SANBI Biodiversity for Life
South African National Biodiversity Institute

SER SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

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

WATER RESEARCH COMMISSION
55 YEARS
Supporting Sustainable Water Futures
1971-2026

RAND WATER

# AFRICA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION SYMPOSIUM 2026

*Delivering Ecosystem Restoration at Scale on a Dynamic Continent*

# PROGRAMME





12–16 October 2026

26 Degrees South Lodge, Muldersdrift, Gauteng

# DRAFT PROGRAMME

| | |
|---|---|
| Conference chairs: | Mlungele Nsikani, Peter Alele |
| Local organising committee chairs: | Dan'sile Mavimbela, Bonani Madikizela |
| Programme committee: | Pearl Gola, Roderick Juba, Namhla Mbona, Hazel Govender |
| With support from: | Nomali Malindi |
| Organising committee: | Matlhodi Mphaka, Ruqaya Adams, Viwe Balfour, Sasha Fredericks, Lynette Munro, Andrew Whitley, Zama Zulu |
| Oversight: | Aveliina Helm, Mahlodi Tau, Phetole Manyama, Mamohloding Maahlo, Amelia Marutle |

# Africa Ecosystem Restoration Symposium 2026

*Delivering ecosystem restoration at scale on a dynamic continent*

12–16 October 2026 | 26 Degrees South Lodge, Muldersdrift, Gauteng

| **Monday, 12 October 2026 \| Arrival and opening \| 16:00–21:00** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Activity | Venue |
| 16:00–18:00 | Registration | Registration desk |
| 16:30–18:00 | SER Africa Annual General Meeting | SANBI Room (Kudu) |
| 18:00–19:00 | Welcome and opening ceremony | WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) |
| 19:00–21:00 | Welcome dinner – black with a touch of gold | WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) |

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| **Tuesday, 13 October 2026 \| Field excursions \| 08:00–21:00** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Activity | Venue |
| 08:00–09:00 | Registration, field trip briefing, vehicle allocation and lunch packs | WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) |
| 09:00–15:00 | Field excursions for all delegates | Multiple field sites |
| 15:00–18:30 | Return to venue and delegate free time | Venue/accommodation |
| 18:30–21:00 | Braai dinner | Pool/outdoor area |

| Wednesday, 14 October 2026 \| 08:30–21:00 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time | WRC Plenary Hall | SANBI Room | Rand Water Room |
| 08:30–10:30 | Opening scientific plenary and three keynotes | Plenary | Plenary |
| 10:30–11:00 | Tea | Tea | Tea |
| 11:00–12:00 | D3-A1 \| Invasion ecology and emerging risks | D3-B1 \| Restoration science and ecological recovery | Youth learning exchange |
| 12:00–13:00 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 13:00–14:30 | D3-A2 \| Early detection, eradication and biosecurity | D3-B2 \| Restoration methods, standards and landscape practice | Youth learning exchange |
| 14:30–15:00 | Tea and poster engagement | Tea and poster engagement | Tea and poster engagement |
| 15:00–16:15 | D3-A3 \| Management, policy and ecosystem recovery | D3-B3 \| Biodiversity conservation and native seed systems | Youth learning exchange |
| 16:30–17:15 | Native seed supply networking event | Executive leadership exchange (by invitation) | Youth learning exchange |
| 19:00–21:00 | Pizza and burger dinner by the pool | | |

| Opening scientific plenary \| 08:30–10:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Contributor | Item |
| 08:30–08:40 | Mlu Nsikani | Welcome, framing and programme orientation |
| 08:40–09:10 | SANBI | Keynote address |
| 09:10–09:40 | Prudence Galega | Responsible forest governance, restoration, biodiversity conservation and community-led climate action in practice |
| 09:40–10:10 | Harrison Kojwang | Certification as a tool in responsible natural resource management – experiences of the Forest Stewardship Council in Africa and beyond. A keynote paper. |
| 10:10–10:30 | Keynote speakers and symposium co-chairs | Keynote dialogue, audience questions and synthesis |

| D3-A1 \| Invasion ecology and emerging risks \| 11:00–12:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Lindokuhle Khanyile | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 11:00–11:15 | Sibonelo Mhlongo | Serotinous woody plant invaders as an invasion syndrome of Mediterranean-type ecosystems and the potential for their eradication from South Africa |
| 11:15–11:30 | Kemoratile Maseko | Species distribution modelling and niche dynamics of cryptic invasive murid rodent species from Southern Africa under climate change |
| 11:30–11:45 | Aileen Anderson | Death to kikuyu (D2K): lessons from the Grootvadersbosch Conservancy, South Africa |
| 11:45–12:00 | Thulisile Jaca | *Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb. ex DC. in South Africa: invasion risk, early intervention and ecosystem restoration |

| D3-B1 \| Restoration science and ecological recovery \| 11:00–12:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Tafadzwa Dzingwe | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 11:00–11:15 | K. Malaka | The effect of soil microbe inoculation on ecological rehabilitation of a disturbed grassland ecosystem in urban areas, Gauteng |
| 11:15–11:30 | Azani Ngumbao Thoya | Restoring nature, restoring livelihoods: community-led ecological restoration and youth engagement in Kenya's Coastal Biosphere Reserve |
| 11:30–11:45 | Marc Sherratt | Rewilding extinct Johannesburg: scaling urban grassland regeneration through carbon sequestration and net positive ecology |
| 11:45–12:00 | Florence Mazwi Murungweni | Assessing long-term vegetation recovery following ecological restoration of a subtropical floodplain wetland in South Africa |

| D3-A2 \| Early detection, eradication and biosecurity \| 13:00–14:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Cowan McLean | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 13:00–13:05 | Nkhangweleni Sikhauli | Understanding the distribution of *Opuntia robusta* in South Africa |
| 13:05–13:20 | Mlungele Nsikani | Early detection, rapid response, and integrated systems for the management of biological invasions in South Africa |
| 13:20–13:35 | Glodean Baloyi | An effort to strengthen ecosystem resilience through the GEF-7 project in Gauteng, South Africa: early detection and eradication of *Enterolobium contortisiliquum* and *Cynoglossum amabile* |
| 13:35–13:50 | Lulama Gracious Madire | Update on biological control of *Tecoma stans* (L.) Juss. ex Kunth in three provinces of South Africa |
| 13:50–14:05 | Thabiso Cele | Advancing ecosystem restoration through early detection and rapid response on emerging alien plants in areas of high biodiversity importance in KwaZulu-Natal |
| 14:05–14:20 | Lindani Sifanele | Community perceptions of *Salvia tiliifolia* invasion in the Eastern Cape: implications for biodiversity and rural livelihoods |
| 14:20–14:25 | Nomali Malindi | Management of invasive *Melaleuca* species in the Western Cape: lessons from a GEF-7 eradication programme |
| 14:25–14:30 | Session discussion | Discussion |

| D3-B2 \| Restoration methods, standards and landscape practice \| 13:00–14:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Keirra Samsunder | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 13:00–13:15 | Fiona Eggers | Retrospective reflections: SER's Standards of Practice as they relate to several southern African wetland rehabilitation projects |
| 13:15–13:30 | Anthony Swemmer | Life after plantations. Long-term vegetation dynamics reveal passive restoration of montane grasslands in South Africa |
| 13:30–13:45 | Mary Nyasimi | Agroecology as a landscape restoration strategy: lessons from the Mount Elgon Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, Kenya and Uganda |
| 13:45–14:00 | Sanou Lassina | Soil block method as an alternative to conventional containers for seedling production and successful reforestation |
| 14:00–14:15 | Johann van Biljon | Adaptive and collaborative management strategies for active rehabilitation on riparian systems, case study: 24 Rivers, Berg River Catchment |
| 14:15–14:30 | Akua Oparebea Asare-Ansah | Can remote sensing construct matched non-intervention comparison sites for forest landscape restoration? |

| Poster viewing and author engagement \| 14:30–15:00 | |
|---|---|
| Lead author/presenter | Poster title |
| Victor Nsereko-Wantate | Field validation of the African Native Tree Seed Security System (ANTSSS): a provenance-based framework for conserving native tree genetic resources |
| Hlengiwe Hlongwane | Building community resilience through participatory water and natural resource governance in Bergville |
| Mbali Mkhize | The role of herbaria in the identification of alien invasive plants for effective management: evidence from *Acalypha poiretii* in South Africa |
| Nosisa Bulose | The spread and ecological impacts of *Cylindropuntia pallida* in the North West Province, South Africa |
| Keabetswe Nhlapo | *Aloysia gratissima*: an emerging threat invading natural and agricultural landscapes in South Africa |
| Thobeka Xolo | Climate vulnerability and resilience pathways for uMngeni-uThukela Water |
| Naomi Carvey | SeedPOD, the seed portal for online data |

| D3-A3 \| Management, policy and ecosystem recovery \| 15:00–16:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Sibonelo Mhlongo | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 15:00–15:15 | Zimbini Scott | Evaluating the invasive status and potential risk of *Agonis flexuosa* (Western Australian peppermint) in South Africa |
| 15:15–15:30 | Nyiko Mthembi | Updates on management progress towards the eradication of *Harrisia pomanensis* in Limpopo, South Africa |
| 15:30–15:45 | Fumani Mpikanisi | South Africa's National Invasive Species Strategy and Action Plan (NISSAP), 2026–2036 |
| 15:45–16:00 | Mokgatla Rapetsoa | Heterogeneous recovery of soil physico-chemical properties following the removal of invasive alien trees in the Western Cape, South Africa |
| 16:00–16:15 | Sylvia Muchiri | A friend or foe for whom? *Acacia reficiens* in African rangelands: a systematic review |

| D3-B3 \| Biodiversity conservation and native seed systems \| 15:00–16:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Azani Ngumbao Thoya | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 15:00–15:15 | Mlungisi Mncwabe | Green defender programme |
| 15:15–15:30 | Shae-Lynn Hendricks | Strengthening biodiversity monitoring and reporting in South Africa: an indicator gap analysis approach |
| 15:30–15:45 | James Arnott | National Park Conservancy Model and Programme |
| 15:45–16:00 | Cowan Mc Lean | Soil quality indices in South African protected areas: site-specific insights, policy gaps, and the role of expert opinion |
| 16:00–16:15 | Eva Martens Elinor Breman | The role of seed banks in restoration – the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership |

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| Thursday, 15 October 2026 \| 08:30–22:00 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time | WRC Plenary Hall | SANBI Room | Rand Water Room |
| 08:30–10:00 | Institutional leadership plenary | Plenary | Plenary |
| 10:00–10:30 | Tea | Tea | Tea |
| 10:30–12:30 | Catchment-based indaba \| FBIS Africa focus session | D4-B1 \| Climate resilience, Eco-DRR and adaptation<br>10:30–12:00 | D4-C1 \| Community-led restoration, rangelands and livelihoods<br>10:30–12:15 |
| 12:30–13:15 | Lunch | Lunch | Lunch |
| 13:15–14:30 | Catchment-based indaba \| Session 1: evidence and planning for catchment restoration | D4-B2 \| Nature-based solutions and urban ecological infrastructure<br>13:15–14:00 | D4-C2 \| Partnerships and community delivery systems<br>13:15–14:00 |
| 14:30–14:45 | Comfort break | Comfort break | Comfort break |
| 14:45–16:00 | Catchment-based indaba \| Session 2: community stewardship and catchment governance | D4-B3 \| Landscape platforms, governance and equity<br>14:45–15:30 | D4-C3 \| Livelihood innovation and restoration at scale<br>14:45–15:30 |
| 16:00–16:15 | Tea | Tea | Tea |
| 16:15–17:15 | Catchment-based indaba \| Session 3: scaling, financing and collective catchment action | D4-B4 \| Evidence, communication and inclusive restoration governance | D4-C4 \| Biodiversity, seeds and indigenous knowledge |
| 17:15–19:00 | Delegate break and gala preparation | | |
| 19:00–22:00 | Gala dinner \| Cultural wear \| WRC Student Awards | | |

| Institutional leadership plenary \| 08:30–10:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Time | Contributor | Item |
| 08:30–08:40 | Peter Alele | Welcome and framing of day 4 |
| 08:40–09:10 | WRC | Keynote address |
| 09:10–09:40 | Rand Water | Keynote address |
| 09:40–10:00 | Keynote speakers and symposium co-chairs | High-level dialogue: water security, restoration and implementation at scale |

| Thursday parallel sessions \| 10:30–12:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Catchment-based indaba \| FBIS Africa focus session: freshwater biodiversity data for restoration decision-making \| 10:30–12:30 | | |
| Time | Lead | Activity |
| 10:30–11:00 | Jeremy Shelton | General presentation: FBIS Africa, its freshwater biodiversity datasets, functionality and relevance to restoration decision-making |
| 11:00–12:20 | Jeremy Shelton and FBIS Africa facilitation team | Practical FBIS Africa 101 focus session: navigate the platform; explore, analyse, visualise and share data |
| 12:20–12:30 | Jeremy Shelton | Applications, collaboration opportunities and close |

| D4-B1 \| Climate resilience, Eco-DRR and adaptation \| 10:30–12:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Chipo Mungenge | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 10:30–10:45 | Khuthadzo Mahamba | Scaling ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction in South Africa: an integrated approach to restoration and climate resilience |
| 10:45–11:00 | Brilliant Ntshangule | Implementation conditions and readiness of municipal climate action: case study of the North West Province |
| 11:00–11:15 | Keirra Samsunder | A risk-based Bayesian network approach to assessing climate resilience of urban landscape design |
| 11:15–11:30 | Abrha Brhan Gebre | Post-planting interventions for tree growing success and climate mitigation in Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis |
| 11:30–11:45 | Sbongiseni Xolo | Climate-informed ecosystem restoration: predicting future invasion risk of terrestrial invertebrates under climate change in South Africa |
| 11:45–12:00 | Mazwi Dlamini | Climate-resilient agriculture and climate adaptation for sustainable resource management in iSimangaliso Wetland Park |

| D4-C1 \| Community-led restoration, rangelands and livelihoods \| 10:30–12:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rand Water Room (Warthog) \| Chair: Mukona Kone | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 10:30–10:45 | Tafadzwa Dzingwe | Carbon credits or carbon colonialism? The equity gap and local self-governance in the rangelands of the Eastern Cape |
| 10:45–11:00 | Tshepang Tlali | Land-based livelihoods and lifestyle changes: perspectives of rural communities in the Amathole District, Eastern Cape, South Africa |
| 11:00–11:15 | Nomalungelo Ndlovu | Beyond strategy: embedding resilience and ecological restoration into municipal planning |
| 11:15–11:30 | Michael Oke | Bridging the urban-rural divide: rangeland restoration, pastoral mobility, and inclusive spatial governance in Nigeria |
| 11:30–11:45 | Nompendulo Mgwali | Restoring rangelands and strengthening rural livelihoods |
| 11:45–12:00 | Tukulo Mtshayelo | EcoChamp under rangeland restoration and water protection |
| 12:00–12:15 | Tukulo Mtshayelo | EcoChampions as connectors: bridging scientific knowledge, indigenous practices and community-led landscape restoration |

| Thursday parallel sessions \| 13:15–14:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Catchment-based indaba \| Session 1: evidence and planning for catchment restoration \| 13:15–14:30** | | |
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Hannah Siebrits | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 13:15–13:30 | Farai Tererai | Advancing freshwater ecosystem restoration: co-developing South Africa's freshwater challenge roadmap |
| 13:30–13:45 | Indrani Hazel Govender | Bayesian network restoration assessment model using a risk-based approach to monitor recovery of riparian restoration at catchment scale |
| 13:45–14:00 | Danielle Smith | From planning to implementation: an Onrus catchment-to-coast case study for holistic catchment management and restoration |
| 14:00–14:15 | Samiksha Singh | Identifying riverine litter sources through community based monitoring: evidence from the Jukskei River |
| 14:15–14:30 | Session chair and presenters | Questions and session synthesis |

| D4-B2 \| Nature-based solutions and urban ecological infrastructure \| 13:15–14:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Thandabantu kaZulu-Nxumalo | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 13:15–13:30 | Douglas Macfarlane | Restoring the blue-green heart of Kigali: lessons from large-scale urban wetland restoration in Rwanda |
| 13:30–13:45 | Lynette Munro | Who pays? An option for urban conservation |
| 13:45–14:00 | Fiona Eggers | Enhancing wastewater management for commercial scale sugar production using designed nature-based solutions |

| D4-C2 \| Partnerships and community delivery systems \| 13:15–14:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rand Water Room (Warthog) \| Chair: Tshepang Tlali | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 13:15–13:30 | Emmanuel Hakizimana | Community-led restoration of indigenous Afromontane tree species around Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda |
| 13:30–13:45 | Zuko Kibi | Strengthening community-based rangeland management through EcoChampions |
| 13:45–14:00 | Belinda Cooper | Stakeholder engagement within the Magaliesberg Biosphere towards collaborative regenerative land-use solutions to support integrated catchment health and scaling for regional impact |

| Thursday parallel sessions \| 14:45–16:00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Catchment-based indaba \| Session 2: community stewardship and catchment governance \| 14:45–16:00** | | |
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Hazel Govender | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 14:45–15:00 | Moleboheng Makashane | Establishment of WASH committees for sustainable management of protected springs |
| 15:00–15:15 | Sibahle Sibiya | Securing water source areas through collaborative stewardship: The WWF–Sappi Partnership in the Southern Drakensberg |
| 15:15–15:30 | Hlengiwe Zuma | Participatory land use management: an innovative complementary approach to catchment restoration in uMkhomazi catchment |
| 15:30–15:45 | Tanisha Curtis | Enviro Champs: citizen capacity for catchment management in South Africa |
| 15:45–16:00 | Nsovo Makhubela | Perceived benefits, stakeholder participation, and institutional sustainability: a case study of the Makana Water Forum |

| D4-B3 \| Landscape platforms, governance and equity \| 14:45–15:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Brilliant Ntshangule | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 14:45–15:00 | Chipo Perseverance Mungenge | Localising international standards of ecological restoration in informal settlements: a global south perspective |
| 15:00–15:15 | Pienaar du Plessis | Applying the value creation framework to understand how value is delivered by multi-stakeholder landscape platforms in the Berg-Breede landscape, Western Cape, South Africa |
| 15:15–15:30 | Mbali Mashele | Citizen science as an enabler of landscape restoration governance: lessons from UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in Southern Africa |

| D4-C3 \| Livelihood innovation and restoration at scale \| 14:45–15:30 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rand Water Room (Warthog) \| Chair: Mlungisi Ntuli | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 14:45–15:00 | Amanda Kalaku | The Smart Nappy Initiative: linking conservation incentives, maternal wellbeing and circular economy solutions |
| 15:00–15:15 | Mookho Makanyane | Natural capital accounting as an evidence base for ecosystem restoration at scale: lessons from South Africa |
| 15:15–15:30 | Mxolisi Ngongoma | Decline in traditional/ancient dishes consumption and the western influence in our modern society |

| Thursday parallel sessions \| 16:15–17:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Catchment-based indaba \| Session 3: scaling, financing and collective catchment action \| 16:15–17:15** | | |
| WRC Plenary Hall (Main Hall) \| Chair: Amelia Marutle | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 16:15–16:30 | Nthatuoa Kuleile | The restoration of degraded ecosystems through integrated catchment management: case study of priority sub catchments in Lesotho |
| 16:30–16:45 | Cross-Catchment Collective | From projects to systems: the Cross-Catchment Collective as a model for scaling ecosystem restoration |
| 16:45–17:00 | Matsolo Migwi | Sustainable financing for integrated catchment management implementation in Lesotho |
| 17:00–17:15 | Israel Bionyi Nyoh | Who pays for the catchment? FSC-verified impacts and the business case for ecological infrastructure |

| D4-B4 \| Evidence, communication and inclusive restoration governance \| 16:15–17:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| SANBI Room (Kudu) \| Chair: Mokgatla Rapetsoa | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 16:15–16:30 | Samuel Antobam | Radio documentaries driving rural household and community soil restoration initiatives |
| 16:30–16:45 | Vianny Ahimbisibwe | Stakeholder prioritisation and non-technical feasibility of forest and landscape restoration monitoring indicators in Togo, Ethiopia and Côte d'Ivoire |
| 16:45–17:00 | Bheka Nxele | Socioeconomic dimensions of large-scale, community-based ecosystem restoration interventions: insights from a multi-stakeholder analysis |
| 17:00–17:15 | Mbasa Mbalenhle Dlamini | Towards anticipatory innovation governance – assessing the degree of legitimacy of water rationing in Makhanda |

| D4-C4 \| Biodiversity, seeds and indigenous knowledge \| 16:15–17:15 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Rand Water Room (Warthog) \| Chair: Zinathi Jikeka | | |
| Time | Presenter | Presentation |
| 16:15–16:30 | Gertrude Kenyangi | Forest restoration and conservation by indigenous peoples and local communities |
| 16:30–16:45 | Naomi Carvey | SeedPOD, the seed portal for online data |
| 16:45–17:00 | Jacinta Mwachizigwa | Restoring ecosystems, reviving heritage: integrating indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage in the restoration of Kaya Forests in Kilifi County, Kenya |
| 17:00–17:15 | Lebohang Shivambu | River clean-up initiative: integrating indigenous knowledge, traditional healing practices, and environmental stewardship |

| Friday, 16 October 2026 \| Departures \| 09:00–12:00 | |
|---|---|
| Time | Activity |
| 09:00–12:00 | Departures |