

(9 May 1994 - to date)

## ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION ACT 73 OF 1989

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### GENERAL POLICY REGARDING TERRESTRIAL AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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Under section 2(1) of the Environment Conservation Act, 1989 (Act No. 73 of 1989), I, Jacob Albertus van Wyk, Minister of Environment Affairs, after consultation with each Minister who is charged with any law which in my opinion relates to a matter affecting the environment, the Minister of State Expenditure, the Administrator of each province and the Council for the Environment, hereby determine the general policy as set out in the Schedule to this notice.

**J. A. VAN WYK,**  
**Minister of Environment Affairs.**

## SCHEDULE

### CLASSIFICATION OF TERRESTRIAL AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

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#### 1. **INTRODUCTION**

The development of nature conservation and specifically the establishment and management of protected areas has moved away from the traditional concept that all protected areas were to be preserved solely as sacrosanct wildlife sanctuaries. The accommodation of the lifestyles, aspirations and needs of local communities as part of the overall conservation ethic has become a globally accepted principle. The protected area system in South Africa presently consists of a variety of types of protected areas, managed for a variety of purposes. To provide for the classification of protected areas on the basis of management requirements, and in keeping with international trends, the following system shall be applied:

## 2. **CATEGORY I: SCIENTIFIC RESERVES AND WILDERNESS AREAS**

### 2.1 *DEFINITION*

A **scientific reserve** is an area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, natural features and/or species of flora and/or fauna and/or cultural resources of scientific importance, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring.

A **wilderness area** is a large area of unmodified land, or land and water, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent physical structures or significant habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions. The area may contain ecological, geological, cultural or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historic value.

### 2.2 *OBJECTIVES*

#### 2.2.1 *Scientific reserves*

To maintain essential ecological processes, to preserve biological diversity and to protect special cultural resources in an undisturbed state in order to have representative examples of the natural environment and/or special cultural resources available for scientific study, environmental monitoring, education, and for the maintenance of genetic resources in a dynamic and evolutionary state.

Research activities need to be planned and undertaken carefully to minimise disturbance. Public access is limited to accredited research scientists engaged in strictly supervised projects.

#### 2.2.2 *Wilderness areas*

To protect a largely undisturbed natural area which serves human physical and spiritual well-being. In order to achieve that a wilderness area must be an enduring natural area of sufficient size to retain its natural character. It is an area where little or no persistent evidence of human intrusion is permitted, so that natural processes will take place largely unaffected by human intervention. Cultural resources which may occur in these areas, will also be protected.

Non-mechanised and strictly controlled access to wilderness areas should be stressed. As pristine natural areas they should be established to ensure that future generations will have an opportunity to seek solitude and understanding in largely undisturbed areas.

### 2.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

#### 2.3.1 *Scientific reserve*

It contains an outstanding ecosystem particularly susceptible to degradation, or species of fauna and flora in imminent danger of extinction, or areas or features of particular biological, cultural or other scientific importance.

The minimum size of the area should ensure the integrity thereof and should accomplish the protection of the feature involved.

The only objective is the permanent preservation of the feature involved, and no development will be allowed which has no direct bearing on this objective.

Access is generally proscribed and in any case is limited to people directly charged with supervision of the area and accredited scientists engaged with strictly demarcated projects.

It is managed by a nationally recognised authority or institution.

### 2.3.2 *Wilderness area*

An undeveloped area presently uninhabited by man and retaining an intrinsically wild appearance and character, or capable of being restored to such a condition.

It must be of sufficient size to protect the wilderness character and to provide the wilderness experience and be physically and visually separated, preferably by other protected area categories, from adjacent areas of development and habitation.

Preservation of the natural environment and wilderness character will be the highest management priority.

Controlled access for visitors seeking the wilderness experience in a natural environment, will be permitted in strict accordance with the natural carrying capacity of the area.

It is managed by a nationally recognised authority or institution.

## 2.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY I*

Special nature reserves, wilderness areas.

## 3. ***CATEGORY II - NATIONAL PARKS AND EQUIVALENT RESERVES***

### 3.1 *DEFINITION*

A **national park** or **equivalent reserve** is a relatively large, outstanding natural area of land and/or sea designated to protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for this and future generations, to exclude exploitation or intensive occupation of the area and to provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and cultural opportunities for visitors.

### 3.2 *OBJECTIVES*

To protect natural and scenic areas of national or international significance for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and tourism purposes. The area should perpetuate, in a natural state, representative samples of physiographic regions, biotic communities and genetic resources and species, to provide ecological stability and diversity. Cultural resources which may occur in these areas, will also be protected.

### 3.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

**National parks** and **equivalent reserves** encompass outstanding and extensive examples of at least one of the recognised biomes of the country in a near natural state or which has potential to be rehabilitated to such a state.

These are of sufficient size to sustain viable, free-living populations of all wild plant and animal species which occur naturally or which occurred in historical times, including predators, without requiring unrealistic control measures to safeguard adjacent farming practices or other development.

Preservation of the natural environment will at all times receive the highest priority. Only development which is reconcilable with the objectives of the area, will be allowed.

These areas are open for controlled access by all members of the public.

These areas are managed by either the National Parks Board or a competent nationally recognised authority.

### 3.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY II*

National parks, provincial parks and nature reserves, indigenous state forests.

## 4. ***CATEGORY III - NATURAL MONUMENTS AND AREAS OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE***

### 4.1 *DEFINITION*

A natural feature or a feature of cultural significance or both or an area of outstanding or unique scenic, scientific, educational or inspirational value.

#### 4.2 *OBJECTIVES*

To protect outstanding natural and cultural features and places because of their special interest, unique or representative characteristics and, to the extent consistent with this, provide opportunities for interpretation, education, research and public appreciation.

#### 4.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

This category normally contains one or more features of outstanding significance which, because of uniqueness, rarity or representivity, should be protected. These areas are not of the size, nor do they contain a diversity of features which would justify their inclusion as a Category II area.

Generally, these sites are not extensive.

They may be established to protect natural ecosystems and cultural resources, but usually they protect specific phenomena related to larger systems.

These sites may be state-owned and managed by either central or other government agencies, or owned and managed by non-profit trusts, corporations or private landowners as long as there is assurance that they will be managed to protect their inherent features for the long term.

#### 4.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY III*

National monuments, monuments, botanical gardens, zoological gardens, natural heritage sites, sites of conservation significance.

### 5 *CATEGORY IV - HABITAT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS*

#### 5.1 *DEFINITION*

Habitat and wildlife management areas are areas subject to human intervention, based on research into the requirements of specific species for nesting, feeding and survival. Maintaining sustainable plant and animal populations as well as protecting rare and threatened species, is an integral function.

#### 5.2 *OBJECTIVES*

To assure the natural conditions necessary to protect significant species, groups of species, biotic communities, or physical features of the environment where these may require specific human manipulation to ensure their survival. Scientific research, environmental monitoring and educational use are the primary activities associated with sustainable resource management of this category. Cultural resources which may occur in these areas, will also be protected.

### 5.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

A Category IV area is desirable when protection of specific habitats is essential to the continued well-being of indigenous flora and resident or migratory fauna.

Although a variety of areas fall within this category, each would have, as its primary purpose, the protection of nature and the survival of species. The production of harvestable, renewable resources and the protection of cultural resources may play a role in management.

The size of the area is dependent on the habitat requirements of the species to be protected. These areas may be relatively small, but should incorporate nesting areas, marshes, or lakes, estuaries, forest or grassland habitats, or fish spawning areas or seascapes including feeding beds for marine mammals. On the other hand, some bird sanctuaries may be very extensive.

The area may require habitat manipulation to provide optimum conditions for the species, vegetation community or feature according to individual circumstances. For example, a particular grassland or health community may be protected and perpetuated through grazing; a marsh for wintering waterfowl may require continual removal of excess reeds and supplementary planting of waterfowl food; or a reserve for an endangered animal may need protection against predators. Limited areas may be developed for public education and appreciation of the work of wildlife management.

Ownership may be by any level of government, non-profit trusts, corporations, private individuals or groups.

### 5.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY IV*

Provincial, local and private nature reserves, conservancies.

## 6. ***CATEGORY V - PROTECTED LAND/SEASCAPES***

### 6.1 *DEFINITION*

Areas which are a product of the harmonious interaction of people and nature. They may demonstrate cultural manifestations such as customs, beliefs, social organisation or material traits

as reflected in use patterns. These areas are often scenically attractive or aesthetically unique patterns of human settlement. Traditional practices associated with agriculture, grazing or fishing are evident.

## 6.2 *OBJECTIVES*

To maintain significant areas which are characteristic of the harmonious interaction of nature and culture, whilst providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism, and supporting the accepted life-style and economic activity of these areas. These areas also serve scientific and educational purposes and maintain biological and cultural diversity.

## 6.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

The scope and character of areas in this category are necessarily broad because of the wide variety of natural, cultural or scenic areas that occur.

These areas may demonstrate certain cultural manifestations such as customs, beliefs, social organisation or material traits as reflected in use patterns. They are characterised by either scenically attractive or aesthetically unique patterns of human settlement. Traditional practices associated with agriculture, grazing and fishing dominate. The area would be large enough to ensure the integrity of the use pattern.

Natural or scenic areas along coastlines and lake shores, or in hilly or mountainous terrain, or along the shores of rivers, or inland adjacent to important tourist highways or population centres, offering scenic views are often included. Many will have the physical qualities and potential to be developed for a variety of outdoor recreation uses.

In some cases the area would be privately held and the application of either central or delegated planning control would likely be necessary to assist in the perpetuation of both the use and lifestyle. Means of subsidisation or other government assistance might be required. Efforts would be made to maintain the quality of landscape through appropriate management practices. In other instances the areas are established and managed under public ownership.

## 6.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY V*

Protected natural environments, natural resource areas, scenic landscapes, urban landscapes.

## 7. ***CATEGORY V1 - SUSTAINABLE USE AREA***

### 7.1 *DEFINITION*

It is a predominantly natural area of land and/or sea, designated and managed to ensure the long-term protection and maintenance of its biological diversity, while providing a sustainable flow of natural products.

## 7.2 *OBJECTIVES*

To protect and maintain the biological diversity and other natural values of the area in the long term, whilst bringing benefits that contribute to the welfare and development of the local community.

## 7.3 *CRITERIA FOR SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT*

The area shall be predominantly natural, although it may also contain limited areas of modified ecosystems (commercial plantations are not appropriate).

The area shall be large enough to absorb sustainable resource uses without detriment to its overall long-term natural and cultural value.

Management shall be undertaken preferably in partnership with the local community or through local custom.

Sound management practices that ensure sustainable production and protect the natural resource base from being alienated for other land uses that may negatively impact on biological diversity are essential.

Also, Category V1 areas provide, where necessary, additional protection as buffers and links in a network of protected areas.

## 7.4 *PRESENT LEGAL OR OTHER CATEGORIES WHICH COULD POSSIBLY BE CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY V1*

Mountain catchment areas.