



# Stewardship case study

## The Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor: Communication links the landscape **#3b**



***THE GCBC was established in a landscape with few existing linkages. The steering committee and projects undertaken have facilitated better coordination between communities, farmers and industry.***

**Key future objectives are:**

- ***Mobilization of civil society to actively support conservation***
- ***Establishment of additional stewardship agreements with farmers***
- ***Working with industry to implement best practice guidelines***
- ***Mitigating climate change impacts.***

In fulfillment of its mandate to support conservation through building institutional capacity, the C.A.P.E. partnership has invested both in the development of individuals within organizations and also in the organizations themselves. At a larger scale capacity has been developed through support of inter-institutional, landscape-level initiatives. The Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor (GCBC) is one of seven landscape initiatives supported by C.A.P.E.

The primary aim in creating conservation corridors is to maintain and restore connectivity across a landscape, as a mechanism to respond to the impacts of climate change and to support livelihoods. The Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor has mobilized a wide range of role-players. The initiative has significantly strengthened the institutional capacity of those committed to the preservation of the Cederberg's unique biodiversity.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE STEERING COMMITTEE**

A broad-based steering committee was established for the GCBC. This body aims to involve the people of the region in the conservation of biodiversity and supports the development of sustainable livelihoods by strengthening civil society. The steering committee plays a key role in identifying important issues and developing projects to address them.

The steering committee represents 22 organizations including NGOs, CBOs, communities, government departments and industry partners. It has prioritized maintaining engagement with local authorities to support local economic and community development.

The GCBC steering committee is the primary forum for discussing, sharing and learning within the Corridor. It provides a structure where organizations active in the region can communicate and collaborate. Discussion of issues facilitates the development of mutual understanding. This communication is supported by a newsletter, website and e-news bulletin. Articles are also placed in the local newspapers as a means to raise awareness.

### **PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING**

Fine-scale biodiversity planning has been undertaken for the region, identifying priorities for conservation and providing a scientific basis for the delineation of the corridor. This was integrated with an Area-Wide Planning Process which involved large numbers of farmers and was supported by the Department of Agriculture. This participative planning process has provided the basis for the establishment of the corridor. The total area under conservation through stewardship agreements is 70 406 ha. A further 282 953 ha are under voluntary agreements with the biodiversity and business projects in the rooibos and potato industries.

### **ENGAGING WITH INDUSTRY**

The GCBC proactively approached the potato and rooibos industries as the expansion of these industries represented the biggest threat to biodiversity within the corridor. In partnership with these two industries, best practice guidelines were developed to promote sustainable farming practices. The development and implementation of these guidelines has been supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and is co-funded by Woolworths, Conservation International and GCBC Small Grants.

Both the rooibos and potato industries have now officially adopted these best practice guidelines. These industries have internalized these principles by employing biodiversity coordinators and are now addressing the broader objective of sustainability. Best practice guidelines have been developed for stock farmers by the Cape Leopard Trust, and are also being developed for the game industry.

Several farmers in the corridor act as champions for conservation: Communication and experiential knowledge from these peers strengthens the conservation awareness of



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***“THE GCBC aims to mobilize and support people across the landscape encouraging them to undertake conservation themselves.”***

other local landowners. The combination of industry guidelines and local champions has been very effective in changing the attitude of the farming community towards conservation.

There are over 30 4x4 trails in the GCBC. Irresponsible use of 4x4 trails in the past caused extensive ecological damage, particularly in the fragile Sandveld. Through a GCBC-initiated project, the 4x4 industry body has now established best practice guidelines for the maintenance and use of trails. The Minister has approved the application of these guidelines across the whole province.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES WITH COMMUNITIES**

A key objective of the GBCG is to facilitate conservation and development at a grassroots level through mobilization of rural communities, including those living in remote settlements. The aim is to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity conservation.

One of the first steps towards building these important relationships was to arrange a community exchange project. The Algeria and Wupperthal Communities from the GCBC visited Cape Flats Nature community champions involved in community conservation and development initiatives on the Cape Flats. Communication between peers is a powerful motivator of community involvement. The next step will be for the Algeria and Wupperthal communities to identify opportunities for community development and biodiversity conservation. The GCBC will endeavour to provide the support they need to achieve these objectives.

Building relationships with local communities which already have their own internal dynamics is always more complex than working with individual farmers. In particular, communities who have recently benefited from land reform understandably find it very hard to consider relinquishing land-rights that they have only just been granted by signing stewardship agreements. However, to their credit, the Algeria community has decided to commit some of their land to conservation. Community leaders have indicated that it has always been an objective within the community to conserve a portion of their land. The GCBC and the Wupperthal community have also initiated discussions to re-establish the Wupperthal conservancy.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

It is forecast that the GCBC region could face substantial increase in temperature coupled with a significant decrease in rainfall. One of the motivations for the establishment of conservation corridors is to facilitate species movement across the landscape in response to climate change.

Researchers are looking at the implications of climate change for rural communities. They are developing tools to help communities adapt to changes in temperature regimes and rainfall patterns. For example, research has been undertaken on the implications of climate change for the water-intensive potato industry in the Sandveld. In the Nieuwoudtville and the Bokkeveld Plateau GCBC partners: Environmental Monitoring Group; Indigo Development and Change; along with Dr Emma Archer from the CSIR, have initiated climate change preparedness workshops with the farmers from the Heiveld. These workshops are exploring the adaptation strategies for climate change employed by communities.

When the GCBC was first established considerable effort was invested in establishing relationships. This was done with the awareness that conservation impacts upon people's livelihoods and that the GCBC is a working landscape in which people have been living for generations. Wherever possible, the GCBC identified and supported existing positive activities. It is now essential to secure long term resources to maintain the momentum which has been established.

### **Key Words:**

*Cederberg, Communities, Industry, Climate Change, Living Landscapes, Landscape Initiatives, Rooibos, Potatoes, Learning Exchange*