SANBI
Biodiversity for Life
South African National Biodiversity Institute

# Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Water Security in South Africa (EbA-Water)



**Freshwater Ecosystem Network Annual Meeting**

11 November 2026

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forestry, fisheries & the environment
Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEM NETWORK

2030 NDP

# Overview


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Timeline

# SANBI mobilises funding for Climate Change Adaptation in South Africa through Direct Access

SANBI is South Africa's only National Implementing Entity for the **Adaptation Fund** and one of two Direct Access Entities for the **Green Climate Fund** in South Africa.

**USD 40.1m**
GCF project approved

**USD 55m**
2 GCF proposals in advanced development

**USD 5m**
AF first-stage proposal under review

ADAPTATION FUND

GREEN CLIMATE FUND

## WHY DIRECT ACCESS MATTERS

- Greater country agency and stronger national institutions
- Directly supports implementation of the Climate Change Act (2024)
- Every proposal advances DFFE, SANBI and sub-national mandates and benefits climate-vulnerable communities

Ecosystem-based Adaptation for Water Security in South Africa **(EbA-Water)**

**Leads:** Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)

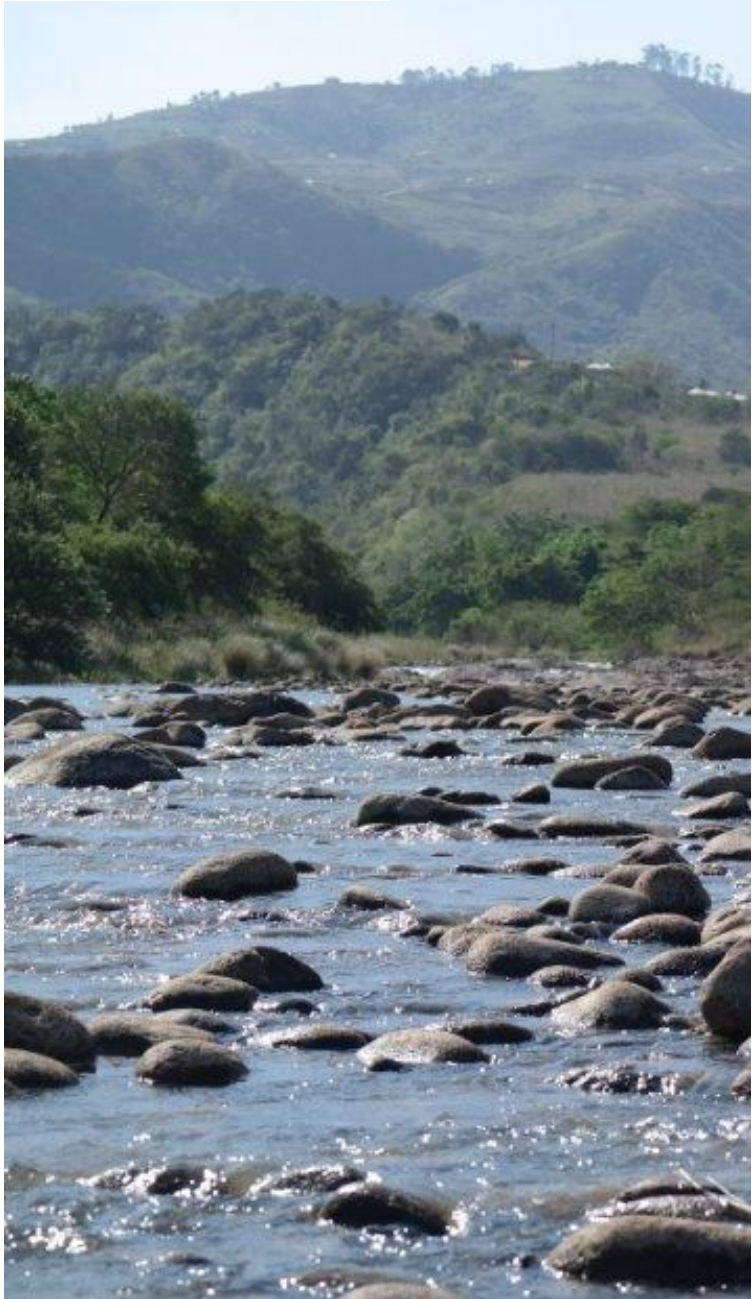
**Funding: +**USD40 million grant, USD10m co-finance (TBC)
**Duration:** 8 years

**Aim:** To secure strategic water source areas towards safeguarding the resource base and strengthening water security in South Africa

**Outcome**: The 4 priority strategic water source areas (Wolkberg, Mpumalanga, Northern and Southern Drakensberg) are secured through regulatory mechanisms and Ecosystem-based Adaptation, safeguarding the water that people depend on

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GREEN CLIMATE FUND

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# From 22 to 4: Maximising the investment

**10%** of the land → **50%** of our surface water → half our people, ⅔ of the economy

**22**

**Strategic Water Source Areas**
The full national set of surface-water SWSAs

**11**

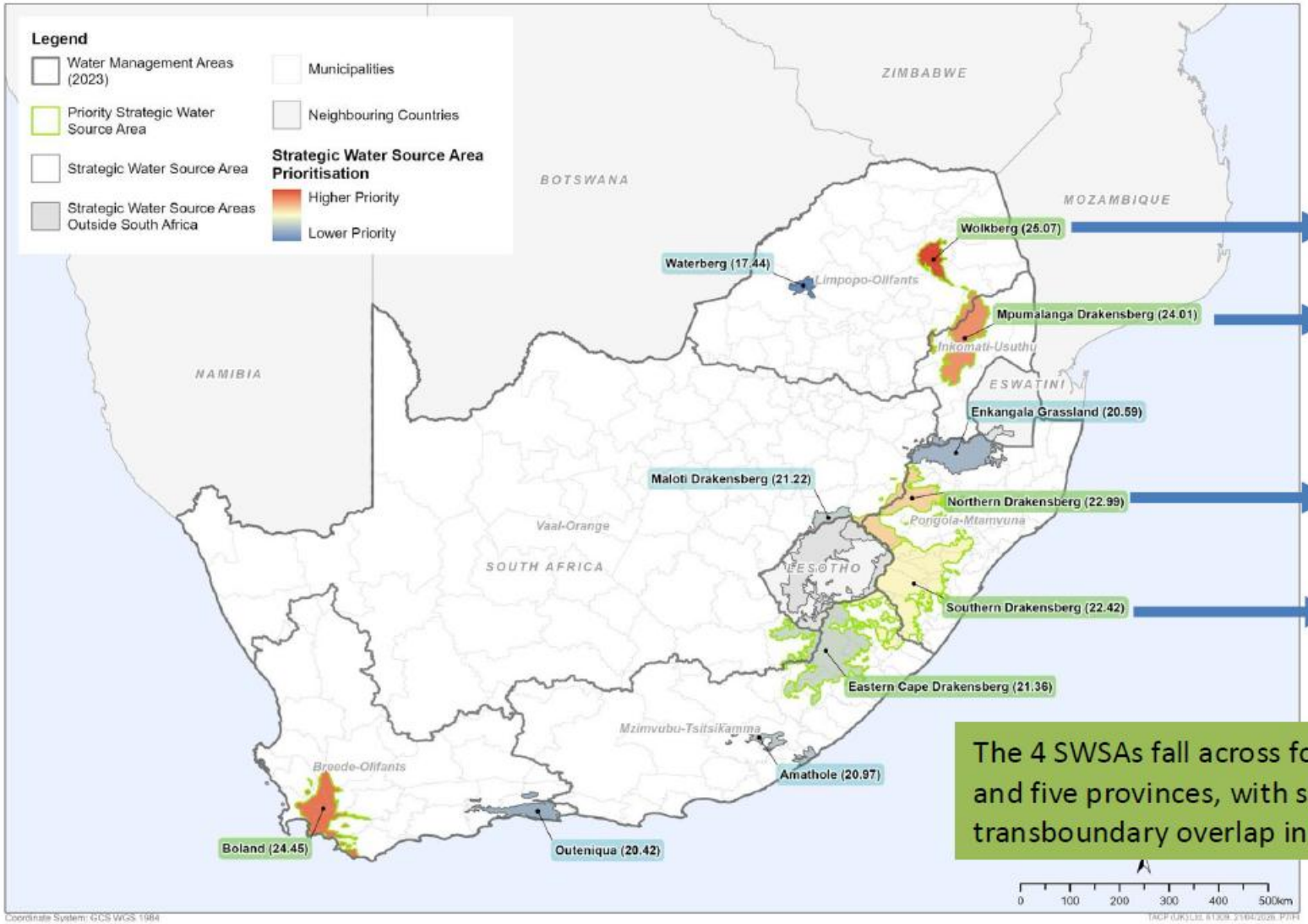
**High-Level Baseline Assessment**
Science-based shortlist of the SWSAs best suited to GCF support

**4**

**MCDA, stakeholder guidance and tri-departmental agreement**
Wolkberg, Mpumalanga, Northern and Southern Drakensberg were selected

**Why narrow down?** Concentrating the investment in fewer SWSAs makes the impact deeper, more meaningful and easier to demonstrate.

# DFFE/DWS/SANBI selected SWSAs from the High-Level Baseline Assessment




**4 priority SWSAs, selected through tri-departmental agreement**

The 4 SWSAs fall across four WMAs, and five provinces, with some transboundary overlap in Lesotho.

*Source: MCDA Technical Report - OneWorld, 2026*

# Project Theory of Change

**GOAL**
**IF** governance arrangements, institutional capacities and knowledge systems are strengthened in support of climate-responsive Integrated Water Resource Management, and Ecosystem-based Adaptation measures are implemented, **THEN** there will be greater resilience to slow-onset climate hazards and improved water security across South Africa, **BECAUSE** land degradation will be reduced and Strategic Water Source Areas will yield improved, climate-resilient water balances.

**OUTCOME 1**
## Governance
The security of Strategic Water Source Areas is improved through governance and decision-making frameworks

**OUTCOME 2**
## Resilient landscapes
Strategic Water Source Areas are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and continue to provide year-round, good-quality water

**OUTCOME 3**
## Institutions
National and sub-national institutions are strengthened to address climate risks associated with Strategic Water Source Areas

**CO-BENEFITS** Better quality water for domestic use and livelihoods · economic productivity · protected water storage infrastructure · biodiversity more resilient to climate change

# Where we are and where we're heading

**WE ARE HERE – November 2026**

| 1 SCOPING<br>Oct 2024 – Sep 2026 | 2 DESIGN<br>Sep 2026 – Mar 2027 | 3 APPROVAL<br>Apr – Oct 2027 |
|---|---|---|
| **COMPLETE** | **IN PROGRESS** | **UPCOMING** |
| ✓ High-Level Baseline Assessment and MCDA: 22 → 11 → 4 SWSAs | ✓ Reference Group convened (Oct 2026) | ○ SANBI internal reviews and SANBI Board |
| ✓ Detailed Baseline Assessment: sites and interventions in the 4 SWSAs | ▶ **Feasibility Study: next to be finalised** | ○ GCF Secretariat and Independent Technical Advisory Panel |
| ✓ Virtual consultations (Aug 2026) | ○ Environmental, social and gender assessments | ○ GCF Board approval (Oct 2027) |
| ✓ In-person consultations and site visits (Sep 2026) | ○ Economic and risk assessment | |
| ✓ National validation (Sep 2026) | ○ Theory of Change and logframe | |

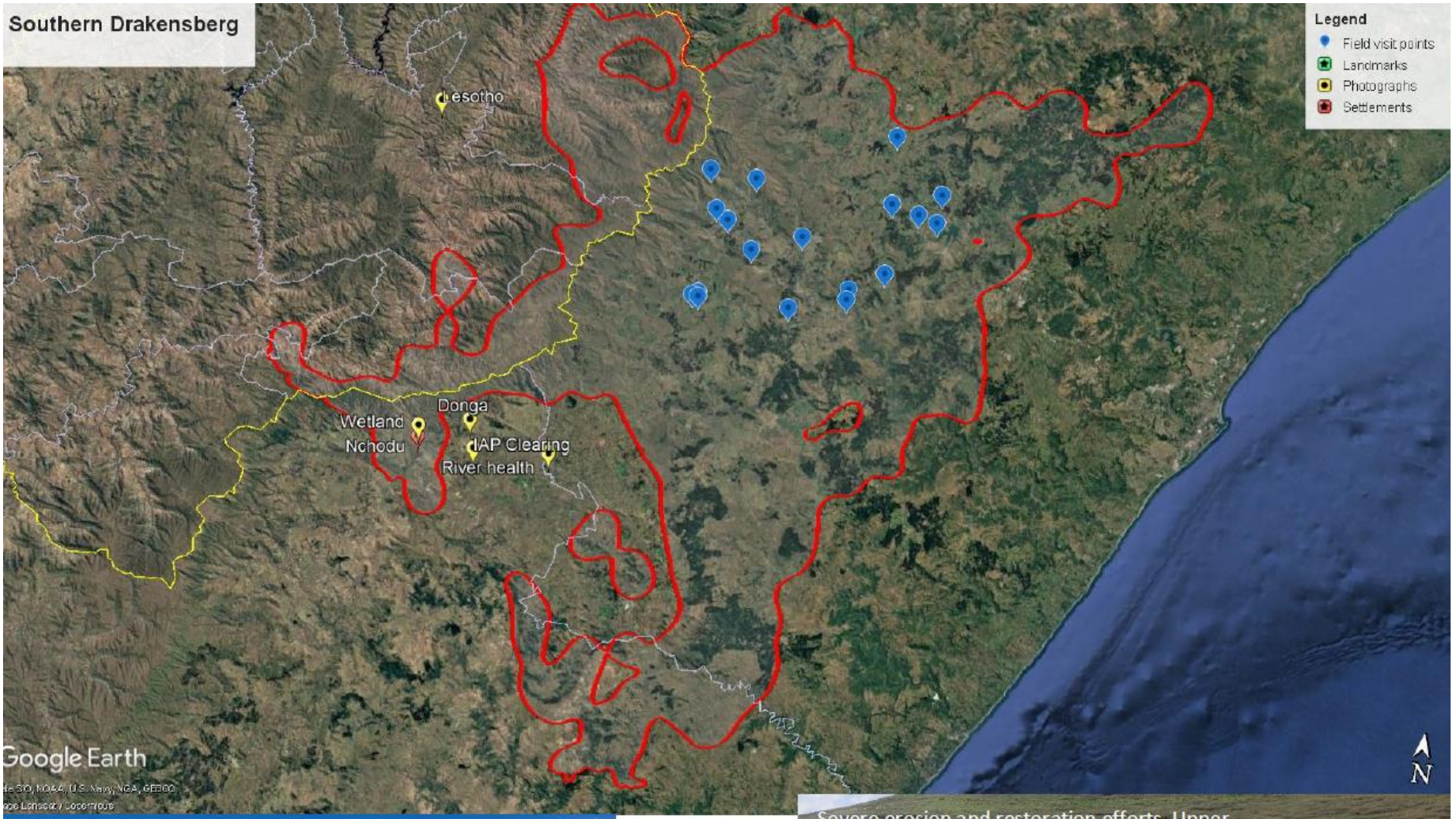
**Throughout: stakeholder consultation and Reference Group oversight**








Patches of previous plantation restored to grassland, but they lack the species diversity that makes them resilient to drought
Legend
City
Field visit points
Landmarks
Photographs
Wolkberg
Tzaneen
Ceremonial site
Degraded grassland
avos
Ebenezer Dam
ceremonial site - source of Groot Letaba
Serala peak
Iron Crown peak
Commercial avo plantation – 5-6 big corporates
Ebeneezer Dam
Private land
plantations
grassland
plantations
plantations
Avo's
Source of Groot Letaba river – ceremonial site nearby


Southern Drakensberg
Legend
Field visit points
Landmarks
Photographs
Settlements
Lesotho
Donga
Wetland
Nchodu
IAP Clearing
River health
Google Earth
N


Restored and cleared grassland in Diamond Village, near Matatiele


Severe erosion and restoration efforts, Upper Mkhomazi catchment