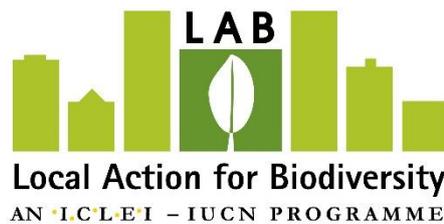


Amathole District Municipality

Wetland Strategy and Action Plan

(2017- 2030)

Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB): Wetlands South Africa





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DISCLAIMER

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AMATHOLE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
WETLAND STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2017- 2030)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Amathole District Municipality
AS	Africa Secretariat
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
EMS	Environmental Management System
ICLEI	ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
LAB	Local Action for Biodiversity
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
NEM: BA	National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act
NEM: PAA	National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act
NEM: WA	National Environmental Management: Water Act
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NWA	National Water Act
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Initiative
SDF	Spatial Development Framework
SPLUMA	Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act

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INTRODUCTION

South Africa is endowed with a rich wealth of biodiversity, which offers an immense opportunity to support the country's development path by providing many goods and services which contribute to municipal service delivery, water and food security and quality of life, especially under a changing climate.

Amathole District Municipality is situated within the central part of the Eastern Cape Province, which lies in the southeast of South Africa and borders the Indian Ocean. The Amathole District Municipality has a land area of 21 595 km² with approximately 200 km of coastline stretching along the Sunshine Coast from the Fish River to just south of Hole in the Wall along the Wild Coast. The Amathole District Municipality coastline spans two bio-geographical regions, namely the warm temperate south coast and the sub-tropical east coast.

Despite the wetlands within Amathole District Municipality being of high value to the municipality in terms of ecosystem service provision, a large number of the wetlands in the region are under threat or have already been lost. This is largely due to historical degradation, deliberate draining of wetlands to make way for development and agriculture, inappropriate development within close proximity to the wetlands, poorly regulated agricultural practices, contamination through chemical, sewage, effluent and storm water seeps, water abstraction and the spread of invasive exotic plants (particularly Blue Gum, Black Wattle and Rooikrans). Degraded wetlands are unable to function to the same degree as healthy wetlands and as such ecosystem service provision is severely hindered or even lost altogether. As such, careful management as well as the investment in the maintenance of healthy wetlands and the rehabilitation and restoration of damaged or degraded wetlands is required. This will ensure the continued provision of these vital ecosystem services to the municipality.

To streamline and improve the management of wetlands, the Amathole District Municipality is implementing the Local Action for Biodiversity: Wetlands South Africa (LAB: Wetlands SA) programme with support from ICLEI Africa Secretariat (ICLEI AS). The LAB: Wetlands SA project aims to ensure the protection of priority natural wetland resources, thus enabling the supply of ecosystem services, and promoting resilient communities and sustainable local economies under a changing climate within South African local governments. Through the development of this Wetland Report, ICLEI AS will assist the Amathole District Municipality in identifying the gaps in management and assist with devising new and better wetlands management strategies going forward.

Supporting Documentation:

This document relies heavily on two supporting documents: The Amathole District Municipality Wetland Report (2017) and the Wetland Strategy and Action Plan Guidelines (2017). Guidelines available here: <http://cbc.iclei.org/project/lab-wetlands-sa/>



1. WETLANDS IN THE AMATHOLE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

1.1. What is a Wetland?

“Wetlands are land which is transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems, where the water table is usually at or near the surface, or the land is periodically covered with shallow water, and which land in normal circumstances supports or would support vegetation typically adapted to life in saturated soil”.

National Water Act No. 36 of 1998.

In simpler terms, a wetland is a feature in the landscape which is saturated with water for a long enough period that the soil conditions change (mottling as a result of the anaerobic conditions) and the vegetation shifts to respond to these changes.



Figure 1 & 2: Mottled soils indicative of a wetland (left) and specially adapted wetland vegetation (right).

For more detailed information regarding wetlands within the Amathole District Municipality. Please refer to the Amathole District Municipality: Wetland Report (2017) which can be accessed here: <http://cbc.iclei.org/project/lab-wetlands-sa/>

1.2 The Value of Wetlands to the Amathole District Municipality

All wetland types can be classified as high value ‘ecological infrastructure’ due to the large number of ecosystem services that they provide. Wetland ecosystem services can be classified into four separate categories namely ‘provisioning services’, ‘regulating services’, ‘cultural services’ and ‘supporting services’. Provisioning services can be described as the products one can physically obtain from wetlands. Regulatory services can be described as the benefits one receives from the wetland. Cultural services are the nonmaterial benefits that one can obtain from wetlands. Lastly supporting services are the services provided that is necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services. Please refer to **Table 1** below for a detailed description of the ecosystem services that wetlands within Amathole District Municipality provide.

Table 1: Ecosystem services identified in the Amathole District Municipality

Provisioning



Food	Many species of fish utilize wetland habitats for spawning, food sources, or protection.
Fresh Water	Storage and retention of water; provision of water for drinking and irrigation.
Fibre and Fuel	Wood, reeds, peat
Medicinal products	Medicinal plants, extraction of genes for resistance to pathogens.
Habitat	Habitat wild life and nesting sites for birds.
Regulating	
Climate regulation	Stores greenhouse gasses, influences local and regional temperature, precipitation.
Water regulation (hydrological flows)	They store storm water much like a sponge and slowly release it over time hence preventing sediment loss and over flooding of areas downstream. This helps with flood control. Wetlands also help with ground water recharge and discharge.
Water purification and waste treatment	Retention, recovery and removal of excess nutrients and other pollutants from the water. Wetlands can be natural filters of water through trapping pollutants, such as excess nutrients, disease-causing Bacteria, pesticides and sediment, and consequently improving water quality.
Erosion control	Retain sediments that would otherwise be carried downstream and deposited in dams and floodplains.
Natural hazard regulation	Flood control and storm protection - Wetlands can slow runoff water, minimizing the frequency streams and rivers reach catastrophic flood levels.
Pollination	Habitat and breeding ground for pollinators.
Cultural	
Spiritual	Baptism places, place of worship, collection of water for various religious activities.
Recreational	Opportunity for recreational and ecotourism, recreational fishing can create a considerable source of income. Wetlands improve the quality of life in communities.
Aesthetic	Beauty or aesthetic value in aspects of wetlands.
Educational	Opportunity for indigenous and academic research and learning.
Supporting	
Soil formation	Sediment retention and accumulation of organic matter, peat formation.
Nutrient cycling	Storage and recycling, processing and acquisition of nutrients.
Biodiversity	Habitat for resident and migrating species.

It should be noted that the numerous ecosystem services provided by wetlands come at no cost to the municipality and as such, all that needs to be done to ensure continued provision of these services is to protect and maintain local wetlands. However, the inappropriate management of wetlands can cause a loss of wetland area and subsequent loss of ecosystem services. This results in the municipalities having to invest in expensive infrastructure (e.g. water filtration plants or flood barriers) to ensure the same level of service delivery.



1.3 Threats to Wetlands within Amathole District Municipality

Despite the significant benefits that wetlands provide in terms of ecosystem services, 50% of wetlands in South Africa have already been lost and 48% of the remaining wetlands are critically endangered and/or degraded. This loss is a direct result of deliberate draining of wetlands, development and expansion (both urban and agricultural) and pollution. Damage to wetlands results in increasingly limited functionality and subsequently a decrease in the ability to provide valuable ecosystem services. The rate of loss of wetland ecosystem types are often associated with highly productive land, and are often the ones that are overgrazed, cultivated, dammed, drained or bulldozed for agricultural purposes.

The Amathole District Municipal IDP notes that there is currently unsustainable use of wetland resources through overgrazing, over cultivation, over abstraction of water for domestic use, pollution, establishment of new human settlements in wetland areas, cutting and burning of aquatic and other vegetation for fuel, housing and commercial activities and the introduction of exotic species into wetlands.

The information below was extracted and summarised from the Amathole Wetland Report. The report contains a holistic overview of threats facing wetlands in the Amathole district.

Impact of development on wetlands

Habitat destruction and the conversion of natural environments for other uses is the most significant cause of biodiversity loss in South Africa. The Eastern Cape Province is no exception in this regard. Changes in land-cover due to human activities, such as cultivation, urban sprawl and development, alters (or destroys) natural habitats, resulting in degradation and fragmentation of the remaining habitats. Overall, this results in loss of ecosystem function and can be attributed to losses of biodiversity and declines in overall ecosystem health. Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation pose the greatest threats to the biodiversity of the Eastern Cape, and associated districts, including threatened plants, and threatened animal life (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibian and invertebrates).

The Amathole District Municipality is faced with a backlog of development and the fast track of providing services adds pressures to biodiversity. Over-exploitation (or unsustainable use of natural resources) occurs when the rate at which natural resources are harvested or utilised exceeds its natural replacement rate, either through reproduction alone in closed populations or through both reproduction and immigration from other populations. Over-exploitation is often unintentional due to the effect on non-target species which inadvertently result from harvesting activities. In the Amathole District Municipality, due to the social pressures, a particular area of concern in this regard is the trade-driven exploitation of medicinal plants.

Impact of agriculture on wetlands

The Amathole District Municipality is characterised by the pastoral way of life of the rural Xhosa communities who graze their Nguni cattle on the foothills. Some of these efforts include homestead gardens, arable allotments, communal lands, irrigation schemes and state owned farms. Production activities such as wool and mohair processing, the packing and shipping of vegetables, fruit and nuts, could potentially provide opportunities for local processing activities.



Increases in population also place increase pressures on the land through an increase in the number of people that require sustenance therefore increasing the need for widespread agricultural practices. Communities resort to the clearing of natural landscapes for agricultural purposes. The rate of clearing or alteration of terrestrial natural vegetation types, for certain land use activities also constitutes drivers and pressures of biodiversity loss and alteration. There is a lack of skills in farming and agricultural practices that does not allow for monitoring the change in the distribution of land uses over time, and adaptive management of natural resources and use, with specific attention paid to how these land use changes affect the extent of the natural areas in the region.

2. GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

South Africa has an extensive legislative framework concerning the environment and biodiversity, which are considered in both developments planning as well as national government priorities. This section outlines key legislation and policies as well as the governance structure within the Amathole District Municipality.

2.1 Policy framework

Table 2 below provides a comprehensive summary of South African legislation, policies and strategies pertinent for the management of wetlands within the Amathole District Municipality. It is important to note that some of the legislation such as the National Environmental Management Act provides specific instructions regarding wetland management whilst other legislation indirectly supports management of wetlands such as the National Environmental Management: Waste Act.

Table 2: Legislation governing wetland management in South Africa and Amathole District Municipality

Legislation/Policy/Strategy	How it relates to Wetlands
Legislation	
South African Constitution	Overarching principles of care for the environment.
National Water Act	Water use control, including extraction and construction within the vicinity of a watercourse or wetland.
National Environmental Management Act	Environmental impact assessments (EIAs) for the development of a new or disturbed site within the vicinity of a watercourse or wetland.
National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act	Protection of biodiversity and the formulation of a number of tools (e.g. bioregional plans and threatened ecosystem lists) that feed into land use planning and EIA procedures.
National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act - Alien and Invasive Species Regulations	All matters related to invasive species management (fauna and flora).
National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act	Integrated landscape protection from catchment to the coast.
National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act	Protection of national parks, protected areas and conservation sites. This includes the protection of wetland site.
National Environmental Management: Waste Act	Regulation of illegal dumping



Legislation/Policy/Strategy	How it relates to Wetlands
Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act	Protect the utilization of the natural agricultural resources to promote the conservation of the soil, the water sources and the vegetation and the combating of weeds and invasive plants.
Municipal Systems Act	Role of local governments and the requirements for IDPs, SDFs and Disaster Management Plans
Municipal Structures Act	Promotion of regional planning and spatial planning categories.
Municipal Health Act	Monitoring of WWTW discharge
Policies	
National Development Plan, and associated Medium Term Strategic Framework.	The NDP sets out measures to protect natural resources in South Africa. Through the creation of the MTSF and associated 'Delivery Agreements', required outputs and targets are set.
Local and Provincial Development Policies	Is the green economy or the role of biodiversity considered?
Municipal Planning	
Integrated Development Plan (IDP)	Overall strategy document for the municipality.
Provincial Strategic Development Framework (SDF)	Overarching spatial planning guidelines for the province.
District SDF	Broad spatial planning guidelines for the district (including a map of land use within the district)
Local Municipal SDFs	Strategic plans to manage municipal land at the local level.
Open Space Framework	Demarcation of Open Space Areas.
Environmental Management Framework	Map and land use guidelines for areas of environmental importance.
Sector Plans	e.g. Disaster Management Plan
Strategies	
The National Biodiversity Framework	Provides biodiversity targets for South Africa.
National Water Resource Strategy	Speaks to protection and rehabilitation of wetlands.
Other	
Bioregional plans (draft or gazetted)	Maps Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs) and Ecological Support Areas (ESAs).
Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act	Provides a framework for spatial planning and land use management in South Africa. It sets out in its definitions that municipal planning is primarily the executive function of the local sphere of government and requires that biodiversity is adequately considered in spatial planning.
Disaster Management Amendment Bill	Outlines how ecosystems should be considered in the updated Disaster Management Act.

2.2 Wetland management within the municipality

Currently, wetland management within ADM is not a priority and this is reflected through budget allocations. Broadly the environmental function is not prioritised. Capacity within municipalities is a challenge i.e. human resource and finance is an issue.



Challenges include:

- Lack of mainstreaming of environmental issues
- Environment is regarded as an unfunded mandate
- Lack of clear roles and responsibilities

Since the effective management and conservation of wetlands cannot be undertaken without engaging with a range of municipal departments, the mainstreaming of wetland management across line functions is imperative. Mainstreaming does not create parallel processes and systems, but ensures that plans are integrated into existing structures, processes and systems.

The Amathole District Municipality developed an Environmental Management System (EMS) in 2004 to govern all of the Amathole District Municipality's functions to ensure environmental compliance and sustainability, as well as form the basis for environmental management within the Amathole District Municipality.

2.3 Local and regional partnerships and programmes managing wetlands within Amathole District Municipality

In addition to the collective municipal work that is being undertaken at both the district and local level to monitor and manage wetlands within the Amathole District Municipality, there are numerous projects and activities currently being implemented within and around wetlands by the public and private sector as well as several NGOs. The projects currently underway within the Amathole District Municipality are summarised in in the Amathole Wetland Report:

3. DEVELOPING THE AMATHOLE WETLAND STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Prior to the development of a WSAP, it was critical to undertake an extensive and inclusive stakeholder engagement process in order to gather all relevant information and inputs from key stakeholders for populating the WSAP as well as ensuring overall stakeholder buy-in. In order to achieve this, as part of the LAB: Wetlands SA project, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and Amathole District Municipality located and engaged with key stakeholders (provincial, district and local municipal officials within the municipality as well as representatives from local NGOs, and others) in three key ways namely through a Wetland Awareness Raising Workshop, one on one meetings which facilitated the development of a Wetland Report and at a WSAP Workshop in order to gather the required information for inclusion in the WSAP and secure stakeholder buy-in at the local level.

The Wetland Awareness Raising Workshop was undertaken in East London on 3 December 2015. Prior to this workshop, a desktop study was undertaken to ascertain which stakeholders within ADM are working in the planning and biodiversity sectors. All identified stakeholders were invited to the workshop which was then used to not only raise awareness of the value of wetlands but also to identify possible stakeholders who should also be included in the WSAP development process.



After the Wetland Awareness Raising Workshop, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and ADM co-developed a Wetland Report. The ADM Wetland Report is a desktop study and aimed to include all the known information on wetlands within the municipality. One on one interviews were undertaken with relevant stakeholders identified and resulted in critical information being gathered for the report as well as resulted in critical 'gaps' in wetland management being identified that need to be addressed. This set the scene for the final stakeholder engagement – the WSAP Workshop.

The Amatole WSAP Workshop was held at the he ADM Calgary Museum in East London on 11 April 2016. All stakeholders identified during previous engagements were invited to attend. During the workshop, feedback on the findings of the ADM Wetland Report were presented, highlighting the critical ecosystem services the wetlands within ADM provide, the threats to these wetlands and the gaps in wetland management. This set the scene for the development of the WSAP.

The WSAP is outlined below and includes all identified issues as well as proposed solutions as developed by all stakeholders present at the WSAP workshop, as well as those that contributed to the Wetland Report.



4. AMATHOLE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY WETLAND STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2017- 2030)

VISION STATEMENT	
<i>“Striving towards healthy wetland systems which are managed in a sustainable manner for the benefit of all”</i>	
VALUES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Selflessness</i> ✓ <i>Pro-poor</i> ✓ <i>Responsiveness</i> ✓ <i>Transformative</i> ✓ <i>Inclusivity</i> ✓ <i>Dignity</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Respect</i> ✓ <i>Good work ethics</i> ✓ <i>Transparency</i> ✓ <i>Integrity</i> ✓ <i>Accountability</i>
FOCUS AREAS (3 – 6 strategic interventions / priorities):	
1. <i>Wetland spatial data management</i>	
2. <i>Environmental Empowerment (includes education/awareness and capacity building)</i>	
3. <i>Wetland restoration (rehabilitation)</i>	
4. <i>Mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation</i>	
5. <i>Collaborative management</i>	
(S.M.A.R.T.) GOALS FOR EACH FOCUS AREA	



FOCUS AREA 1: Wetland spatial data management	Goal 1.1: Development of a holistic Amathole wetlands inventory by 2020
	Goal 1.2: Create a geodatabase from information arising from the inventory as per Goal 1.1 by 2020
	Goal 1.3: Conduct a thorough assessment of all identified ADM wetlands by 2020
FOCUS AREA 2: Environmental Empowerment	Goal 2.1: Develop an environmental/wetland education plan.
	Goal 2.2: Capacitate local municipality officials on wetland related issues i.e. management, protection, etc.
FOCUS AREA 3: Wetland restoration (rehabilitation)	Goal 3.1: Identify wetlands requiring rehabilitation and restoration by 2020
FOCUS AREA 4: Mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation	Goal 4.1: Ensure wetlands information in all relevant planning initiatives
	Goal 4.2: Include wetland matters into existing environmental management forums
	Goal 4.3: Ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the ADM wetland strategy and action plan
FOCUS AREA 5: Collaborative management	Goal 5.1: Development of an action plan for stakeholder engagement

HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Focus Area 1: Wetland spatial data management			
Goal 1.1: Development of a holistic Amathole wetlands inventory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop data collection standards and create data sheet/data directory. • GPS all wetlands/coordinate wetlands delineation (data sheet). (Appoint and external service provider to undertake wetland delineation). • Data capturing on a worksheet/inventory sheet. • Develop an inventory. 	Environmental Officer and GIS Technician and consultant	2017 to 2020 (3 Years)



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Goal 1.2: Create a geodatabase from information arising from the inventory as per Goal 1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set topology rules. • Develop metadata standards. • Identify possible layers/themes. • Develop a feature database. 	Environmental Officer GIS Technician	2017 to 2020 (3 Years)
Goal 1.3: Conduct a thorough assessment of all identified ADM wetlands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source/develop a land cover dataset/ wetland condition data. • Classify all mapped wetlands. • Determine the threat status and unprotected station of each wetland group. • Prepare the data for publishing. • Publish the data on ADM website. • Share information with national stakeholders such as SANBI, DEA (Working for Wetlands) etc. to drive national alignment. 	Terrestrial Environmental Officer, GIS Technician,	2017 to 2020 (3 Years)
Focus Area 2: Environmental Empowerment (includes education/awareness and capacity building)			
Goal 2.1: Develop an environmental/wetland education plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps that need to be addressed in terms of wetland/environmental awareness. • Engage relevant stakeholders on development of the EWEP. • Implementation of the EWEP 	Environmental Unit	Ongoing/Long Term Short Term
Goal 2.2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess local municipalities' official's capacity to implement wetland management. 	ADM & Other relevant stakeholders	Short term



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN			
FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Capacitate local municipality officials on wetland related issues i.e. management, protection, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct training workshop accordingly. 	ADM & Other relevant stakeholders	Ongoing/long term
Focus Area 3: Wetland restoration (rehabilitation)			
Goal 3.1 Identify wetlands requiring rehabilitation and restoration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a wetland management tool. Ascertain requirements for wetland rehabilitation (engage stakeholders such as Department of Environmental Affairs, Working for Wetlands) Implementation through EPWP Wetland mainstreaming Resources mobilization for implementation. 	Environmental Unit	2017 to 2020 (3 Years)

HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN			
FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Focus Area 4: Mainstreaming, monitoring and evaluation			



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Goal 4.1: Ensure wetlands information in all relevant planning initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review ADM and LM's IDPs, SDFs and other planning initiatives. • Engage IDP and Planning staff • Incorporate relevant wetland information in planning initiatives (i.e. maps, classifies wetlands, status etc. into the IDPs, SDFs etc.) • Ensure alignment with National and Provincial legislation, policies and frameworks etc. 	Environmental Manager and IDP Manager	Ongoing
Goal 4.2: Include wetland matters into existing environmental management forums.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify relevant exiting forums. • Mobilise wetland representation and information into identified environmental management forum/s 	Environmental Manager	Ongoing
Goal 4.3: Ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of the ADM wetland strategy and action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a wetland monitoring and evaluation strategy • Develop monitoring and evaluation tools • Establish a monitoring and evaluation team • Implementation and review strategy 	Environmental Manager	Ongoing
Focus Area 5: Collaborative management			
Goal 5.1: Develop action plan for stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate current community engagement initiatives. • Ascertain to which end communities are engaged on environmental matters within ADM. 	Environmental Manager	Ongoing



HIGH LEVEL ACTION PLAN

FOCUS AREA & GOALS	KEY ACTIONS	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate the ADM communities' knowledge and understanding on the environment.• Develop strategy accordingly.		