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AWARD
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Series

Improving Transboundary Alien Invasive Species Management & Securing Gains

Supporting strategy for developing a post-handover agreement between DEA-NRMP & land owners

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1 Overview

The RESILIM-O Restoration and Rehabilitation programme has to date highlighted a number of priorities for building resilience in the Olifants Basin, which have highlighted the need to address the negative impact of forestry operations in the catchment on biodiversity and water resources in the Blyde and Klaserie sub-catchments.

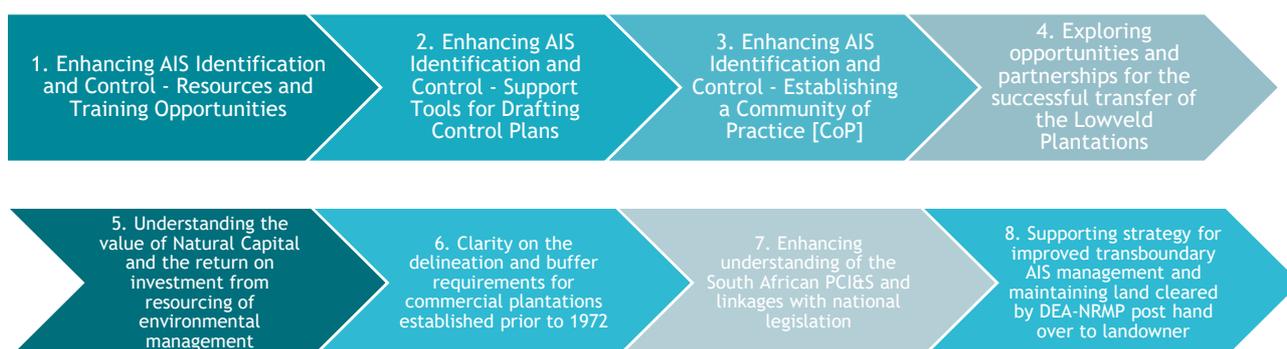
Challenges in terms of complying with the requirements of relevant forestry and environmental legislation in terms of SFM have been identified by restoration practitioners working in the above sub-catchments. These priorities include, for example, the need to:

- Conserve biodiversity and sustainably manage high priority ecosystems by supporting collective action informed by adaptive strategies and practices; and
- Reduce vulnerability to climate change and other factors by supporting collective action informed by adaptive strategies and practices.

Direct and indirect impacts from plantation forestry operations in the Blyde and Klaserie sub-catchments of the Olifants Basin are recognised

to have significant negative impacts on biodiversity and water resources in these catchments, which undermine resilience. This component of the RESILIM-O project therefore aims to develop the capacity of target stakeholders to enhance sustainable forest management (SFM). Developing capacity to improve forest management to reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of forestry operations on biodiversity and water resource in the Blyde and Klaserie sub-catchments (high biodiversity areas and strategic water resource areas in the Olifants catchment) will contribute to resilience building. Engagement of key stakeholders in the forestry sector in the Blyde and Klaserie sub-catchments highlighted a number of challenges to sustainable forest management. Through a social learning process, these challenges were explored with stakeholders to identify capacity constraints underlining these challenges. A capacity development strategy was then developed to address the core capacity constraints. The strategy includes eight components:

8 COMPONENTS OF THE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



This document addresses component 8 of this capacity development strategy, namely **Improving transboundary Alien Invasive Species management and securing gains - Supporting strategy for developing a post-handover agreement between DEA-NRMP and land owners**



2 Introduction

The Department of Environmental Affairs - Natural Resources Management Programme (DEA - NRMP) offers assistance to land owners to clear and control alien invasive species (AIS) on their land.

This assistance come in various forms, from investment in contracting teams to clear alien invasive species (AIS) to providing assistance in the form of herbicides, bio-control agents and planning. The clearing of AIS is the most common assistance provided, however challenges in securing the gains made by the DEA-NRMP are evident due to a range of downfalls in the current process and agreements, and result in cleared areas not being kept in maintenance phase. Such challenges include poor communication, inadequate joint planning, lack of transboundary management, and misalignment of priorities. To overcome these challenges, a strategy is needed to improve the process and agreements, and to enhance transboundary AIS management, so that

the gains made (investment of resources and positive environmental benefits) are secured. This document therefore provides an improved strategy for maintaining and monitoring cleared areas that have returned to the landowner by the DEA-NRM Programme.

The strategy consists of:

- An introduction to the types of assistance the Programme provides;
- Current challenges;
- A recommended process for planning where and how assistance should occur;
- Details that need to be included in the contractual agreement; and
- Roles and responsibilities of all parties.

This strategy was developed by engaging local role players - unpacking existing challenges and downfalls, exploring potential solutions and opportunities, as well as extracting ideas from an existing guidelines document [DEA Environmental Programme Branch (National) *Guidelines Work on Private Land* (2008) - with draft revisions (2016)]



2.1 Types of assistance

The DEA-NRMP offers assistance to land owners in various ways, as detailed below. The nature, extent and timing of assistance is dependent on the resources that the Programme has available and cannot always be guaranteed, even when a contract between the Programme and the landowner is in place.

1 AIS clearing incentive

The DEA-NRMP contracts teams to clear AIS on a land owner's property. A Landowner Agreement is prepared between the Programme and the landowner that defines the area to be cleared and the extent of the infestation. The team contracted by the Programme conducts an initial clearing, as well as two follow-up treatments, after which the area is 'handed-back' to the land owner, who is responsible to securing the condition of the cleared area (i.e. to keep it in maintenance state). The details of the Landowner Agreement (i.e. estimate person days, costs, etc.) are determined by DEA Norms and Standards, and the conditions of the agreements (i.e. responsibilities of both parties) are jointly defined.

2 Herbicide incentive

A landowner can receive funding from the Programme in the form of herbicides, which they use when clearing AIS. Herbicides are supplied for the initial clearing and for up to three follow-up treatments. The landowner is responsible for using the herbicides correctly and responsibly, and the Programme can audit the use (i.e. correct application) and hold the landowner accountable for abuse, if necessary. This type of incentive can be used when full assistance is not possible (i.e. due to the Programme's resource limitations).

3 Biological control incentives

Biological control agents can be provided by DEA-NRMP to a landowner and placed in a defined area to target a specific plant species. The landowner is responsible for following the specified management practices and for reporting back to the Programme on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The success of the agents cannot be guaranteed.

4 Planning & mapping incentives

Where capacity is available, the DEA-NRMP can provide mapping and planning support (i.e. for drafting Invasive Species Monitoring, Control and Eradication Plans) to land owners. The landowner is responsible of preparing, implementing and updating the long-term Control Plan.

Assistance from the Programme is typically provided in the form of AIS clearing (type 1 of the list above) and this report therefore documents a strategy to improve the incentive process.



2.2 Challenges

There are various challenges in the current incentive process that prevent the gains from investment being secured.

These include:

- Conditions of the Landowner Agreement (LOA) not being met by either or both parties (i.e. breach of contract)
- Poor communication between the Programme and the Landowner/Manager, resulting in confusion as to when and where clearing and/or follow-ups will be done; duplication and/or misalignment of efforts; and uncertainty about the status of clearing and/or follow-ups
- Poor internal communication within the land owner organisations resulting in the LOA not being communicated or transferred when there is a change in management or ownership Land owners cannot sign off on agreements in High Altitude Team (HAT)

areas as they do not have the capacity to maintain them in order to fulfil the agreement conditions

- DEA: Biosecurity unit, responsible for inspections, is unclear how often should they monitor compliance
- Lack of transboundary management results in infestations from neighbouring land providing a continuous source of seed for re-infestation of cleared areas
- Budget cuts/shifts and delays (that are out of their control) experienced by the Programme result in delays in clearing and/or follow-ups

In general, there is a lack of sound processes and clear agreements to ensure the gains from investment in AIS control are secured. To overcome this, this report documents a strategy that suggests the processes that need to be undertaken, aspects that need to be included in the agreement and the roles and responsibilities of all parties.





3 Strategy for Securing Gains

3.1 Incentive Overview

The AIS Clearing Incentive assistance provided by the DEA: NRMP (Programme) can be requested by a landowner (LO) or manager. A process is then undertaken by the Programme to identify an area to be cleared, based on their priorities and consultation with the LO.

The Programme contracts teams to do the initial clearing, as well as the first and second follow-ups, after which the cleared land is handed over to the LO, regardless of the state infestation. It is

then the LO's responsibility to ensure that improvement is done on the area, to work towards maintenance state; or to secure the area in its maintenance state.

As a bare minimum, the land should not become worse than it was when DEA:NRMP handed it back to the LO. The LO must report back to the Programme on the state of the treatment and the DEA:Biosecurity unit conducts inspections to assess the progress.

3.2 Incentive Process

The recommended process to address the existing challenges of the incentive assistance is categorised into aspects that should be defined and clarified during the planning, implementation and handover phases.

1 Planning phase

- When selecting an area for investment, an alignment of priorities between the parties is needed so that the investment is mutually beneficial and achievable.
 - The LO's Invasive Species Monitoring, Control and Eradication Plan, which indicates priority compartments and details the characteristics (i.e. water security and supply, biodiversity importance, etc.) of each management unit, should be used to select a mutually beneficial land unit for clearing. The Control Plan can also inform budgeting

and planning of the agreement, as well as reporting indicators, and will ensure that the assistance provided by the Programme contributes to the long term, ongoing Plan by the LO.

- It is recommended that the LO have a Control Plan drafted before agreements are signed. A support tool for drafting a Control Plan is provided as part of the capacity development strategy, which is based on the regulated requirements, the DEA:Biosecurity Control Plan Guideline(2015), insights from stakeholders, and inputs other resources and Plans.
- To determine which area the assistance will be provided, both parties should undertake a site visit together, and make use of their own maps to align priority areas and planning. Where feasible, spatial databases should be joined prior to the site visits (i.e. overlay the DEA: NRMP's and LO's spatial records).



- Joint agreement of the area to be cleared and the targets (area and target of clearing) must be determined collaboratively.
 - From the onset of the planning process, the following should be clearly agreed to:
 - DEA: NRMP is there to support and help the LO, given available resources.
 - The LOs are ultimately responsible for the AIS control on their land.
 - DEA: NRMP is influenced by budget shifts/cuts and delays (which are out of their control) which may alter the timing and/or value of their investment.
 - Aspects that are outside of the immediate focus area should also be considered, such as the risk of re-infestation from neighbouring areas where AIS are evident.
 - In such cases, transboundary strategies much be considered and engagement with neighbouring LOs undertaken.
 - It would be ideal for planning and co-operation at occur at catchment scale, across boundaries (i.e. be means of catchment level forums).
 - Determine management and rehabilitation activities for areas after clearing and treatment (i.e. to prevent re-infestation, land degradation, etc.).
 - Joint development of the agreement (contract) document which details reporting and communications requirements, conditions, etc. (see section 3.3 : Incentive Incentive Agreemen).
- When activities cannot be carried out as and when was planned (i.e. if DEA: NRMP cannot do follow-ups in the time frame (due to budget or contact delays) that is required to ensure the area is not re-infested; the Programme must communicate with LO and together develop a new/remedial plan so that the clearing investment is not lost).
 - When there is a change in timeframes or other aspects of the original agreement
 - It is recommended that the Programme and the LO should schedule regular meetings (in person or telephonically) to ensure enhance communication and planning.
 - If the land is sold or management transferred during the implementation phase, the agreement goes to the new LO/contractor/manager (stipulate in agreement) who is then responsible for taking over the specified responsibilities - the details of the agreement need to be clearly part of the transfer or handover process.

3 Handover phase

- Once DEA: NRMP's contracted teams have done the initial clearing and two follow-ups in the agreed area, the area is handed back to the LO.
 - After the two follow-ups, the area must be handed back to the LO, i.e. does not have to be in maintenance phase before it is handed over.
 - If the Programme is unable to do both follow-ups, a joint decision must be made on how the area will be dealt with (i.e. LO may have to take over doing the follow-up/s when the Programme is unable to, and/or negotiate another means of the Programme investing or assisting the LO).
 - There is also option for portions of the area to be handed back to the LO.

2 Implementation phase

- Ongoing communication is needed to ensure all parties are aware of the plans and activities. Communication should be undertaken:
 - Before NRMP contract teams go to site to do clearing and/or follow-ups.



- DEA to do Environmental Management Inspections (EMIs) with LO for environmental advocacy and to see the progress of the treated area. The inspection can also act as an incentive to fulfil the targets and commitments of the agreement.
- LO is responsible for maintaining or improving the state of the cleared area (depending on its handover state), and

report to the Programme using the KPIs in the agreed upon timeframes.

- If the land is sold or transferred, the new LO/contractor/manager is responsible for securing the land in its maintenance phase or improving its condition, as per the targets set in the agreement.

3.3 Incentive Agreement

During the planning phase of the incentive process, an agreement document must be jointly populated and signed by all parties involved.

The Programme has a standardised agreement (typically a two-page document) that must be used, however it should be expanded and altered to include the following details:

- Allocate the appropriate persons to sign the contract (i.e. DEA-NRMP Manager, Land Owner, Estate Manager, DEA: Biosecurity Manager)
 - The signatories are responsible for communicating the agreement with others and ensuring that all are kept up to date on the process.
- Timeframes of joint site visit and planning, and clearing and follow-ups (typically done within 6 months of previous treatment)
- Actual costs of clearing and follow-ups
- Communication plan (schedule meeting dates/timeframes, critical communication points)

- Roles and responsibilities of all parties (see section 3.4 : Roles &)
- Unexpected changes (i.e. if land is sold or transferred)
- Reporting specifications (timeframes, KPIs)
- Framework for inspections (timeframe, process, etc.) undertaken by DEA: Biosecurity
- Disincentives (what will happen if a party does not uphold their side of the agreement)
 - For example, if the LO does not secure the cleared area in an improved/ maintenance state, the Programme can claim back the full cost (plus interest) of their investment, or the LO must return the area to the specific state at their own cost.

While the agreement document should contain all the necessary details, it is also important that the document is concise and short to minimise complications and confusion.



3.4 Roles & Responsibilities

The table that follows details the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the incentive assistance process. This list should be

used as a basis, but expanded or altered as needed.

Partner	Roles & Responsibilities
DEA:NRMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guide, assist and motivate landowner to bring AIS under control e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide advice on clearing methods, activity samples and other aspects - Assist with training and other support that may be needed ▪ Project management (clearing and follow-up/s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must not commence work before agreements are signed off ▪ Provide template for reporting on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) ▪ Contract teams to do clearing (pay directly) ▪ Cover 100% of labour, transport, equipment and herbicide costs of the contract teams ▪ Train contract teams ▪ Monitoring and evaluation at any idea time (given reasonable notice to LO)
Land Owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintenance and achievement of clearing targets as specified in the agreement ▪ Reporting on KPIs to DEA ▪ Responsible for AIS control on their land
DEA:Biosecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspections to assess compliance with the terms of the agreement

The DEA-NRM Programme’s main objectives include:

- Hydrological: To enhance water security and to promote the quest for equity, efficiency and sustainability in the supply and use of water.
- Ecological: To improve the ecological integrity of our natural systems.
- Social: To optimise the social benefits that are possible as a community-based public works programme by investing in the most marginalised sectors of South African society.

- Natural Resources: To restore the productive potential of land, and to promote the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Economic: To develop the economic benefits (drawn from land, water, wood and people) of clearing these plants.

Extensive effort and resources are invested annually on achieving these goals. Strengthening the landowner agreements can contribute significant to delivering on these objectives and securing the gains made in the fight to control AIS in South Africa.



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The Association for Water and Rural Development

AWARD is a non-profit organisation specialising in participatory, research-based project implementation. Their work addresses issues of sustainability, inequity and poverty by building natural-resource management competence and supporting sustainable livelihoods. One of their current projects, supported by USAID, focuses on the Olifants River and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems to sustain livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment.

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About USAID: RESILIM-O

USAID: RESILIM-O focuses on the Olifants River Basin and the way in which people living in South Africa and Mozambique depend on the Olifants and its contributing waterways. It aims to improve water security and resource management in support of the healthy ecosystems that support livelihoods and resilient economic development in the catchment. The 5-year programme, involving the South African and Mozambican portions of the Olifants catchment, is being implemented by the Association for Water and Rural Development (AWARD) and is funded by USAID Southern Africa.

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