

## **Waterberg declared a Bioregion**

The Waterberg area (the total district) has been declared as a Bioregion according to NEMBA act 10 of 2004. This was gazetted on **4 Jan 2019, gazette no. 2966, Limpopo Provincial Gazette**. It was published with concurrence of the Minister.

Bioregions and bioregional plans are discussed in Chapter 3 (Biodiversity Planning and Monitoring) in NEMBA.

Prior to this, LEDET only had the conservation plan for the province and developers and consultants argued that the plan has no legal teeth.

The Bioregional plan is a legal planning tool and is based on the conservation plan. I've included the wall map and summary. You can access the plan from SANBI's website: <http://bgis.sanbi.org/Projects/Detail/183>

Land is zoned according to biodiversity importance and land use guidelines stipulates the activities allowed in each zone.

**Dr. K. Steenkamp**, Pr. *Sci. Nat.*

Deputy director: Species Assessment and Planning

Biodiversity Management

Limpopo Economic development, Environment and Tourism

Cell: + 27 82 822 6266

Tel: + 27 15 290 7012

## Bioregion Executive Summary

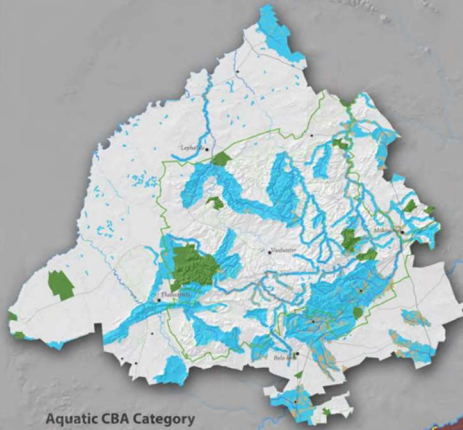
This Bioregional Plan covers the Waterberg District located within the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The Waterberg District Municipality is the primary implementing agent of the Bioregional Plan. The spatial component of the Bioregional Plan is based on a provincial systematic biodiversity plan, the Limpopo Conservation Plan version 2 (LCPv2), undertaken by the Limpopo Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET). The purpose of a bioregional plan is to inform land-use planning, environmental assessments and authorisations, and natural resource management, by a range of sectors whose policies and decisions impact on biodiversity. This is done by providing a map of biodiversity priority areas, referred to as Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs), with accompanying land-use planning and decision-making guidelines.

Agriculture, wildlife and mining are important economic sectors in the region, with plans underway to expand the mining industry as part of the Strategic Integrated Project, particularly along the Northern Mineral Belt. Expansion of the mining industry is one of the Strategic Integrated Projects that is being coordinated by the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordinating Committee, which forms part of the implementation of the National Development Plan. Wildlife breeding has shown massive expansion in the past 5 years. This is strictly an agricultural activity that is having negative impacts on the natural environment. The Growth in the tourism sector is leading to an increase in game farming, tourism facilities, lifestyle estates and golf estates. Consequently, increasing development pressures on biodiversity and the remaining natural ecosystems should be appropriately managed. These factors together make a bioregional plan a useful tool for addressing the need to take biodiversity into account in land-use planning and decision-making, in order to promote sustainable development.

The Waterberg District falls largely within the Savanna biome, with Grassland biome elements located on the higher peaks of the Waterberg. Three endemic and three near-endemic ecosystem types cover 70% of the Waterberg District. Two nationally listed threatened ecosystems are found in the district. Sixty-four plant species of special concern occur in the District. Twenty-two of these species are threatened. It is also home to three Important Bird Areas of South Africa, reflecting a high diversity of bird species and 21 threatened bird species. There are at least 45 mammal species of special concern in the District, of which 15 are threatened. Three reptile species of special concern occur, two of which are threatened. Aquatic systems are equally unique, with 72% of the wetland types and 64% of the river types assessed as threatened, providing habitat for at least three Near Threatened freshwater fish species. The region supports numerous endemic species as well, and its unique topography and varied geology sets it apart from the rest of South Africa. Land-use patterns indicate that approximately 84.8% of the Waterberg District is natural or near-natural land cover. In terms of non-natural land cover categories: 1.3% is urban (62.5% change 2009-2014), 10.9% is under dryland cropping (-5% change 2009-2014); 1.6% is under irrigation cropping (24% change 2009-2014); and, 0.31% is under mining (21% change 2009-2014), making up 13.8% as severely or irreversibly modified. Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) cover 51.0% of the Waterberg District; Ecological Support Areas (ESAs) cover a further 14.8% of the District.



# Waterberg District Municipality Map of Critical Biodiversity Areas



### Aquatic CBA Category

- Critical Biodiversity Areas
- Ecological Support Areas
- Ecological Support Areas (Not Natural)

### Terrestrial CBA Category

- Critical Biodiversity Area - Irreplaceable
- Critical Biodiversity Area - Optimal
- Ecological Support Area - Natural Habitat
- Ecological Support Area - Not Natural
- Other Natural Areas
- No Natural Habitat
- Protected Areas
- Waterberg Biosphere Reserve
- Conservation Areas (informal)

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Protected Areas cover 4.2% and Conservation Areas 7.6%. Protected Areas and Conservation Areas together cover 11.4% of the Waterberg District. Protected Areas (excluding Conservation Areas), Critical Biodiversity Area and Ecological Support Areas together cover 70.0% of the Waterberg District.

The spatial component of the Waterberg District Bioregional Plan is based on the Map of Critical Biodiversity Areas and Ecological Support Areas identified and described in the Limpopo Conservation Plan v2 (LCPv2), a provincial systematic biodiversity plan developed by LEDET, and further refined to align with other relevant spatial plans for the District, such as the Waterberg Environmental Management Framework (EMF), the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve and municipal Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs). The Waterberg District Bioregional Plan is consistent with the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004) and meets all the requirements of the Guideline Regarding the Determination of Bioregions and the Preparation and Publication of Bioregional Plans (DEAT, 2009). There are many mandatory and recommended users of bioregional plans whose decisions and actions impact on biodiversity. These users include local, provincial and national government departments and authorities; national and provincial conservation authorities; environmental and planning consultants; conservation NGOs; and private and communal landowners.

