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MINING AND BIODIVERSITY COME TOGETHER TO POWER A GREENER ECONOMY

Posted by Administrator on Friday, 31 May 2013 in Grasslands News 2013

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On 22 May 2013, the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, launched the 'Mining and Biodiversity Guideline: Mainstreaming Biodiversity into the Mining Sector', at Kirstenbosch, Cape Town. "We have indeed reached a momentous stage in our country's development, where sectors originally perceived to have competing mandates, have realised the common vision of growth and prosperity for our country, and are beginning to walk this path towards sustainability together", said Minister Molewa.

Our challenge as a nation in a developing state context is to find a balance between economic growth and **environmental** sustainability.

Without the integrity of our natural systems, in particular our catchments, rivers and **wetlands** that support water-related services, there can be no sustained long-term economic growth or life. The mining industry plays a vital role in South Africa's growth and development. South Africa's **biodiversity** and its mineral wealth are fundamental to the Green Economy, job creation and overall sustainability. However if mining is not strategically planned and carefully implemented, it also has significant negative impacts on **biodiversity** and water.

Based on the knowledge and science that highlights the state of SA's biological and water resources; the Mining and Biodiversity Guidelines is a practical, user-friendly manual for integrating **biodiversity** considerations into the decision making and planning processes of mining. This guideline will help us avoid impacting on our **biodiversity** priority areas, including our critical water resources, through better planning and implementation, as it provides a tool to facilitate the sustainable development of South Africa's mineral resources in a way that enables regulators, industry and practitioners to minimise the impact of mining on the country's **biodiversity** and **ecosystem** services.

The Mining and Biodiversity Guideline is the result of a unique partnership between the mining and **biodiversity** sectors. The development of the Guideline was initiated by the Chamber of Mines and the South African Mining and Biodiversity Forum (SAMBF) with technical input and coordination from the South African National Biodiversity Institute's (SANBI) Grasslands Programme in collaboration with numerous other stakeholders including government, NGOs, the scientific fraternity and the private sector. The launch of the publication coincided with the United Nations International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB), aimed at creating awareness of the importance of **biodiversity**. The theme for this year's celebration of IDB is "Water and Biodiversity - Water is essential for life" which is very fitting as the Guideline represents the linkages between contributing factors and assesses the impacts of mining on **biodiversity** and water resources.

"We are proud to launch this Mining and Biodiversity Guideline, which is a product of collaboration with the mining sector. We have to work together across sectors, as it is only by working together that we can do more." Minister Molewa also stated that: "...it is certainly my wish that the guidelines be used as a key tool by the mining sector and government to guide better practices for sustainable development, branding South Africa as leaders in **environmental** and sustainability issues". Minister Molewa said that the Guidelines were launched with the full support of Minister Shabangu who was not able to attend the launch.

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