



## The Biodiversity Economy Project

Realising the benefits of the biodiversity economy for communities within and around protected areas

Economic growth and social development are important to overcome the serious societal challenges faced by the country. Fortunately, South Africa has extraordinary biodiversity wealth, which can be harnessed to grow the economy while improving rural livelihoods. The Biodiversity Economy Project was initiated in 2022 to expand protected areas across the country, while also ensuring that the communities located within and around these areas will reap the benefits associated with their local biodiversity.



# About the project


The Biodiversity Economy Project is a five-year project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), that aims to boost the biodiversity economy for communities living in and around protected areas in South Africa. The project builds on South Africa's *National Biodiversity Economy Strategy*, which seeks to balance the protection of biodiversity with sustainable use for economic development. The project is being implemented in two pillars. The second pillar seeks to increase benefits to local communities involved in conservation by improving capacity to implement the biodiversity economy.

The full title of the project is *Catalysing Financing and Capacity for the Biodiversity Economy around Protected Areas*. The World Bank is the implementing partner for pillar II, which will be executed by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), South African National Parks (SANParks), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) and iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority (IWPA).

Challenge	Solution
High unemployment around protected areas	Implement ecotourism initiatives to create job opportunities for local communities and enhance their economic prospects.
Inequality in rural economies	Implement value chain development and financial inclusion measures, to promote inclusive growth in rural areas.
Unrealised potential of the biodiversity economy	Promote biodiversity enterprise development through training and capacity building to unlock economic opportunities while conserving biodiversity.
Threats to protected areas	Strengthen law enforcement, engage local communities, and foster partnerships to combat threats.


## Contribution to global and national targets

The Biodiversity Economy Project has been structured to respond to global and national targets. It is aligned with the three goals of the National Development Plan to increase employment, decrease inequality, and reduce poverty.



Convention on Biological Diversity

Global Biodiversity Framework  
30 x 30 target



South Africa's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan



National Protected Area Expansion Strategy

**Biodiversity stewardship**

The project will add 26 600 ha under improved management practices in landscapes by concluding biodiversity stewardship agreements with communities.

**Biodiversity economy**

The project will benefit 260 000 people living in and around protected areas, who will be empowered to participate in the biodiversity economy.



National Biodiversity Economy Strategy



2030 NDP

National Development Plan



1 NO POVERTY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

15 LIFE ON LAND

Sustainable Development Goals



## Project objectives

The overarching objective over the long term is...

*“to protect South Africa’s exceptional biodiversity through local economic development and conservation.”*

To reach this objective the project aims to increase investment in three targeted landscapes to grow the biodiversity economy and increase benefits to local communities.

### Component 1: Build biodiversity economy nodes

The first component will demonstrate the concept of a successful biodiversity economy in the three project landscapes. It will start by developing co-ordination platforms where different groups can come together to create a shared vision for the biodiversity economy nodes. The component will strive to bring new land under conservation by negotiating biodiversity stewardship agreements with communal landowners. These will expand wildlife habitat and improve the buffers around existing protected areas. The component will support a wide range of activities to increase the economic opportunities in these landscapes, such as providing support for small businesses.

### Component 2: Knowledge exchange

The second component will share the many lessons learnt over the course of the project. It will support knowledge exchanges between the project landscapes, where people visit to learn what others are doing. The component will develop written resources to capture and share the knowledge that arises. It will extend this learning between the three project landscapes, to a national level and internationally through the Global Wildlife Program. By doing so, the component will help to replicate and scale-up the successes of the project. Showcasing the knowledge of the project more widely will help to bring both public and private resources into the biodiversity economy.

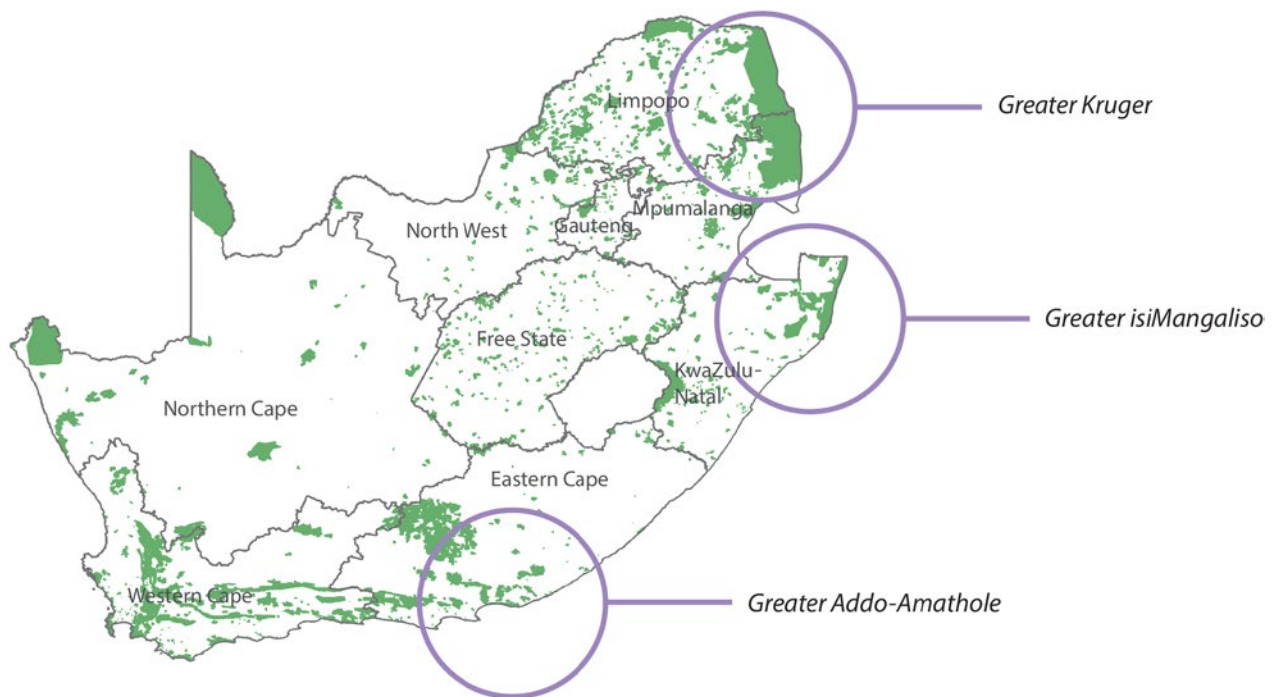
### Component 3: Project management and monitoring

The final component will support project management activities to ensure that the project is delivered effectively and efficiently. The component will help to ensure co-ordination between the implementers in the different project landscapes. It will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the project is progressing towards meeting its long-term objectives. The activities of this component will include day-to-day management, operations, and reporting.



## Project location

Project activities will focus on three landscapes spread across the country in areas with strong potential for vibrant biodiversity economies.



### Greater Kruger Limpopo

The Greater Kruger-Limpopo Node in Limpopo province stretches along the north-western boundary of the Kruger National Park. The Park is the largest protected area in South Africa and a world-renowned tourism destination with around 1.8 million visitors a year. As many as two million people live along its borders, many relying on subsistence agriculture and social grants due to high unemployment. The focal sites of the node include a land claim area, as well as two further areas of community-owned farmland. The potential economic opportunities are game fencing, gate access, roads, and tourism products.

### Greater Addo-Amathole

The Greater Addo-Amathole Node in the Eastern Cape province stretches from the Addo Elephant National Park in the west to the Great Fish River Nature Reserve in the east. The Eastern Cape is the poorest province in South Africa with high unemployment rates. However, the area is also a biodiversity hotspot and contains important strategic water resources. The focal sites include portions of land adjacent to the existing protected areas, including land owned by the eight communities surrounding Addo. Another focus is a land claims settlement adjacent to Great Fish Nature Reserve, where the community has entered a co-management agreement with ECPTA. The opportunities here are for fenced game ranching, lodges, guided game drives, and an abattoir to process game products.

### Greater iSimangaliso

The Greater iSimangaliso Node runs along the northern half of iSimangaliso Wetland Park in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The park is a World Heritage Site – one of the outstanding natural wetlands and coastal sites of Africa. But, over 80% of households in the surrounding communities live below the poverty line, and unemployment is high. People rely extensively on natural resources, which has resulted in the degradation of communal areas and increasing pressure on the resources inside the park. There are 14 land claims within the park and eight signed co-management agreements. The economic opportunities include the development of a planned five-star resort and homestays, boating concessions, community tourism, community conservation areas, and a community-owned abattoir.

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