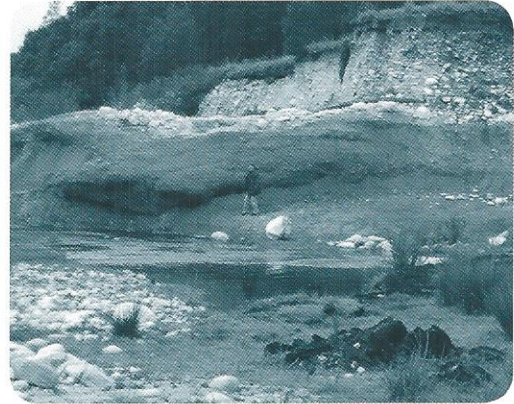


THREATS to wetlands

- Invasive alien plants
- Erosion
- Developments within and around wetlands
- Pollution and excess nutrients
- Too frequent burning of wetlands
- Draining of wetlands
- Cultivation within wetlands
- Over grazing/ trampling
- Lack of buffer zones next to wetlands



Bushpig and warthog did not historically occur in the Western Cape, and therefore Western Cape wetlands should not be used for domestic pigs, which typically cause a high level of disturbance to the wetland soil.



Some wetlands are more vulnerable to erosion than others especially those in high energy river systems. Once peat has dried out it can be subject to sudden and significant erosion.



Floods and droughts are predicted to intensify in the future, which will make it increasingly important to maintain healthy wetlands as one of the mechanisms by which landowners and other catchment users are able to cope with these extremes.

Basic principles of wetland rehabilitation

- 1 Address the cause of the damage e.g. over grazing or drainage ditches.
- 2 Attempt to re-establish the natural water flow patterns within the wetland.
- 3 Consider revegetation of buffer zones and wetland areas.
- 4 Remove invasive alien vegetation.
- 5 Follow up as necessary and monitor progress.

Due to the sometimes complex nature of wetlands, careful planning should be done before any wetland rehabilitation is undertaken. It is important to have a good understanding of the particular wetland on your property.

Please consult the following resources for more detailed planning assistance:

www.wrc.org.za

WET-Tool Management series

<http://www.capeaction.org.za/index.php/resources/landscape-initiatives?view=document&id=205>

Guidelines for Wetlands Management

<http://www.cepf.net/Documents/rooibosguidelines.pdf>

Guidelines for the sustainable production of rooibos

www.2.dwaf.gov.za/webapp/ResourceCentre/Documents/Reports/WetlandZoneDelineationSep05.pdf
Wetland delineation guidance

www.wetlands.za.net/
Wetland Portal of South Africa, which hosts information, discussions and event notifications

www.wetland.org.za
Various management guidelines

Legislative-based guidelines

Activities in and around wetlands are restricted in terms of the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (regulation 7), the National Water Act (section 21 and 22) and the National Environmental Management Act of 2010 (section 24 and EIA regulations).

The following guidelines apply:

- 1 Identify and delineate wetlands during winter months. Some wetlands are not easily identified during the dry summer months.
- 2 Keep natural buffer areas of 32m around wetlands free of invasive alien plants and irrigated crops.
- 3 If the wetland is a Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) or Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area (FEPA), a risk assessment should be conducted prior to activity or a 100m buffer area should be maintained.
- 4 Where relevant, activities in wetlands should be managed within a river management/ maintenance plan.
- 5 All modifications to water flow in or through a wetland require official permission. Disturbed wetlands can often be successfully restored by returning the flow to its original state through closing of drainage ditches and trenches.
- 6 Do not restrict, block or alter (including over-abstraction) the water supply to a wetland.
- 7 Do not over abstract or divert surface or groundwater feeding into a wetland, which may cause it to dry up. High yielding boreholes should not be sunk in or near wetlands.
- 8 Dam construction within wetlands transforms the wetland into a permanent water body, resulting in the loss of the important wetland habitat, particularly if it is a seasonally wet system. Dams should thus be constructed outside of wetlands and stream channels.
- 9 Avoid pollution sources like waste disposal sites, domestic effluent, etc, near wetlands.
- 10 Regularly clear wetlands of invasive alien plants, taking care not to disturb the soil. I.e. do not use heavy machinery.
- 11 Certain wetlands (especially grassy floodplains) can be grazed, provided that no over grazing occurs, and that it is done in the correct season (December to April).
- 12 The intensity of grazing within wetlands by large livestock should be subject to setback lines and other best management principles. If it is a priority wetland (CBA or FEPA) grazing should not be allowed within a 32m buffer area, or a setback line determined through a risk assessment process.
- 13 Most wetlands in the Western Cape are likely to have evolved with periodic fires, and are likely to have burnt along with the surrounding non-wetland areas. Careful consideration should be taken on appropriate frequency and timing of burning wetland areas, with particular caution when burning wetlands with organic soils at dry times, as underground fires can develop which are very difficult to put out fire frequency should be guided by a management plan.

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