protection granted to the biodiversity priority area concerned.
The provincial biodiversity stewardship programmes aim to provide incentives to participating landowners, in relation to the level of commitment from the landowner. Incentives include technical advice and support on biodiversity management, such as invasive alien control and burning of firebreaks; game donations of founder populations by conservation authorities to the landowners; and recognition and marketing opportunities. At a national level, fiscal incentives have been created for landowners. Those portions of Nature Reserves that are used solely for conservation are excluded from being charged property rates. Income tax deductions for management expenses are available for Nature Reserves, Protected Environments and Biodiversity Management Agreements. In addition, an income tax deduction based on the value of the property is afforded to landowners with Nature Reserves declared for at least 99 years.
Measures have also been taken to create awareness on the benefits of wetlands, as an incentive for the private sector to improve their protection and restoration efforts. Developers, including high impact developers such as forestry, mining, urban developers and agriculture are encouraged to implement best practice, since best practices could be advantageous to improved resilience to the effects of climate change, prevent increased costs in water purification, reduce flooding and erosion of soils etc.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

South Africa's Biodiversity Stewardship Guideline

3.4 Have actions been taken to remove perverse incentive measures which lead to degradation or loss of wetlands? {3.4}
☑ Z=Not Applicable

3.4 Additional Information

Please specify the actions that have been taken to remove perverse incentive measures (e.g. removal of subsidies for agricultural expansion) and provide the source links or upload the source documents here.
››› All activities that have a negative impact on the environment are subject to environmental authorisation in South Africa and therefore incentive is not a justification for development without authorisation

Target 4

Invasive alien species and pathways of introduction and expansion are identified and prioritized, priority invasive alien species are controlled or eradicated, and management responses are prepared and implemented to prevent their introduction and establishment.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 6]

4.1 Does your country have a national inventory of invasive alien species that currently or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands? {4.1}
☑ A=Yes

4.1 Additional information
››› The Alien and Invasive Species Regulations of 2014 (as amended in 2020) have specifically listed several species for control or eradication (Wilson, 2024), this includes Plants (383), mammals (43), birds (14), reptiles (30), amphibians (7), fresh-water fish (30), terrestrial invertebrates (24), fresh-water invertebrates (12), marine invertebrates (17) and microbial species (7).
In addition, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in March 2023 released a national map (the NAIPs or National Alien Invasive Plant survey) of the 14 most widespread and abundant, terrestrial invasive alien plant taxa (approx. 40 species) in South Africa. This was followed by a publication in March 2024, by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) on the status of biological invasions and their management in South Africa (SANBI and CIB, 2023). Appendix 2 of this report includes a species list. Whilst an inventory is therefore available it is not specifically tailored to taxa that currently or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands (or on the trends that have been observed) and this would require additional interpretation based on fields present in the database.
References:
SANBI and CIB. 2023. The status of biological invasions and their management in South Africa in 2022. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Kirstenbosch and DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch. pp. 122. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8217182.
SANBI and CIB. 2023. The status of biological invasions and their management in South Africa in 2022. Appendix 2. The species list. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Kirstenbosch and DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8217197
SANBI and CIB. 2023. The status of biological invasions and their management in South Africa in 2022.

Appendix 3. Metadata for the species list. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Kirstenbosch and DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8217211
Wilson, J. R. 2024. A list of taxa currently and historically regulated under South Africa's National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, Alien & Invasive Species Regulations. v1.0(20240331) http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10809766

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

The status of biological invasions in South Africa

4.2 Has your country adopted any national policies, strategies, or guidelines on invasive species control and management that are relevant for wetlands? {4.2}

☑ A=Yes

4.2 Additional information

››› In South Africa Invasive species prevention, control and eradication is governed by the following legislation 1) The National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1988) (NEMA), 2) National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (Act 10 of 2004) (NEM:BA) and the regulations under NEM:BA on Alien and Invasive Species 3) Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (Act No. 43 of 1983) (CARA) and 4) the Agricultural Pesticides Act (Act 23 of 1947).
NEMBA Chapter 5 specifically deals with Alien Invasive Species – “Species and organisms posing potential threats to biodiversity”, this includes species that are relevant for wetlands. Chapter 5 is divided into four parts, of which Part 1 includes Alien Species and Part 2 Invasive Species. The NEMBA Alien and Invasive Species (AIS) Regulations were passed into law in 2014 and updated in 2020. South Africa has also published a Highly hazardous pesticides policy and decision support tool/ database which provides information pertaining to impacts on wetlands, biota and food web within the wetlands and is in the process of developing a National Invasive Species Strategy & Action Plan (NISSAP).
In addition, the management actions of invasive species are supported by awareness interventions which are deployed to raise public awareness on the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet, and also to highlight the importance of effective management of invasive species infesting our wetlands. Such awareness activities gather much needed feedback from the stakeholders on what can be done and provide platform for the exchange of information on the challenges of biological invasions in our water resources.
Various guidelines have also been published regarding approaches and principles for invasive alien species control and eradication. This includes for example the guideline managing invasive alien plants: A concise handbook for land users in the Cape Floral Region by Matrens et al. (2021) and the 2013 Guideline by eThekwini Municipality on Alien Plant Control, with supporting handbooks for specific species such as Water Hyacinth (Best Practice, Removal Methods, Training & Equipment). The Rhodes University Centre for Biological Control also hosts a Weeds Biological Control Short Course which familiarizes those new to science with the theory that underpins host specificity and thus the safety of biological control.
References:
Terblanche, K., Diederichs M.N, Douwes, E & Terblanche, C., Petterson, T., Boulle, J., Clark, K and Lotter, W. 2013 . General Invasive Alien Plant Control: Insight into best practice, removal methods, training & equipment. 10.13140/RG.2.1.2678.2246.
Martens, C., Deacon, G., Ferreira, D., Auret, W., Dorse, C., Stuart, H., Impson, F., Barnes, G. and C. Molteno. 2021. A practical guide to managing invasive alien plants: A concise handbook for land users in the Cape Floral Region. WWF South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa.

4.3. Has your country successfully controlled through management actions invasive species of high risk to wetland ecosystems? {4.3}

☑ F=Fewer than #

››› 3

4.3 Additional Information

››› Whilst there are a few examples of invasive species that have been successfully controlled, a number of species are still invading wetlands, some more widely than others, and work is ongoing to address these. The Working for Water Programme (WfWater) established in 1995 is South Africa’s largest funder of invasive species control measures. Its original purpose was to implement invasive plant control operations to reduce their impacts on water resources, and to create much-needed employment amongst the rural poor. This programme has been subsequently renamed to a suite of programmes which include the Working for Wetlands programme which also provide considerable support to management of Ramsar sites where rehabilitation or control of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) is problematic. In addition, South Africa is in the process of adopting a national strategy for managing biological invasions as the next step to ensure that the work of all role-players is integrated and that all projects are working towards national objectives, this includes control and management actions in wetlands ecosystems.
A typical example on the successful control and management of invasive species is the one on the domestic cat that has been successfully eradicated from the Prince Edwards Islands (PEI). In the coming years South Africa will be embarking on a process of eradicating the house mouse on the same islands. Recent studies

have shown that the house mouse has become an increasing threat to the bird populations on the island, largely due to changing (warmer) weather patterns. Because of the risk of alien introductions, strict biosecurity regulations govern activities at the PEIs. These are particularly aimed at reducing the rates of introduction of new alien species. South Africa also has a well-established biocontrol programme. Classical biological control of invasive aquatic plant species has been remarkably successful: the following have been brought under complete biological control: Azolla cristata, Azolla filiculoides, Myriophyllum aquaticum, Pistia stratiotes, Salvinia molesta; the following has been brough under substantial control: Eichhornia crassipes (Zengeya and Wilson, 2023). Although biological control is in place, these species do still have large occurrences and widespread effects in South Africa.
Various other taxa have been considered for biocontrol, or there are some mechanical and chemical control programmes under way (Hill et al. 2020). In some cases, chemical control measures have also been successful for example, Spartina alterniflora Loisel is the only known halophyte that is invasive in intertidal salt marsh habitats in South Africa and it poses a considerable threat to the biodiversity of nearby estuaries. First detected in 2004, regular chemical treatment during the growing period from 2013 and adjustments to the recommended herbicide mix has almost completely removed the plant from the Great Brak Estuary (Ridden, van Wyk and Adams, 2016). South Africa has found that often an integrated approach involving the combined use of a range of methods is usually necessary to control invasive alien plants effectively
References:
Zengeya, T.A. & Wilson, J.R. (eds). 2023. The status of biological invasions and their management in South Africa in 2022. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Kirstenbosch and DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology, Stellenbosch. pp. 122. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8217182.
Ridden, T., van Wyk, E. and Adams, J. 2016. The rise and fall of an invasive estuarine grass. South African Journal of Botany, Vol 107, November 2016, Pages 74-79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sajb.2016.07.008
Hill, M.P., Coetzee, J.A., Martin, G.D., Smith, R., Strange, E.F. (2020). Invasive Alien Aquatic Plants in South African Freshwater Ecosystems. In: van Wilgen, B., Measey, J., Richardson, D., Wilson, J., Zengeya, T. (eds) Biological Invasions in South Africa. Invading Nature - Springer Series in Invasion Ecology, vol 14. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32394-3_4

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Rhodes University: Centre for Biological Control
Overview of the Working for Water Programme

4.4 Has the effectiveness of wetland invasive alien species control programmes been assessed?{4.5}
☑ C=Partially

4.4 Additional Information
››› The first national status report on biological invasions and their management in South Africa was published in 2018 based on data up to the end of 2017 and subsequent updates have been published based on data up to the end of 2020 and 2023. The status report created an excellent foundation on which to build a comprehensive monitoring and reporting programme, which can guide research and implementation efforts. In addition, many studies have assessed the impacts of individual IAS, particularly plants (Henderson & Wilson, 2017), but very few have spatially assessed the combined impacts of co-occurring IAS into site specific spatial scales (Le Maitre et al., 2016).

Section 3 - Goal 2. Effectively conserving and managing the Ramsar Site network

In responding to each of these questions, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide links, references/ upload documents where applicable and relevant.
[Reference to Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, 13, 14, 15]

Target 5
The ecological character of Ramsar Sites is maintained or restored through effective planning and integrated management
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 1, 3 and 5]

5.1 Have a national strategy and priorities been established for the further designation of Ramsar Sites, using the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List? {5.1}
☑ D=Planned

5.1 Additional information
››› South Africa does not currently have a pre-defined list of potential new Ramsar Sites and is in the process of initiating a project to develop a Ramsar Site Designation Strategy (planned for 2027), in line with the 2022 Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands.
In support of this initiative, as part of continued improvements to the National Wetland Map, SANBI is focused

on strengthening the broad foundational base from which to systematically and defensibly identify future Ramsar sites. This includes the development of a robust wetland ecosystem classification system representative of on-the-ground wetland ecology and diversity across South Africa and relatable both to the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology as well as to the Red List of Ecosystems (RLE) standard assessment which emphasizes, amongst other components, the development of a conceptual model to understand key ecosystem drivers and processes and key threats. The national classification system, and linkages with the IUCN classification systems is overseen by the National Wetland Ecosystem Classification Committee and National Ecosystem Classification Committees convened by SANBI. In addition, South Africa currently has a map of National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas developed in 2011 (Nel et al.), which is proposed for an update. Each Province across South Africa has a set of identified Critical Biodiversity Areas, including estuaries, rivers and inland wetlands. These products would serve to inform the proposed Ramsar Site Designation Strategy. Until such time that the strategy is developed, potential Ramsar sites are identified on an ad hoc basis through consultations with national and provincial government departments and conservation agencies as well as with other stakeholders, following which various assessments and continued consultations are implemented aimed at evaluating the available data and completing the necessary process for site designation.

5.2 How many Ramsar Sites have a management plan? {5.3}
☑ E=# Sites

››› 27

5.3 How many of the Ramsar Sites are actively implementing their management plan? {5.4}
☑ E=# Sites

››› 27

5.4 How many Ramsar Sites are implementing management actions outside of formal management plans? {5.5}
☑ E=# Sites

››› 3

5.2 – 5.4 Additional information
››› The majority (90%) of South Africa's Ramsar sites have management plans in place and they are effectively implemented. For a number of these sites the plans are currently being updated. Actions range from enforcement related activities to signage and fence maintenance, rehabilitation, wildlife and disease management, conducting monitoring and environmental education, and strengthening governance and community engagements. Most of South Africa’s Ramsar sites have management actions that have been incorporated into a larger Protected Areas Management Plan (PAMP). In some cases, management plans are far outdated and need to be updated. For the sites where managements plans have not yet been established, processes are currently underway to develop these plans, in parallel to this various conservation, restoration and monitoring measures are implemented at these sites

5.5 Have all Ramsar Sites been assessed regarding the effectiveness of their management (through formal management plans where they exist or otherwise through existing actions for appropriate wetland management)? {5.6}

If “yes”, please indicate the number of Ramsar Sites
If “partially”, please indicate the number of Ramsar Sites
If “planned”, please indicate the number of Ramsar Sites
☑ A=Yes

››› 28

5.5 Additional information

Please provide the source links or upload the source documents here indicating the assessment tool used (e.g. Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), Resolution XII.15), and the source of the information.
››› South Africa has developed the Ramsar Monitoring Management Effectiveness Tracking Tools for Ramsar sites in line with Resolution XII.15 and incorporated it into the South African Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT-SA). The majority of sites are assessed using this tool. In a few cases assessments have not been undertaken for some time and are due to be completed. Where the METT is not used, for example for Ramsar Sites which are not within protected areas, other mechanisms to ensure M&E is undertaken are implemented, for example through annual site specific stakeholder engagements to discuss and compile progress reports. A number of sites, particularly a number of estuarine Ramsar Sites also include additional M&E mechanisms to monitor operational progress on a quarterly basis. Regular feedback on management progress is also provided at the South African National Ramsar Site Committee, which meets twice a year. In addition, Strategic Adaptive Management (SAM) has emerged as the SANParks approach of

choice to deal with the complexity and multi-stakeholder dynamics that characterise park management decisions. SAM is designed to be strategic to facilitate action with foresight and purpose, and adaptive to facilitate learning whilst doing, and participatory to facilitate engagement and co-learning with stakeholders. Recent conversations have highlighted a need for management effectiveness monitoring and reporting to include a component on the ecological responses of the site, to measure the impact of management actions on the site's ecology, and not just to monitor the progress with management action.

5.6 How many Ramsar Sites have a cross-sectoral management committee? {5.7}
☑ E=# Sites

››› 11

5.6 Additional information
››› Many of South Africa's Ramsar Sites have cross-sectoral management committees that have been established to facilitate the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. All Ramsar sites that are estuaries or parts thereof have a cross-sectoral management body which comprises all stakeholders involved in their management (including representatives from the community, government agencies, industry and NGOs). These include the Orange River Mouth, De Hoop Vlei, De Mond, Verlorenvlei, Berg Estuary, Kosi Bay, Lake Sibaya, St. Lucia System and Turtle Beaches/ Coral Reefs of Tongaland, and Langebaan. Many of the inland Ramsar Sites also have cross-sectoral committees, for example, the Makuleke Wetlands has a joint management board which comprises representatives from the Makuleke Communal Property Association (CPA), and the South Africa National Parks. The Blesbokspruit has a management forum consisting of representatives from government and non-government organisations.
There is scope to strengthen cross-sectoral management in future for those sites which have yet to establish collaboration platforms.

5.7 For how many Ramsar Sites has an ecological character description been prepared (see Resolution X.15)?
☑ E=# Sites

››› 30

5.7 Additional information

For example give the name and official number of the Site or Sites.
››› Although it varies in detail from site to site, ecological character descriptions have been prepared for each Ramsar Site as part of their RISs and RIS updates.

5.8 Resolution VI.13 urges Parties to give priority to providing the Secretariat with maps and completed Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for all Sites designated for the Ramsar List, and to revise this data at least every six years. If your country has not updated its RIS as required, describe the challenges in updating RIS, particularly descriptions of ecological character.
››› South Africa is currently in the process of updating a large number of the RISs for its Ramsar Sites. Of the 24 Ramsar Sites which require updates, at the time of developing this report, one updated RIS has been completed (Makuleke Ramsar Site) whilst others are in various stages of completion.
Common challenges identified to date include the need to ensure continuous capacitation to cater for new Ramsar Site Managers on the process to complete the RISs. Updates furthermore require data to be gathered and collected through surveys and monitoring, which requires adequate financial resources and time. In some cases research gaps have been identified, which includes fundamental research topics, for which funding is not always available as funders tend to lean towards funding applied research topics. Updating the RIS furthermore requires adequate time and financial resources to ensure that various experts and expertise are gathered, typically through consultative exercises, to gather inputs from a wide range of experts. Some system improvements could also be made, and these have been submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat through the survey conducted in 2023

Target 7
Sites that are at risk of change of ecological character have threats addressed {2.6.}.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 3, 4 and 10]

7.1 Additional information

If "Yes", please provide the source links or upload the source documents here describing the mechanisms established
››› Yes, this is undertaken through feedback provided on the state of Ramsar Sites as part of reporting at the National Ramsar Site Committee, which meets twice a year, and through ad hoc notifications to the Ramsar National Focal Point. Changes in ecological condition are also included in the reporting process as part of the updates to the Ramsar Site Information Sheets as and when such updates are required. South Africa has identified a need for a more formal Standard Operating Procedure which would guide Ramsar Site Management Authorities on when, how and what to report in terms monitoring against thresholds of potential

concern and reporting on both acute and chronic changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites

7.2 Have all cases of negative human-induced change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat, pursuant to Article 3.2? {7.2}
☑ A=Yes

Section 3 - Goal 3. Wisely Using All Wetlands

In responding to each of these questions, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide links, references/ upload documents where applicable and relevant.
[Reference to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15]

Target 8
National wetland inventories have been either initiated, completed or updated and disseminated and used for promoting the conservation and effective management of all wetlands
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 21]

8.1 Does your country have a National Wetland Inventory (NWI)? {8.1}
☑ A=Yes

8.1 Additional information

For example, if “in progress” or “planned”, by when will it be completed?
››› The first National Wetland Map for South Africa was developed by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in 2006 to provide stakeholders with information on the distribution and type of wetlands. Since then it has undergone several iterations, and the accuracy of the inventory has improved with each iteration. The National Wetland Map provides information on the location, spatial extent, condition and type of wetlands. Information is available on the National Wetland Map webpage and associated publications and information material.
The National Wetland Map team, together with multiple partners, draw on the national wetland map dataset to produce a national wetland status and trends report on an approximately five-year cycle, as part of South Africa’s National Biodiversity Assessment (NBA). The next NBA is due to be published in 2025. Information is available on the National Biodiversity Assessment webpage and associated publications and information material.
South Africa similarly regularly maintains a national map of estuaries and estuarine habitat, and a coastal ecosystem map, which includes shallow marine habitats. These maps are led by Nelson Mandela University, the Council for Science and Industrial Research and the South African National Biodiversity Institute, together with partners, and the status of these ecosystems is regularly published as part of South Africa’s NBA updates and made available on the National Biodiversity Assessment webpage.
A 1:500 000 scale river network developed by the Department of Water and Sanitation, was most recently updated by the Council for Science and Industrial Research for use in the 2018 version of the NBA, and an updated version is in preparation by the South African National Biodiversity Institute and partners. A more detailed river network is available for the country at 1:50 000 scale. This data is jointly curated by the Departments of Water and Sanitation, and Rural Development and Land Reform. Information is available on the webpages of these entities.
The National Wetland Map as well as other ecosystem datasets are absorbed into country-wide Biodiversity Sector plans, prepared per Province, which apply systematic biodiversity planning to identify “critical biodiversity areas” and “ecological support areas” for which restricted land use guidelines apply. These spatial products, together with the National Wetland Map, are available a stand alone products and are also incorporated into a Biodiversity Screening Tool, which alerts practitioners country-wide to areas in the landscape which are sensitive to impacts from landuse change and require further investigation or the undertaking of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

South Africa's National Wetland Monitoring Programme
South Africa's National Biodiversity Assessment
Guideline for mapping wetlands in South Africa
South Africa: Freshwater Biodiversity Programme

8.2 If your country has an NWI, has it been updated in the last decade [2014-2024]? {8.2}
☑ A=Yes

8.2 Additional information
››› The most recent update of the National Wetland Map (version 6) was completed in March 2024 (SANBI 2024). An updated version of the map is expected, as part of the preparation of the 2025 National Biodiversity Assessment for South Africa.

The National River Network has not recently been updated at national level, however, two recent local scale projects have recognised the need for an update. Within the Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security project led by the South African National Biodiversity Institute together with partners, stream order, flow direction and spatial location was updated, while Gauteng Province prepared a major province-wide update of stream order, flow direction and anthropogenic alterations along the stream network. This dataset was formally endorsed by the National Spatial Data Infrastructure oversight committee for dissemination and inclusion into the national river network.
Below are listed a set of references which describe the most recent updates of the estuarine ecosystem map, coastal integrated ecosystem map and marine ecosystem map.
Van Niekerk L, Adams JB, Lamberth SJ, Mackay F, Taljaard S, Turpie JK, Weerts S, Raimondo DC. 2019 (eds). South African National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: Technical Report. Volume 3: Estuarine Realm. CSIR report number CSIR/SPLA/EM/EXP/2019/0062/A. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. Report Number: SANBI/NAT/NBA2018/2019/Vol3/A. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6373
Harris LR, Sink KJ, Skowno AL, Van Niekerk L (eds). 2019. South African National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: Technical Report. Volume 5: Coast. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6374
Sink KJ, Van der Bank MG, Majiedt PA, Harris LR, Atkinson LJ, Kirkman SP, Karenyi N (eds). 2019. South African National Biodiversity Assessment 2018 Technical Report Volume 4: Marine Realm. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. South Africa. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6372
Van Deventer H, Smith-Adao L, Collins NB, Grenfell M, Grundling A, Grundling PL, Impson D, Job N, Lötter M, Ollis D, Petersen C, Scherman P, Sieben E, Snaddon K, Tererai F, Van der Colff D. 2019. South African National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: Technical Report. Volume 2: Inland Aquatic (Freshwater) Realm. CSIR report number CSIR/NRE/ECOS/IR/2019/0004/A. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6230

8.3 How often is the NWI updated?
☑ A=Regular intervals ≤ 6 years

8.3 Additional information
››› The next update of the National Wetland Map is underway. This map, along with updated ecosystem maps for estuaries, rivers, coast and shallow marine habitats will be available to the public during 2025 in association with South Africa’s next iteration of the National Biodiversity Assessment.

8.4 Is wetland inventory data and information publicly available? {8.4}
☑ A=Yes

8.4 Additional information

For example if “partially” or “planned” by when will the data/information be made public?
››› The National Wetland Map is freely available to all to view and download through the South African National Biodiversity Institute’s. Estuaries, rivers, shallow marine datasets are similarly freely available to all to view and download through the South African National Biodiversity Institute’s National Biodiversity Assessment webpage and further information is available through Nelson Mandela University’s coastal ecosystems webpage and the South African Environmental Observation Network’s estuary portal. Data on rivers is also available via the Department of Water and Sanitation’s website

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

South Africa: Rivers (Department of Water and Sanitation)

South African Environmental Observation Network’s estuary portal

South African National Biodiversity Institute-Biodiversity Data repository

8.5 Please explain how the NWI data/information is maintained if at all? {8.3}
››› Data on inland wetlands is maintained by the South Africa Government (delegated to the South African National Biodiversity Institute), with support from Provincial and National Parks (SANParks) entities where capacity exists. Any organisation or individual is able to contribute data, and the National Wetland Map team has set in place structures and processes to facilitate engagement for uptake and also to solicit review. The wetland map is currently expanding every year as significant data is generated internally by the National Wetland Map team. The National Wetland Map is officially considered to be a nationally important dataset and the responsibility to develop mapping standards, receive and curate inputs, maintain, distribute, and continuously update this information is delegated to the South African National Biodiversity Institute
Spatial data on estuarine and marine habitats is maintained and continuously updated by researchers from Nelson Mandela University, the Council for Science and Industrial Research, the South African National Biodiversity Institute and numerous additional partners. Synthesis information on the extent, type and status of these ecosystems is published through the National Biodiversity Assessment, approximately every five years.
The status of the national rivers network has been mentioned in 8.1 and 8.2 above

8.6 Based on the information in NWI, if available, please provide the total area in square kilometres (km2) for the extent of wetlands (according to the Convention on Wetland's definition) for the year of available data and provide the relevant disaggregated information in the box below. This information will also be used to report on SDG 6, Target 6.6, Indicator 6.6.1, for which the Convention is a co-custodian. {8.6}
☑ E=# km2

››› 27281

8.6 According to the Convention's definition and classification of wetlands, the disaggregated information on wetland extent is as follows

Note: The minimum information that should be provided is the total area of wetlands for each of the three major categories; "marine/coastal", "inland" and "human-made".
If the data on inventories are partial or not complete, use the available information to fill in the form, specifying if it is partial or not complete.
Guidance on information on national wetland extent can be consulted at: https://www.ramsar.org/document/guidance-on-information-on-national-wetland-extent.
››› *Note that: Permanent shallow marine waters is included into the calculation of rocky and sandy shores, which stretch from dune base to surf zone; Marine subtidal aquatic beds calculation represents only a calculation of kelp beds; Rocky Shores includes a category referred to in South Africa as "Mixed Shores" (a mixed of sand, rock, pebble and gravel) (Harris et al. 2018 ; Sink et al. 2019)
Estuarine waters includes coastal brackish lagoons into the one calculation (Nelson Mandela University estuarine functional zone shapefile 2019); Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats includes only sand and mudflats into the calculation (Nelson Mandela University database, which is under continuous review and update); Intertidal marshes calculation is drawn from Raw et al. 2021; Intertidal forested presents a calculation of the extent of mangroves (Riddin et al. 2024).
Permanent rivers/streams and Seasonal/intermittent rivers/streams are not included into the total of inland wetlands, as they are calculated in km not km2; the four classes Permanent freshwater marshes (inorganic), Seasonal freshwater marshes (inorganic), Permanent Saline, brackish or alkaline marshes, and Seasonal Saline, brackish or alkaline marshes were not yet discriminated at the time and are calculated together; several inland waters classes were not assessed as they are currently insufficiently documented or do not occur within South Africa. Peatland calculations were based on Grundling et al. 2021 and these typically occur as a mosaic within larger wetlands and thus are not counted in the Inland wetland total. Only fens are represented as no bogs are yet recorded in South Africa.
Only large water reservoirs and farm dams are included in the Human-made wetlands calculation, noting that not all farm dams have yet been mapped across the country
Updated Figures may be applicable in 2025, following the finalisation of the National Biodiversity Assessment for South Africa.

8.6 Marine/Coastal Wetlands

	Square kilometers (km2)
A -- Permanent shallow marine waters	Included in rocky and sandy shores
B -- Marine subtidal aquatic beds	29
C -- Coral reefs	26.5
D -- Rocky marine shores	185
E -- Sand, shingle or pebble shores	738
F -- Estuarine waters	2013.5
G -- Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats	43.4
Ga -- Bivalve (shellfish) reefs	Not assessed
H -- Intertidal marshes	41.7
I -- Intertidal forested wetlands	23.7
J -- Coastal brackish/saline lagoons	Included in calculation of estuarine waters (F)

K -- Coastal freshwater lagoons	
Zk(a) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems	18

8.6 Marine/Coastal Wetlands total (km2)

››› 3119

8.6 Inland Wetlands

	Square kilometers (km2)
L -- Permanent inland deltas	none
M -- Permanent rivers/streams/creeks; includes waterfalls	7 852 km*
N -- Seasonal/intermittent/irregular rivers/streams/creeks	10573 km*
O -- Permanent freshwater lakes	1337
P -- Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes	none
Q -- Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes	2787
R -- Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes and flats	included in type Q
Sp -- Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools	23157
Ss -- Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools	included in calculation for Sp
Tp -- Permanent freshwater marshes/pools	included in calculation for Sp
Ts -- Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools on inorganic soils	included in calculation for Sp
U -- Non-forested peatlands	1093*
Va -- Alpine wetlands	included in calculation for Sp
Vt -- Tundra wetlands	none
W -- Shrub-dominated wetlands	included in calculation for Sp
Xf -- Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands	none currently documented
Xp -- Forested peatlands	119*
Y -- Freshwater springs; oases.	not assessed
Zg -- Geothermal wetlands	none currently documented

Zk(b) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems	not assessed

8.6 Inland Wetlands total (km2)
››› 27281

8.6 Human-made wetlands total (km2)
››› 5984

8.7 How has the ecological character of wetlands in your country, overall, changed since COP14 ? {8.5}

Ecological character is the combination of the ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services that characterize the wetland at a given point in time.
Please select only one per square.

a) Ramsar Sites	☑ P=Status improved ☐ O=No change ☐ N=Status deteriorated
b) All wetlands in your country	☐ P=Status improved ☐ O=No change ☑ N=Status deteriorated

8.7 Additional Information
››› Whilst opportunities for more and continued work does exist, a number of actions have been implemented to rehabilitate and improve the ecological status of many of South Africa's Ramsar Sites.
The ecological condition of rivers, estuaries and inland wetlands have continued to deteriorate following each successive National Biodiversity Assessment (Nel and Driver, 2015; Van Niekerk et al., 2019; Van Deventer et al., 2019; 2020). In the most recent National Biodiversity Assessment, inland wetlands and estuaries were found to be the most threatened and yet least protected ecosystem types in the country (SANBI 2019; Skowno et al. 2019). Concern has been raised over the status of specific ecosystem types such as peatlands (Grundling et al. 2021), mangroves (Riddin et al. 2024) and coastal swamp forest wetlands (Van Deventer et al. 2020)
References:
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). 2019. National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: The status of South Africa’s ecosystems and biodiversity. Synthesis Report. South African National Biodiversity Institute, an entity of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Pretoria. pp. 1–214
Skowno, A.L.; Poole, C.J.; Raimondo, D.C.; Sink, K.J.; Van Deventer, H.; Van Niekerk, L.; Harris, L.R.; Smith-Adao, L.B.; Tolley, K.A.; Zengeya, T.A.; Foden, W.B.; Midgley, G.F. & Driver, A. 2019. National Biodiversity Assessment 2018: The status of South Africa’s ecosystems and biodiversity. Synthesis Report. South African National Biodiversity Institute, an entity of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, Pretoria. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6362.
Grundling, P-L.; Grundling, A.; Van Deventer, H.; Le Roux, J. 2021. Current state, pressures and protection levels of South African. Mires and Peat, Volume 27.

8.8 On a scale of **1-5** rate the change in the ecological character of wetlands in your country, overall, since last COP
Please select only one per square.

a) Marine/coastal	☐ 5=major improvement ☐ 4=improvement ☐ 3=no change ☑ 2=deterioration ☐ 1=major deterioration
b) Inland	☐ 5=major improvement ☐ 4=improvement ☐ 3=no change ☑ 2=deterioration ☐ 1=major deterioration
c) Human-made	☐ 5=major improvement ☐ 4=improvement ☐ 3=no change ☑ 2=deterioration ☐ 1=major deterioration

8.8 Additional Information
››› Whilst specific studies to validate the above are required, census poll results collected through a National Stakeholder Workshop held on 27 June 2024 returned a 70% majority opinion for all three above categories that, overall, the ecological condition of South Africa’s aquatic ecosystems has deteriorated.

8.9 What are your main needs in developing or updating an NWI to suport SDG Indicator 6.6.1 reporting for tracking global wetland status and trends? Please select below. {8.7}

	Yes
a) Access to data and data acquisition standards	☑
b) Wetland delineation methods and approaches	☐
c) Habitat classifications	☐
d) Standardization in data interpretation methods	☐
e) Regulatory framework and governance structure	☐
f) Resources	☑
g) Relevant skills	☑
h) Data collection and mapping	☑
i) Collaboration	☑
j) Others	☐

8.10 Please select from the list below the main needs of your country in using NWI results to implement COP mandates, e.g. conservation and wise use of all wetlands (Resolutions X.2, XIII.12, XIII.I3, XIII.14, XIII.16, XIV.17 and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)) to achieve sustainable development.

	Yes
a) Resources	☑
b) Relevant skills	☐
c) Data systems and management	☐
d) Application of NWI information for decision making (climate, biodiversity and sectoral planning/reporting)	☑
e) Regulatory framework and governance structure	☑
f) Data interpretation and communication	☑
g) Collaboration	☐
h) Others	☐

Target 9
The wise use of wetlands is strengthened through integrated resource management at the appropriate scale, inter alia, within a river basin or along a coastal zone {1.3.}.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 1, 9, 10 and 15].

9.1 Is a national wetland policy (or equivalent instrument) that promotes the wise use of wetlands in place? {9.1}
☑ D=Planned

9.1 Additional information
››› South Africa is currently in the process of applying for funding through the Global Environmental Facility to obtain support for the development of a National Wetland Policy.

9.2 Since COP14 have any amendments to existing legislation or policies been made to reflect commitments under the Convention on Wetlands? {9.2}
☑ C=In Progress

9.2 Additional information
››› The National Water Act Amendment is in progress and includes new provisions for the protection of South Africa's Strategic Water Source Areas (known as South Africa's mountain catchments or water towers). South Africa is furthermore in the process of amending the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act.

9.3 Do your country's water governance and management systems recognize wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins? {9.3}
☑ A=Yes

9.3 Additional information
››› The importance of wetlands and their management at the scale of river basins is deeply entrenched in the water governance and management systems of South Africa. The National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) calls for all water resources to be managed within an Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) framework. The National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS) as well as the National Water and Sanitation Master plan (NW&S MP) are key strategies for the water sector in South Africa and both recognise wetlands as key ecological infrastructure that need to be protected and restored as a key component of the water value chain. The principles of IWRM are further embedded the various transboundary river basin agreements between South Africa and its neighbouring basin states

9.4 Have communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) expertise and tools been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management (see Resolution X.19)? {9.4}
☑ A=Yes

9.4 Additional information
››› Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness on water resources and wetlands management in South Africa has improved significantly since the introduction in the early 1990's of new legislation on the environment and has been facilitated through the support of research and learning institutions, government departments and their agencies, and NGOs. The plans of a wide range of government departments and organisations that are involved in catchment /river basin planning and management have included CEPA as a key objective. Several CEPA options and tools on water resources and their management are available in South Africa, aimed at multiple audiences, ranging from school learners to post school students, to citizens and non-wetland specialists which work in specific sectors such as the investment sector. Examples of some of the many CEPA programmes which have been developed include the Fundisa for Change programme (https://fundisaforchange.co.za/) and the Citizen Science Training Programme (https://www.groundtruth.co.za/olt). South Africa has noted that there are potential opportunities to update, strengthen, produce and disseminate some of the materials that are available, particularly concerning inland wetlands (marshes) so that they reflect the most recent scientific understandings, are available in different media and in different languages suited to non-wetland specialists to be used for both education and awareness.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Fundisa For Change Initiative - Fundisa for Change is a Professional Learning Community made up of environmental and teacher education partners collaborating and working with teachers across South Africa to improve and strengthen ESD and environmental learning in schools.

9.5 Has your country established policies or guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigating or adapting to climate change? {9.5}
☑ A=Yes

9.5 Additional information
››› Ecosystem-based adaptation is a major focus of South Africa's response to climate change. South Africa published guidelines for Ecosystem- Based Adaptation (EBA) in South Africa in 2018. These guidelines include

wetlands, highlighting their importance for the maintenance of nutrients and water flows, quality, storage and capacity, in addition to protection against floods or storm inundation. South Africa has also developed a climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy for the biodiversity sector, accompanied by an implementation plan. The biodiversity sector adaptation strategy biome level implementation plan has identified interventions for adaptation to climate change for all freshwater systems across the country. Strategic Objective 3 advocates for aquatic ecosystems that are healthy and resilient. The outcomes of this objective are that the Resource Quality Objectives of rivers and wetlands in the biomes are met and endure under climate change, and that riparian and wetland buffer areas are restored and protected. RQOs are a part of South Africa's water legalisation and wetland management approach – they are the objectives for water related ecosystems which must be met in terms of that ecosystems water quality, water quantity, biota and habitat. In addition, South Africa is the process of developing Coastal Climate change adaptation plans aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change in the coastal sector.
References:
South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). (2017). Guidelines for Ecosystem-Based Adaptation (EbA) in South Africa. Pretoria, South Africa: SANBI.

9.6 Has your country included wetland actions in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and other related national policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation?
☑ A=Yes

9.6 Additional Information
››› South Africa's National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP); encourages the conservation, rehabilitation and restoration of natural ecosystems such as wetlands and mangroves. In addition, South Africa's Climate Change Act (Act 22 of 2024) aims to enable the development of an effective climate change response and a long-term just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society for South Africa in the context of sustainable development. Principle 3(l) amongst other recognises that a robust and sustainable economy and healthy society depends on the services that well-functioning ecosystems provide and that enhancing the sustainability of the economic, social and ecological services is an integral component of an effective and efficient climate change response.

9.7 Has your country formulated policies, plans or projects to sustain and enhance the role of wetlands in supporting and maintaining viable farming systems? {9.6}
☑ A=Yes

9.7 Additional information
››› South Africa has a large and productive agricultural sector with diverse farming practices from crop production to horticulture to livestock farming. The Department of Agriculture has a Conservation of Agriculture Resources Act, 43 of 1983 that recognises the importance of wetlands for sustaining and protecting agricultural lands and practices and which (together with the National Water Act) regulates the use and management of wetlands on farms.
Various projects are undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, supported by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and various NGOs to create awareness and enhance the role of wetlands in supporting farming systems through rehabilitation and wise use initiatives. For example, the Department of Agriculture has implemented a Land Care programme, which is a community based and government supported approach to the sustainable management and use of agricultural natural resources. The overall goal of the Land Care programme is to optimise productivity and sustainability of natural resources to result in greater productivity, food security, job creation and better quality of life for all. In addition, with support from the ARC, in 2023, several agricultural extension officers were trained on climate smart agriculture. Training manuals that have been developed include information on the wise use of water and wetlands for agriculture. The employment and training of agricultural extension officers is seen as a key opportunity to provide support to farmers on the management and sustainable use of wetlands. Another example is the KwaNovuka Catchment Sensitive Farming Pilot Project, funded by the WWF Nedbank Green Trust. The project focuses on partnering with the communal and commercial cattle farmers in both catchments to create a shared learning platform for optimal grassland management and catchment sensitive farming

9.8 Has research to inform wetland policies and plans been undertaken in your country on: {9.7}
Please select only one per square.

a) agriculture-wetland interactions	☐ C=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) climate change	☐ C=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

c) valuation of ecoystem services	☐ C=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

9.8 Additional information

››› Numerous studies have been undertaken in South Africa regarding the valuation of ecosystem services and climate change this includes research on blue carbon ecosystems and resource economic studies, however fewer studies are available on the teal carbon status and on wetlands and agriculture.
A number of economic evaluations have been conducted for various inland and coastal wetlands in South Africa which aided in creating awareness of the value of these systems and have informed decision making. This includes for example, the Berg Estuary (DEAD&P, 2021), the Papenkuils (Horn et al. in prep), upper Riviersonderend and Vyeboom wetlands (Marais et al. 2021) and Kluitjieskraal wetland (Kotze et al. In prep) situated in the Breede River Catchment in the Western Cape Province. Studies for various peatlands in South Africa have also been conducted (Grundling et al, 2017). Various National studies have also been undertaken, including Natural Capital Accounts, a growing field of research in South Africa., and a study by Turpie et al. (2017), which valued ecosystem services provided by South Africa's terrestrial, freshwater and estuarine habitats. This study estimated that the services provided by these ecosystems are worth at least R275 billion per annum to South Africans.
The extent, status and value of blue carbon ecosystems (estuarine habitats) have been assessed for South Africa (Adams et al., 2019, Raw et al., 2021 Adams et al., 2022, Adams et al., 2023), however, further work is required to quantify the extent and quality of teal carbon ecosystems (freshwater realm) in South Africa.
Climate Change Research:
Adams, J. B., Raw, J. L., Mbense, S. P., Bornman, T. G., Rajkaran, A., Van Niekerk, L., 2019. Climate change and South Africa's blue carbon ecosystems. Water Research Commission, Pretoria, South 873 Africa. Report Number:2769/1/19.
Adams, J. B., Wasserman, J., Raw, J. L. and van Niekerk, L., 2022. Response of South African coastal wetlands to climate change. In: Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources: Implications and Practical Responses in Selected South African Systems. (ed.) Petja, M. B. Water Research Commission, Pretoria, South Africa. pp.126-142. ISBN 978-0-6392-0174-0.
Adams, J. B., Van Deventer, H., Whitfield, E. C.,Machite, A., Riddin, T., Van Niekerk, L., Apleni, A., Madasa, A., 2023. Prioritisation of blue carbon ecosystems for implementation of restoration measures. Project 83419948 funded by GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammernarbeit GmbH for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), South Africa through the GIZ implemented Climate Support Programme, which is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI). pp. 168.
Raw, J. L., van Niekerk, L., Riddin, T., Tsipa, V., Banda, S. P., Adams, J. B., 2021. Scoping Study: A Blue Carbon Sinks Assessment for South Africa. Department for Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), Pretoria, South Africa. pp. 329.
Economic valuations:
Grundling, P.L., Grundling, A.T., Pretorius, L., Mulders, J. and Mitchell, S. 2017. South African Peatlands: Ecohydrological Characteristics and Socio-Economic, WRC Report No. 2346/1/17, Water Research Commission).
Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, 2021. Environmental flows and the health and value of the Berg River Estuary: Potential trade-offs between estuary value and regional water supply under a changing climate. Cape Town, South Africa: DEA&DP.
Colvin. C., Cartwright, A., McKenzie. M., Dent. M., Maherry, A., Mhlongo, T. 2015. Enhancing ecological infrastructure in the uMngeni catchment through private sector action and engagement. Green Fund Research Report.
SANBI & Statistics South Africa. 2018. Assessment report towards the development of a national strategy for advancing environmental-economic and ecosystem accounting in South Africa. Developed as part of the Natural Capital Accounting & Valuation of Ecosystem Services Project in South Africa. Compiled by Ginsburg, A., Driver, A., Bouwer, G., Parry, R. & Nel, J.L. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. 85 pp.
Turpie, J.K., Forsythe, K.J., Knowles, A., Blignaut, J., Letly, G., 2017. Mapping and valuation of South Africa's ecosystem services: A local Perspective. Ecosystem Services, 27, Part B. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2017.07.008.
Annabel Marian Horn. Matthew Law, Simon Lorentz, Liz Day, Christopher Dalgliesh, Sue Reuther, Wilna Kloppers. 2021. The Economic Value of the Ecosystem Services of the Papenkuils Wetland – a Wetland in a Dryland. In prep. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-540475/v1
Daniel Marais, Theo Fischer, Donovan Kotze, Bennie Haasbroek, Malin Govender, James Pugin and Annabel Horn. 2021. Economic valuation of the averted degradation of the Vyeboom Wetland in the Theewaterskloof Dam catchment, South Africa. Water SA 47(1) 24–34. https://doi.org/10.17159/wsa/2021.v47.i1.9442
Donovan Kotze, Bennie Haasbroek, Daniel Marais, Malin Govender, Theo Fischer, Gottlieb Arendse and Annabel Horn.. 2024. The ecological and economic benefits of investing in the rehabilitation and management of ecological infrastructure in the Kluitjieskraal Wetland in the upper Breede River Catchment. In prep.

9.9 Has your country made efforts to conserve and wisely use urban and peri-urban wetlands in line with Resolutions XI.11 and XIV.10? {9.8}

☑ C=Partially

9.9 Additional information
››› South Africa has made numerous efforts to conserve and wisely use urban and peri-urban wetlands. Although there are numerous case studies and examples, there is still much that can be done to strengthen wetland planning, management, rehabilitation and awareness in urban and peri-urban areas across the Country.
Examples of efforts to conserve urban wetlands include:
• City of Cape Town Wetland management and rehabilitation initiatives: At COP14 the City of Cape Town received its status as a Ramsar Wetland Accredited City. Since then, CoCT has and continues to implement various projects aimed at enhancing the wise use of its wetlands, this includes the Liveable Urban Waterway (LUW) Programme and the Green Infrastructure programme
• Sewage or treated effluent and stormwater discharges pose significant pressures on wetlands in South Africa. The Department of Water and Sanitation and various local governments have put in place initiatives to address this issue. For example, the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment developed Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) implementation guidelines for developments to consider around Gauteng, including the treatment of stormwater that will emanate from all proposed developments adjacent to wetlands.
• Civil society, local communities, NGOs and schools also play a large role in conserving and enhancing the functionality of wetlands in urban areas, this includes various ‘Friends of’ and ‘adopt a wetland’ initiatives. Examples include the Korsman Conservancy, winner of the 2023 Enviropaedia Eco-Logic awards for the work undertaken at the Korsman Bird Sanctuary, the Hennops Revival NPO, who drive an initiative to revive and restore the Hennops River in Gauteng, and many others. Various Schools also participate in cleaning events of wetlands.
• Development of the wetland management Guidelines for South African Municipalities by ICLEI

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Wetland Management Guidelines for South African Municipalities

9.10 Has your country made efforts to conserve small wetlands in line with Resolution XIII.21 and XIII.15? {9.9}
☑ A=Yes

9.10 Additional information
››› Most of the wetlands in South Africa may be considered to be small in size when compared to wetlands of other countries. This is largely attributed to the fact that South Africa is a semi-arid country where approximately 97% of mapped wetlands in South Africa are less than 100 ha in size (as per National Wetland Map 5). It is noted that through the Convention on Wetlands, attention was called to the need for countries to conserve and protect small wetlands as they often play a valuable role in providing a wide range of critical ecological services, particularly in urban areas, and that it is up to each Contracting Party to define the size of small wetlands and to ensure that they are included in national wetland inventories and relevant policies and strategies. South Africa regards all wetlands of all sizes of equal importance and small wetlands have been included in the South African national wetland inventory and relevant policies and legislation.

Target 10
The traditional knowledge innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities relevant for the wise use of wetlands and their customary use of wetland resources, are documented, respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with a full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities at all relevant levels.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 22]

10.1 Do you have national legislation or equivalent on indigenous and local communities at all relevant levels in wetland management, and/or Site management?
☑ A=Yes

10.1 Additional Information
››› Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act, Act 6 of 2019

10.2 If the answer to question 10.1 is “yes”, have the guiding principles for considering the cultural values of wetlands including traditional knowledge for the effective management of Sites (Resolution VIII.19) been used?
☑ A=Yes

10.3 Have case studies on the participation of indigenous people in projects or successful experiences on

cultural aspects of wetlands been compiled? (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21) {10.1}
☑ C=In Preparation

10.3 Additional information

››› A select number of documented case studies of the participation of indigenous people in projects are in the process of being compiled. These case studies have taken place within the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces within South Africa. One such case study bridges the gap between science and traditional healing/knowledge through a collaborative effort between SANBI, DWS, and Nature Speaks and Responds NPC (NSR) which held a workshop to empower traditional health practitioner and community members in monitoring and preserving aquatic ecosystems.
Another case study includes the community of KwaNovuka, located in the Impendle Municipal area near the town of Dargle. Within this area is the Impendle Vlei which is the source of the uMngeni River that supplies water to millions of people that live in this catchment. Surrounding the wetland area are commercial farms and communal areas where community members engage in various agricultural activities including stock farming. A few local organisations have been active in working with the commercial farmers to partake in land management activities such as the removal of invasive alien vegetation and grassland rehabilitation. However, there has been limited engagement with the community of KwaNovuka to understand their needs as well as how they would like to participate in the protection of this important resource.
Since 2020, SANBI has been engaging the KwaNovuka community with a view to understand how the community interacts with the landscape , what their challenges are, what their priorities are and, what role the Impendle Vlei and surrounding grasslands play in their lives (socially, economically, spiritually). Through this iterative process, the need was identified for the youth to be empowered to look after their own environment, learn from the elders (thereby passing down indigenous knowledge) and develop a plan for looking after the landscape. Under the EI4WS Project and Amanzi Ethu Nobuntu programme, a team of 10 Enviro-Champs have been trained on various aspects including using citizen science tools for biomonitoring and wetland monitoring. They are using the knowledge they are gaining through the project to conduct education and awareness with the community, cattle counting and establishing community gardens.

10.4 Have the guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities’ and indigenous people’s participation in the management of wetlands been applied? (Resolution VII. 8) {10.2}
☑ A=Yes

10.4 Additional information

If “yes” please list national legislation/policies and actions that consider the needs and participation of indigenous and local communities in wetland management at all relevant levels.
››› In South Africa, communities hold a wealth of indigenous knowledge that offers rich and unique insights into practices that incorporate sustainable human interactions with nature. Indigenous peoples and community-based groups participate in wetland management through various mechanisms. The People and Parks Programme (P&PP) in South Africa is an example of a mechanism that enables the involvement of local communities in the management of protected and surrounding areas, many of which contain wetlands. South Africa also has established Catchment Management Forums, which enable local communities to participate in water management related decision making. Other examples include SANBI’s Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security Project, through which a landscape management plan for Impendle wetland, KZN, is in development which includes local participation in both developing and implementing management actions. In addition, South Africa’s EPWP prescripts takes previously disadvantaged individuals within communities into account by creating jobs and upskilling community members during wetland rehabilitation projects. Another example is the Cape Town Mayors initiative project whereby local communities rehabilitate wetlands along the Cape Flats. Lastly in recognising the importance of involving local indigenous communities and their knowledge, collaborative efforts between the Indigenous Marine Innovations for sustainable Economies and Environments (IMIsEE) from the NRF-South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) and the Keiskamma Trust (KT) from Hamburg, South Africa have emerged. This partnership has resulted in the initial designing and co-creation of the first nature-based eco-engineered prototype that is created by incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into science driven ecological engineering principles. This nature-based prototype is a first of its kind in South Africa, aimed at rehabilitating the functionality and biodiversity of human-impacted coastal environments such as harbours and marinas

10.5 Have traditional knowledge and management practices relevant to the wise use of wetlands been documented and their application encouraged {10.3}
☑ A=Yes

10.5 Additional information

››› This has been documented to an extent but could be improved through future initiatives. Examples include studies on the traditional medicinal uses of indigenous South African aquatic plants and their propagation and studies relating to the sustainable use of various reeds for the basket weaving local industry in South Africa.

Target 11

Wetland functions, services and benefits are widely demonstrated, documented and disseminated. {1.4.} [Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 11, 12 and 13]

11.1 Has an assessment been made of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites and other wetlands? {11.1}

☑ C1=Partially

11.1 Additional information

If “yes” or “partially”, please indicate how many Ramsar Sites and their names
››› Ecosystem services and benefits have been assessed with varying degrees of comprehensiveness for at least 9 of the 30 Ramsar Sites in South Africa.
The aquatic biodiversity and tourism value of selected South African Ramsar wetlands (Malherbe et al., 2017) was assessed for Barberspan in the North-West Province, De Hoop Vlei and Heuningnes Estuary near Cape Agulhas in the Western Cape Province, Kosi Bay and Lake Sibaya on the Zululand coast and Ntsikeni wetlands in the Drakensberg foothills of the KwaZulu-Natal Province, Makuleke wetlands at the northeast boundary of the Kruger National Park (KNP) in the Limpopo Province, the Blesbokspruit in the Gauteng Province, and the Seekoeivlei Ramsar site in the Free State Province. A broad description of the ecosystem services that are provided by the wetlands in South Africa's Ramsar Sites has also been included in the Ramsar Information Sheets for the majority of sites.
More recently, as part of a project funded by Defra UK and supported by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) to assess the impacts of wastewater on wetland ecosystem services, an assessment method was developed and is being applied to nine wetlands in South Africa (Blesbokspruit and Klip River wetlands in Gauteng; Mthinzima wetland in KwaZulu-Natal; Kamfers Pan wetland in the Northern Cape; and the Kluitjieskraal, Zeekoevlei and George wetlands in the Western Cape). The wetland sites were purposefully selected to represent a wide range of wetland types and contexts found in South Africa. It is anticipated that the issues identified with regards to vulnerability to loss of ecosystem services, and the lessons learnt (in particular regarding trade-offs between pollutant assimilation and other ecosystem services provided by wetlands) will have broad applicability for South Africa, and will therefore be well positioned to inform national efforts to develop policy, strategy and actions relating to the effect of wastewater/pollution on wetlands and the ecosystem services which they provide.
More widely in South Africa a vast number of ecosystem services assessments have been undertaken as part of amongst others, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies, under the widely adopted methodology of WET-EcoServices (Version 2) (Kotze et al, 2021).
References:
Dineo Maila; Joseph Mulders Nuveshen Naidoo; Jackie Crafford; Steve Mitchell; Kyle Harris. 2017. An Evidence-Based Approach to Measuring the Costs and Benefits of Changes in Aquatic Ecosystem Services. Report No. TT 726/17 .
Malherbe, W., Ferreira, M, van Vuren, J., Wepener, V and Smit, N. 2017. The aquatic biodiversity and tourism value of selected South African Ramsar wetlands. WRC Report TT 732/17. Water Research Commission, Pretoria, South Africa.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Wet-EcoSystem Services (Version 2) Assessment Manual - A technique for rapidly assessing ecosystem services supplied by wetlands and riparian areas

11.2 Since COP14, have wetland programmes or projects that contribute to food and water security and hence poverty alleviation been implemented? {11.2}

☑ A=Yes

11.2 Additional information

››› The South African government created and operationalised the Expanded Public Works Programme. Under this programme, there are a number of sub-programmes that focus on labour intensive restoration, rehabilitation and management of natural resources including wetlands ecosystems. A specific sub-programme titled Working for Wetlands and others that also influence wetlands, has been operational since 2000. The programme focuses on restoration, protection and wise use of wetlands whilst at the same time providing employment creation, skills transfer and enterprise development especially to the disadvantaged youth and women. Youth and contractor development allows service providers to develop entrepreneurial skills which could assist with food and water security. Other examples include:
• KwaNovuka Catchment Sensitive Farming Pilot Project -In order to address the issues of degradation in the formerly pristine waters of catchments like the uMngeni and iNzinga
• The Greater Cape Town Water Fund puts forward ecological infrastructure restoration as a critical component of efforts to enhance water security for all users of the Western Cape Water Supply System (WCWSS)
• Amanzi Ethu Nobuntu (AEN) in partnership with various partner organisations across the catchment, from source to sea worked with young people to clean rivers, clear alien invasive plants and facilitate education and awareness to bring change to their local communities.

11.3 Since COP14 have wetland programmes or projects that contribute to other benefits for human well-being been implemented?
☑ A=Yes

11.4 Have socio-economic values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands? {11.3}
☑ C=Partially

11.4 Additional information

If “yes” or “partially”, please indicate, if known, how many Ramsar Sites and their names
››› A key component for the management of all of the Ramsar Sites in South Africa is the incorporation of objectives and actions that aim to valuate, understands and maintain and enable the responsible use of the site for their socio-economic values. For example, an economic evaluation has recently been completed for the Berg Estuary Ramsar Site (Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, 2021. Environmental flows and the health and value of the Berg River Estuary: Potential trade-offs between estuary value and regional water supply under a changing climate. Cape Town, South Africa: DEA&DP) and has been included in the management planning for the site.

11.5 Have cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands in general? {11.4}
☑ A=Yes

11.5 Additional information
››› In South Africa, cultural values have been integrated into the management planning of several wetlands, including Ramsar Sites. For example, the management plans for the Makuleke Wetlands incorporate cultural heritage and the traditional knowledge of local communities to enhance wetland conservation and sustainable use (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2015). This approach aligns with broader efforts to integrate cultural services into ecosystem management, recognizing that respecting and preserving cultural values can strengthen community engagement and support conservation outcomes.
However, the extent of inclusion varies by region and specific site, with some wetlands receiving more attention to cultural values than others, depending on local policies, community involvement, and available resources.

Target 12

Restoration is in progress in degraded wetlands, with priority to wetlands that are relevant for biodiversity conservation, disaster risk reduction, livelihoods and/or climate change mitigation and adaptation. [Reference Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 2, 8 and 11]

12.1 Have national wetland restoration targets been established?
☑ A=Yes

12.1 Additional Information
››› In line with the UNCCD, Land Degradation Neutrality targets, South Africa has a target to Rehabilitate 61 900 ha of wetlands by 2030, to be predominately achieved through Governments EWPW programmes such as working for wetlands and land care programmes. Contributions towards this target by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment are set on an annual basis.
It should be noted that South Africa is in the process of revising and updating its land degradation neutrality targets.

12.2 Have priority sites for wetland restoration been identified? {12.1}
☑ A=Yes

12.2 Additional information

If “yes”, please provide a list of sites, specifying wetland types
››› The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Working for Wetlands programme has developed five-year strategic plans for each of the nine provinces of South Africa.

12.3 Since COP14 have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes, plans or projects been implemented? {12.2}
☑ A=Yes

12.3 If applicable provide information on the extent of restored wetland area and types since last COP, in square kilometres

	Restoration planned m2 or km2	Under restoration	Total Restored
Marine/Coastal			9 000 000 km2
Inland			522 km2
Human-made			905 km2

12.3 Additional information

Explain/clarify the data/statistics presented in the table above
››› • Marine/Coastal: 9 000 000m2 (Estuaries within uThukela MPA)
• Inland: 522 439 000m2 (April 2021-March 2024)
• Human-made: submerged and floating macrophytes 905 328.42 m2 (April 2021-March 2024)
The data presented above are with respect to marine/coastal work done by Oceans and Coasts branch of DFFE, inland work done of the Working for Wetlands Programme, and the human-made restoration work done by DFFE Biocontrol, from 2021-2024.
In addition to the government lead EPWP initiatives, various restoration projects have been implemented by a number of other ministries (such as the Department of Agriculture's Land Care programme), the private sector, as part of their legislated environmental authorisations and by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Communities. Given that there currently is no central database that collates all rehabilitation activities across the country, additional work would be required to understand and collate the full contribution from the private sector and NGOs to report on the total area of rehabilitation and restoration work being undertaken /planned in South Africa.

12.4 Have the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (Resolution VIII.1) and Resolution XII.11 on Peatlands, climate change and wise use: Implications for the Ramsar Convention been implemented? {12.3}
☑ A=Yes

12.4 Additional Information

If “yes” or “partially”, please indicate the progress in implementation
››› South Africa contributed to the Global Peatlands Assessment (Awkwany et al., 2022) and has developed a range of guidelines on peatlands and their management and rehabilitation in South Africa. A number of awareness campaigns on peatlands were also undertaken by Agricultural Research Council (ARC) and the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Forestry (DFFE) since COP14.
Akwany, L.; Elshehawi, S.; Grundling, P-L.; Suspense, I.A.; Adam, J.; Botula, Y-D.; Van Deventer, H.; Dinesen, L.; Farmer, F.; Lourenco, M.; Ntara, E.; Rebelo, A.J. 2022. Chapter 3: Regional Assessment for Africa. In: UNEP. 2022. Global Peatlands Assessment – The State of the World’s Peatlands: Evidence for action toward the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of peatlands. Summary for Policy Makers or Main Report. Global Peatlands Initiative. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya. Available online at: https://www.unep.org/resources/global-peatlands-assessment-2022

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

The Plight of South Africa's Peculiar Peatlands - This short film aims to raise awareness about the significance of South African peatlands and the challenges they face

Target 13

Enhanced sustainability of key sectors such as water, energy, mining, agriculture, tourism, urban development, infrastructure, industry, forestry, aquaculture and fisheries when they affect wetlands, contributing to biodiversity conservation and human livelihoods.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Targets 10 and 14]

13.1 Have actions been taken to enhance sustainability of wetlands when they are affected by key sectors including
Please select only one per square.

a) Energy	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) Mining	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

c) Agriculture	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
d) Tourism	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
e) Urban development	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
f) Infrastructure	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
g) Industry	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
h) Forestry	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
i) Aquaculture	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
j) Fisheries	☐ D=Planned ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

13.1 Additional Information
››› South Africa has developed various legislation, polices, strategies, guidelines and tools aimed at various sectors to enhance their sustainable management and use.

13.2 Are Strategic Environmental Assessment practices applied when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact wetlands? {13.1}
☑ A=Yes

13.2 Additional information
››› Yes, they are applied. The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has a dedicated Branch responsible for Regulatory Compliance and Sector Monitoring.

13.3 Is there a legal requirement in your country to conduct environmental impact assessments for development projects (such as new buildings, new roads, extractive industry) from key sectors (e.g., water, energy, mining and agriculture) that may impact wetlands? {13.2}
☑ A=Yes

13.3 Additional information
››› South Africa has advanced legislations and regulations in place that are regularly implemented to protect, conserve and sustain natural resources including wetlands. These includes the National Environmental Management Act 108 of 1998 and the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and the National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998

Section 3 - Goal 4. Enhancing implementation

In responding to each of these questions, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide links, references/ upload documents where applicable and relevant.
[Reference to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17]

Target 15

Ramsar Regional Initiatives with the active involvement and support of the Parties in each region are reinforced and developed into effective tools to assist in the full implementation of the Convention.

15.1 Has your country been part of the development and implementation of a Ramsar Regional Initiative?? {15.1}
☑ A=Yes

15.1 Additional information

If “yes”, please list the Ramsar Regional Initiatives in which your country is actively involved.

››› South Africa is a member of the South African Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI), which was endorsed at COP14 in 2022, and has been involved as a member of the SARRI task force for the operationalisation of the initiative.

15.2 Has your country supported or participated in the development of other regional (i.e., covering more than one country) wetland training and research centres? {15.2}
☑ B=No

Target 16

Wetlands conservation and wise use are mainstreamed through communication, capacity development, education, participation and awareness.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 21].

16.1 Has an action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA been established? {16.1}

Even if no CEPA plans have been developed, if broad CEPA objectives for CEPA actions have been established, please indicate this in the Additional information section below
Please select only one per square.

a) At the national level	☑ D=Planned ☐ C=In Progress ☐ B=No ☐ A=Yes
b) Sub-national level	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=In Progress ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
c) Catchment/basin level	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=In Progress ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
d) Local/site level	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=In Progress ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

16.1 Additional information

If “yes” or “in progress” to one or more of the four categories above
››› Broad CEPA objectives for inland wetlands are included in the recently published National Wetland Management Framework. This Framework includes actions for implementation by the state such as updating and strengthening awareness materials and undertaking awareness raising events for World Wetlands Day. South Africa’s National Wetland Society also has several objectives that relate to CEPA, including providing opportunities for continuous training development and for building a community of practice through information sharing. To improve and direct co-ordinated action South Africa has identified a need to appoint a dedicated CEPA focal point for the development, implementation and monitoring of a more comprehensive CEPA plan.
Each of South Africa nine provinces have provincial wetland forums. A large focus of these forums, as contained in their terms of refences is to ensure collaboration, knowledge sharing and awareness creation. These forums are active throughout South Africa and meetings are held quarterly where interesting presentations are given and fascinating fieldtrips are undertaken. A large number of municipalities in South Africa also have environmental awareness and education programmes. CEPA also forms an important and integral part of the management plans for all of South Africa’s Ramsar Sites. A particular need in this regard is for support and funding to improve the signage, education centre infrastructure and to develop information boards at a number of these sites.

16.2 How many centres (visitor centres, interpretation centres, education centres) that focus on wetlands have been established? {16.2}
a) at Ramsar Sites
☑ G=More than #

››› 10

b) at other wetlands
☑ G=More than #

››› 1

16.2 Additional information

››› Out of South Africa’s 30 Ramsar Sites, more than half have visitor or education centres, this includes the Blesbokspruit wetland Education Centre at Marivale Nature Reserve, the Eskom Ingula Visitors centre at Ingula Ramsar Site and a centre at False Bay, Nylsvley Nature Reserve and Makuleke. The Potberg Eco Venue can be found at de Hoop Vlei and at the Ramsar Sites managed by iSimangaliso visitors can visit the Mabibi, eNkovukeni and kwa-Dapha community resource centre hubs. A new wetland education centre, to be funded through private funding, is being planned for the Verloren Valei Ramsar Site and will serve as a venue for the three surrounding Ramsar Sites (Middelpunt, de Berg and Verloren Vlei). A number of Ramsar Sites, particularly the isolated islands sites are not open or generally accessible to the public and for these sites, online approaches and social media is used to create awareness and education.
In 2022, BirdLife South Africa’s Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre received the Star Wetland Centre Award at Ramsar COP 14, in recognition of best practice in eco-tourism and education at wetlands.

16.3 Does the Contracting Party {16.3}

Please select only one per square.

a) ensure stakeholder participation in decision-making on wetland planning and management	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) specifically involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management?	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

16.3 Additional information

››› Stakeholders are involved in planning and decision making processes through various mechanisms, including through stakeholder consultations and public participation processes which are conducted as part of the development of national wetland related strategies and plans and the development of Ramsar Site management plans. Stakeholders are also involved through catchment and Ramsar Site management forums and through the Provincial Wetland Forums which meet four times a year to plan, implement and review activities related to wetlands matters.

16.4 Do you have an operational cross-sectoral national Ramsar/wetlands committee? {16.4}

☑ A=Yes

16.4 Additional information

››› South Africa has a National Ramsar Site Committee which convenes twice a year. All activities, decisions, interventions and other issues related to Ramsar sites are discussed. The committee is attended by National Departments, research institutions and Ramsar Site Managers as well as the focal points from other related MEAs
South Africa also convenes multiple committees for the management of its Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs), including the Government Authorities Committee and the Spatial Information Task Team.
In addition South Africa has established a National Coastal Committee which convenes a diverse range of government stakeholders, including government departments, provincial coastal committees, and protected area management authorities.
South Africa is in the process of evaluating the requirement for a National Wetland Committee to oversee inland wetland matters in general, and specifically to monitor the implementation of the National Wetland Management Framework.

16.5 Do you have an operational cross-sectoral body equivalent to a national Ramsar/wetlands committee? {16.5}

☑ A=Yes

16.5 Additional information

››› There are a number of committees which have been established to support wetland management in South Africa, this includes the Freshwater Ecosystem Network (FEN), a community of practice related to freshwater ecosystems, convened annually by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). The network was launched in 2013 with various representatives from government, national and provincial agencies, NGOs and the private sector. South Africa also has a National Wetland Indaba (NWI), which has been held annually since 2005. Over the years, participation in the Indaba has increased from a handful of wetland specialists to an annual event which attracts hundreds of people from varying disciplines with a common interest in wetlands.

16.6 Are other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share the

Convention’s implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and: {16.6}
Please select only one per square.

a) Ramsar Site managers	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) other MEA national focal points	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
c) other ministries, departments and agencies	☐ D=Planned ☐ C=Partially ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

16.6 Additional information
››› Yes, through the Provincial Wetland Forums mentioned above, as well as through the National Wetland Indaba, which is held annually in South Africa. The Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment also has a International Relations Forum, which is a forum of all MEA focal points to ensure integration, communication and alignment across the MEAs from a South African perspective.

16.7 Has your country organized any Convention on Wetlands-branded World Wetlands Day events, whether led by government or NGOs, since COP14? {16.7}
☑ A=Yes

16.7 Additional information
››› There are many world wetlands day events that are held each year, organised by both Government and NGOs in several of the provinces in South Africa. Many of these events are arranged as a collaborative effort between government and non-government organisations and civil society. In addition to the above, each year on WWD, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment issues a media statement on the importance of wetlands. There are also several private organisations, consultants, mines etc. who regularly communicate and share information on WWD.

16.8 Did your country undertake any campaigns, programmes or projects to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife during the World Wetlands Days since COP14? {16.8}
☑ A=Yes

16.8 Additional information
››› Wetlands are part of the Environmental Awareness Programmes that are implemented by various sector departments, public entities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Scientific and Research Institutions across the country. This awareness is not only done during the World Wetlands Day but throughout the year to educate communities about the importance of wetlands ecosystems. Examples of campaigns, programmes or projects to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands during the World Wetlands Days since COP14 include:
o Training on the use of citizen science tools (such as iNaturalist) by SANBI and DWS
o School awareness campaigns on wetlands, organised by DFFE, in collaboration with provincial environmental department and their conservation agencies and local government during the month of February.
o Events for community members and the youth, including schools, at various wetland sites, organised by Ramsar Site management authorities, provincial wetland forums, and by wetland conservation groups. Since COP14, WWD events include events at Colbyn Wetland Nature Reserve in Gauteng, Lake Fundudzi in Limpopo, Verloren Valei in Mpumalanga, Assegaaibosch Nature Reserve in the Western Cape, Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape, amongst many others.
Whilst a number of the events are captured on the Convention on Wetlands event portal (https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/events), many are not, and South Africa could pursue means to encourage all event hosts to load their events.

You have attached the following Web links/URLs to this answer.

Raising awareness of the existence, importance, and need for conservation of South African wetlands - An article on one of the many WWD events that were held in South Africa in 2024

16.9 Has information about your country’s wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites and their status been made public (e.g., through publications or a website)? {18.5}
☑ A=Yes

16.9 Additional Information
››› Every 5 years South Africa releases its National Biodiversity Assessment, which contain information relating to the Countries wetlands, including their locations, extents and their threat status. South Africa also has an Annual State of Water Report and periodically also releases a State of the Environment Report (SOER).
Information regarding South Africa's Ramsar Sites is available to the public through the Ramsar Site Information Service, and in many cases are also included in the websites of the various Ramsar Site Management Agencies.
Recent discussions have revealed a potential need for a dedicated wetlands and Ramsar Site webpage to assist with information dissemination to the public.

Target 17

Financial and other resources for effectively implementing the Convention's fourth Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 from all sources are made available.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 19]

17.1 [For Contracting Parties with a development assistance agency ("donor countries")] Since COP14, has the agency provided funding to support wetland conservation and management efforts in other countries? {17.3}
☑ Z=Not Applicable

17.2 [For Contracting Parties with a development assistance agency ("donor countries")] Have environmental safeguards and assessments been included in development proposals proposed the development of projects by the agency? {17.4}
☑ Z=Not Applicable

17.3 [For Contracting Parties that have received development assistance since COP14] Has your country received financial support specifically for national wetland conservation and management: {17.5}
Please select only one per square.

a) from development assistance agencies of another country?	☐ Z=Not applicable ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes
b) from non-national or multilateral development assistance agencies?	☐ Z=Not applicable ☐ B=No ☑ A=Yes

17.4 Has any financial support from the national budget been provided by your country to facilitate the implementation of the Convention on Wetlands? {17.6}
☑ A=Yes

17.4 Additional information

If "yes" please state the amounts, and for which activities.
››› Financial support from the National budget is provided annually to facilitate the implementation of the convention of wetlands as part of the wetland management mandates of various government departments and their agencies, this includes funding for some wetland rehabilitation and research.

Target 18

International cooperation is strengthened at all levels

18.1 Are the national focal points of other MEAs invited to participate in the national Ramsar /wetland committee? {18.1}
☑ A=Yes

18.1 Additional information
››› The Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and World Heritage Convention all sit on the National Ramsar Committee.

18.2 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Convention on Wetland's Administrative Authority and the focal points of UN and other global and regional bodies and agencies (e.g. UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNECE, ITTO)? {18.2}
☑ A=Yes

18.3 Has your country received assistance from any of the following UN or other global and regional bodies and agencies in implementing the Convention on Wetlands since COP14? {18.3}

a) UNEP	☑
b) FAO	☑
c) UNECE	☐
d) UNFCCC	☑
e) Global Environment Facility	☑
f) UNDP	☑
g) UNESCO	☐
h) World Health Organization	☐
i) World Meteorological Organization	☐
j) ITTO	☐
k) The Convention's IOPs	☑

18.3 Additional information

For example describe the support and indicate the amount of funding.
››› Several GEF and GCF funded projects are underway in South Africa, many of which include some elements relating to wetlands management, conservation and rehabilitation. The WWF-SA and IUCN (Ramsar IOPs) have also funded numerous protects related to wetlands in South Africa.

18.4 Has your country established international network(s), such as twinning arrangements, to facilitate knowledge sharing and training related to wetlands that share common features? {18.4}
☑ C=Partially

18.4 Additional information
››› Recently (in October 2024), experts from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) joined their French counterparts at the Office Français de la Biodiversité (OFB) to address shared challenges in biodiversity monitoring. South Africa similarly has programmes for joint learning on peatlands as part of the international mire conservation group.

18.5 Have all transboundary wetland systems been identified? {18.6}
☑ A=Yes

18.5 Additional information
››› There are for major river basins which are shared with neighboring states, namely the Limpopo, Inkomati, Maputo and the Orange River Basins. Ramsar Sites which occur at the boarders with neighboring states include the Orange River Mouth, Makuleke wetlands and Ndumo Ramsar Sites.

18.6 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems (for example, in shared river basins and coastal zones)? {18.7}
☑ A=Yes

18.6 Additional information
››› South Africa is a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which has adopted a protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems. South Africa has a number of transboundary biodiversity conservation and water agreements and participates in the meetings of the various transboundary water commissions including the Orange Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM), the Limpopo Watercourse Commission (LIMCOM), and the Incomati and Maputo Watercourse Commission (INMACOM).
South Africa also participates in the management and meetings of the various Transfrontier parks and conservation areas which are shared with South Africa, including the !Ai-!Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Conservation Park, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area, Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, Lubombo Transfrontier Conservation and Resource Area and the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area.

18.7 Does your country participate in regional networks or initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species? {18.8}
☑ A=Yes

18.7 Additional information

If “yes”, please list which regional networks or initiatives
››› South Africa is a signatory to the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)

Target 19

Capacity building for implementation of the Convention and its 4th Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 is enhanced.
[Reference to Global Biodiversity Framework Target 20]

19.1 Has your country conducted any national needs assessment since COP14 to inform capacity building planning to implement the Convention’s Strategic Plan? {19.1}
☑ B=No

19.2 Does your country or institution implement capacity development strategies or actions for the Convention’s Strategic Plan?
☑ A=Yes

19.2 Additional Information
››› There are multiple capacity development programmes and courses available in South Africa which are provided by consultancies and tertiary institutions on wetlands and their management. The National Wetland Indaba, provincial wetland forums and the South African Wetland Society furthermore provide opportunities for the attendance of meetings and webinars to learn about and share knowledge on specific aspects of wetland assessments and management. Capacity building opportunities are furthermore integrated into various projects for wetland management which are implemented by government, NGOs and research institutions.

19.3 Are wetland conservation and wise-use issues included in formal education programmes (Resolution XIV.11)? {19.2}
☑ A=Yes

19.3 Additional information
››› Various Universities in South Africa offers training, short courses and modules on wetland-related matters. Wetlands issues are also included on Universities curriculum on Degrees such as Environmental Science, Environmental Management, Nature Conservation, Mining and Environmental Geology and Earth Sciences in Hydrology and Water Resources. Wetland wise use is furthermore included in learning materials for schools, available through the Fundisa for Change initiative (https://fundisaforchange.co.za/)

19.4 How many training events for wetland site managers have occurred since COP14? {19.3}
a) at Ramsar Sites
☑ G=More than #

››› 1

b) at other wetlands
☑ G=More than #

››› 1

19.4 Additional information
››› Training on the Ramsar Information Sheet system by the South African Ramsar NFP, assisted by the Ramsar Africa Region Secretariat, was undertaken online for all Ramsar Sites in December 2023. In person RIS Training and workshops have been undertaken for 8 Ramsar Sites during 2022-2024. Wetland mapping training (provided by SANBI) has been undertaken with many of the Provincial governments and agencies and Ramsar Sites management authorities.
Opportunities for co-learning and training on wetland management tools, concepts and practices for landowners and agencies that are responsible for managing specific wetlands or conservation/protected areas that include wetlands (including areas under biodiversity stewardship agreements) could be further strengthened in South Africa but requires sufficient capacity and resources.

19.5 Have you (AA) used your previous National Reports in monitoring implementation of the Convention? {19.4}

☑ A=Yes