



Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE): Ecological Reserve Implementation

Water Resource Classification System Capacity Building Workshop

The WRCS Capacity Building Workshop was not aimed at generating recommendations and proposals for the way forward. Nonetheless, participant made several useful and valid suggestions in this regard. The most relevant of these are summarized below.

Recommendations

Process recommendations:

1. A statement explaining the implications, requirements, opportunities and constraints of the Classification Process should be sent to government departments that are likely to be affected by, or may need to partake in, the process. These include, *inter alia*: DEAT, DoA, Department of Health, Department of Land Affairs, provincial nature conservation authorities and South African National Parks.
2. The Classification Process should be fast tracked in the Olifants-Doring Catchment. The following activities should form part of that process:
 - a. The quaternary catchment incremental inflows should be disaggregated to allow for EWR determinations of key tributaries, as these are important from a biodiversity conservation perspective.
 - b. Biodiversity conservation targets for the catchment should be finalized.
3. A committee comprising senior representatives of Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWA), Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and Department of Agriculture (DoA) should direct the Classification Process in the Olifants-Doring Catchment.
4. Water required for the protection of pre-agreed national biodiversity conservation targets for rivers, estuaries and wetlands should be afforded a higher priority than other water use¹.
5. While it was accepted that non-flow related issues could affect ecological condition it is recommended that these not be taken into account in the Classification Ecological Water Requirement (EWR) data. For instance, the Olifants Estuary is currently in a C category. It could be elevated to a B-category through implementation of several non-flow related management actions, particularly cessation of subsistence fishing in the estuary. The EWR's, for a C-category and a B-category, however, have been set in the absence of this intervention.

¹ If these are afforded higher status, then the financial mechanisms to support them should be clearly defined and agreed at the Classification Process.

Technical recommendations:

1. Much of the Present Ecological Status and Ecological Importance and Sensitivity information used in the proof of concept application of the Olifants-Doring catchment is either desktop and/or outdated, and the updating of these data for use in a Classification Process is a priority.
2. In Integrated Units of Analysis (IUAs) that include an estuary, the calculation of the ecological indices should be adjusted to ensure that the condition of the estuary is adequately weighted. The present arrangement using river length will underestimate the importance of estuaries and wetlands in the determination of the Management Class configurations.
3. The Ecosystem Health Indices should be unpacked in the same way as the Social and Economic indices, i.e., presentations should show the factors considered in evaluating and assigning Ecosystem Health. Furthermore, a criterion relating to biodiversity targets should be added to the Ecosystem Health index.
4. The term Ecosystem Health Index should be changed to indicate that it is a broader set of criteria than just ecosystem condition, e.g., "ecosystem index" or "ecological index".
5. The term "ecologically sustainable configuration", is likely to sound (especially to non-ecological stakeholders) like something that should be actively aimed for in all cases as opposed to the minimum lowest-we-should-go point. This term should be changed to something along the lines of ecological minimum base configuration.
6. DEAT and/or South African National Botanical Institute (SANBI) should be involved in the development of the technical aspects of Steps 1-5 of the WRCS, in particular in the development of scenarios that promote attainment of national biodiversity targets (see also Bullet 4 under Process recommendations).