

## South Africa-Working for Wetlands(WfWet)

### *South African pro-poor wetland rehabilitation projects*

#### **SUMMARY**

South African government-funded wetland rehabilitation projects carried out by vulnerable social groups. This is a borderline Government-led programme aiming at the provision of wetland services. In theory the private sector will be approached to become an active participant, but until now it is Government-led.

#### **MATURITY OF THE INITIATIVE**

Ongoing since 2000.

#### **DRIVER**

The main driver is the government's concern to reduce poverty through the creation of work opportunities in government-funded wetland conservation and water quality protection projects.

#### **STAKEHOLDERS**

##### **Supply**

Wetlands are located in private, communal and public lands. There are in total 50 wetland rehabilitation projects.

##### **Demand**

National government and corporate business.

##### **Intermediary**

Direct negotiation between the WfWet programme (National Biodiversity Institute) and the local contractors that carry out the rehabilitation work.

##### **Facilitators**

WfWet administered through the National Biodiversity Institute, under the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, in partnership with the departments of Water Affairs and Forestry and of Agriculture. World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

#### **MARKET DESIGN**

##### **Service**

Water quality

##### **Commodity**

*Rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems*, for example by reflooding wetlands that had previously been drained for peat mining, agriculture and irrigation.

##### **Payment Mechanism**

*Direct negotiation* between the WfWet Programme and the landowners on whose land the rehabilitation project is to take place.

*Wetland offsite compensation:* In 2005, the WfWet programme also began carrying out wetland projects on behalf of companies required to offset their adverse impacts on wetlands. . For example, to obtain mining permission, the company Anglo Coal had to agree to compensate for the loss of wetlands caused by its new open cast mine by funding the rehabilitation of equivalent wetlands in the same catchment. WfWet carried out the 46 hectare-project on the company's behalf in Dunns farm and Thubalihle wetlands.

## Terms of Payment

Project activities are carried out and financed by the WfWet programme.  
Unclear whether if in private land, the landowner receives any compensation.

## Funds Involved

Annual budget of R30 million (about US\$4 million), originating mainly from the Poverty Relief fund. Ferraro (2009) reports an annual budget of 67 million Rand in 2006, from the Poverty Relief Fund, plus other funds from international donors and conservation groups.

## ANALYSIS OF COSTS AND BENEFITS

### Economic

The total value of these projects and supporting activities amounts to R65 million for 2005/6.

### Environmental

WfWet prioritizes the wetlands slated for rehabilitation based on biophysical characteristics with less regard paid to the land ownership. WfWet first identifies its priority catchments, and then narrows the choice by site and landowner criteria (current use, perceived value, etc.) (Ferraro, 2009). Over 80 wetlands were rehabilitated in 2005/6. Rehabilitation works include: gabion construction, the removal of invasive alien plants in the immediate area, surveying of flood irrigation furrows, construction and placing of grass bale gabions and levelling of drainage furrows.

These rehabilitation works result in higher amounts of sediment trapped by erosion control structures and progressively gives way to the re-establishment of the normal wetland hydrological and biological dynamic.

### Social

*Employment benefits:* the project engages mainly with the groups most affected by poverty and unemployment, focusing on women, youth and disabled individuals. It provides work for up to two years, and so far the project has benefited over 2000 people.

*Skills Development:* For every month worked, each worker has the right to two days of training in vocational and life skills- these courses include: primary healthcare, basic adult education, gender equality, family planning, HIV/AIDS, first aid, safety, swimming, fire fighting, and financial management.

“The combination of temporary employment, income generation, acquisition of new skills, and the raising of personal self-belief and self-esteem gives workers an opportunity to escape the vicious circle of poverty” (WWF, no date).

Because of its emphasis on rehabilitation the project requires highly skilled planning and engineering labor, as well as more careful environmental targeting. Thus, WfWet has a less onerous hiring protocol for contractors than Working for Water (WfW). The most important aspects of the **contractor bid are price and technical merit**. Only 10 out of 100 points allocated to a contract in the bidding system are designated for details related to participation by disenfranchised individuals, women, and disabled people. For the labor intensive portions of the projects, similar criteria to WfW are used to ensure the hiring of the unemployed with the same percentage targets for women, youth, and the disabled. Due to the amount of engineering involved with some of the projects, equipment operators can receive higher pay than laborers (Ferraro, 2009).

## **LEGISLATION ISSUES**

The project is embedded in the government's pro-poor interventions, through the Expanded Public Works Programme.

## **MONITORING**

No information available.

## **MAIN CONSTRAINTS**

No information available.

## **MAIN POLICY LESSONS**

This project builds on the works of a previous wetland rehabilitation project – the Mondi Wetlands Project- established by WWF/ Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA).

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

No information available.

## **CONTACT**

No information available.

## **REFERENCES**

Ferraro, P. (2009). "Regional review of Payments for Watershed Services: Sub-Saharan Africa." *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 28: 525-550.

IIED. 2005. Fair deals for watershed services: learning from new attempts to develop pro-poor payments for watershed services. Draft Discussion Paper. International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

King, N et al .2005. An Inventory of current ecosystem service payments, markets and capacity building in South Africa. Document presented at the Eighth Public Meeting of the Katoomba Group- Building Foundations for Pro-Poor Ecosystem Services in Africa 1

South African Government Information website- Environmental Programmes:  
<http://www.info.gov.za/issues/govtprog/environ.htm#wat>.

WWF (no date). Working for Wetlands, South Africa. Managing Rivers Wisely Series. Living Waters Programme, World Wildlife Fund (WWF).  
<http://assets.panda.org/downloads/mrwworkingforwetlandscs.pdf>.

## **LINKS**

<http://www.ccwr.ac.za/wetlands/rehab.htm>

<http://www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw/Wetlands/>



**Watershed  
Markets**