

Title: Refining the delineation and description of Western Altimone Sandstone Fynbos (FFs30)

Description: Vegetation maps are an essential tool for biodiversity planning and assessment. The mapping of vegetation types involves the classification and delineating of groups of plant communities sharing a suite of abiotic and biotic processes in a particular landscape. In South Africa, the National Vegetation Map of South Africa, Lesotho, and Swaziland (2006), or National Vegetation Map (NVM) was the first map of terrestrial ecosystems that represented the biodiversity across the South African landscape, and it quickly became embedded in National and Provincial conservation planning processes. However, at the time the authors of the first version of the NVM acknowledged the need for further investigation and refinement as new data is gathered for many of the vegetation types that were mapped. Hence some of the vegetation types have been highlighted as types with little information that require further research. One of these types is the Western Altimone Sandstone Fynbos (FFs30) which was identified as have very little research and further investigation was recommended to refine the data for this type. This vegetation type is located at high altitudes within the Fynbos biome of the Westerns Cape, usually on the peaks of mountains. As such, the type is the ideal location for cellular towers. Given the small area occupied by units of this vegetation type, even low impact activities could have degrading effects on the system. Further investigation of the accuracy of the current delineation and classification, comprehensive lists of taxa for the vegetation type, and possible investigations of degradation could assist in increasing our understanding of these systems so that they can be prioritised for protection if necessary. Vegetation plots will be sampled systematically within units of this type for both biotic and abiotic variables.

Field: Ecology

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