



EZEMVELO
KZN WILDLIFE

Conservation, Partnerships & Ecotourism

Conservation Plans – Do we have too many?



An Implementation Perspective

Overview

- How many plans
- Implementation woes of the client
- Way forward
- Conclusion

Some definitions and provisos:

- These are my own views, augmented by some views aired on the IAIA SA forum on “Linked In®”
- Client – The end user
- Plans – broadscale term for all the tools and products developed within the broader Environmental sector, with main focus on biodiversity
- Perception in the implementation sphere is critically important. Our clients hold the perspective that we expect too much. For many, “Perception is Truth”!
- The exception proves the rule...

Numerous plans

Provincial Scale

- Terrestrial Biodiversity Conservation Assessment (Cons Plan)
- Freshwater Conservation Plan
- Estuarine Conservation Plan
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Listing Notice 3 Trigger Maps (LN3)

District Scale

- Environmental Management Frameworks (EMF), IDPs, SDFs, SEAs.
- Municipal Open Space Systems, Environmental Services Management Plans
- Vegetation Assessments

Local Municipal Scale, Fine Scale

- EIA information, Planning Zones, Micro-movement corridors

National or other scales

- Vegetation assessments (Mucina & Rutherford)
- Threatened Ecosystems
- NFEPA rivers and wetlands
- World Heritage Site Buffers

- When reviewing we don't only consider the consplan.

Examples of confusion

- “The threatened ecosystem layer calls this area Kwambonambi Grassland which is Critically Endangered. Mucina and Rutherford refers to the vegetation as Coastal Grassland which is Endangered. The Provincial Vegetation layer refers to the same vegetation type as either Kwambonambi Grassland, or Maputaland Coastal Grassland, depending on which version one looks at. The first was regarded as critically endangered, while the latter is vulnerable (?). Which vegetation type do I use?” – To add to the confusion, the Provincial Conservation Plan will give a land parcel within this vegetation type as a low biodiversity priority area, the EMF will refer to the same land parcel as an area under threat, and therefore of conservation value, and the municipal Environmental Management Services Plan will flag it as being registered as a National Protected Area candidate, and therefore a candidate offset site.
- A client in this situation will be confused.
- It is a question of scale, but confusion abounds!



Examples of confusion

An excerpt from a recently received “Specialist Report”:

- “Attached please find an excel spreadsheet containing the ratings of the Ezimvelo KZN wildlife 'CPLAN' Environmental/Conservation Geodatabase system from 2007 for the proposed development site (Portion 95 of Farm no 4770) along with a map showing the location of the proposed development site relative to the CPLAN grid cells. These cells are 1km x 1km grid cells with a listing of possible fauna and flora that have a preservation value.
- There are the various veld and landcover type systems such as Acocks Veld types and The Biomes of Southern Africa, but these are primarily maps displaying the location and types of vegetations, not a rating systems in terms of environmental vulnerability.”
- This client is confused, and the report adds no value, and delays the EIA and Planning processes.

Concerns raised by Clients

Recently discussed on the Linked In Forum (National context!):

- “Data is not accurate enough to inform decisions”.
- “Decision makers and CAs hesitant to make decisions around biodiversity issues, and cover themselves in red tape, further confusing the issue”.
- “Applicants would rather act unlawfully than go through an expensive process to be told they need to conserve their land”.

What's the issue?

SO WHAT?

- Planners spend too much time explaining on the phone, or via email responses what is required of EAPs or specialists, interpreting various plans, and which should be used in the application being conducted. Response letters are unduly long, when incorrect information is used, or incorrect assumptions are made, or conclusions are drawn incorrectly.
- Conservation agencies and other conservation NGOs get a bad reputation in the implementation sector for “delaying” environmental assessments.
- Environmental Authorisations no longer safeguard biodiversity, as competent authorities have time-frames to respond within, and relying on goodwill between the CA and conservation authorities is no longer enough. Very little understanding within the CA of the various plans.
- Confusion between specialist reports with the data used leading to poor quality reports, and limited value to feedback into various spatial plans.

What's the issue?

Are we doing ourselves any favours?

- We have some fantastic plans, no REALLY!
- BUT, there is a perceived lack of synergy with products, potentially arising from a huge variety of differing mandates, and a lack of understanding of who should be doing what.
- Too much overlap, plans are too similar – EG, using veg type names for threatened ecosystems, which was well thought through, but the delay...
- Confusion between specialist reports with the data used leading to poor quality reports, and limited value to feedback into various spatial plans.

What's the way forward?

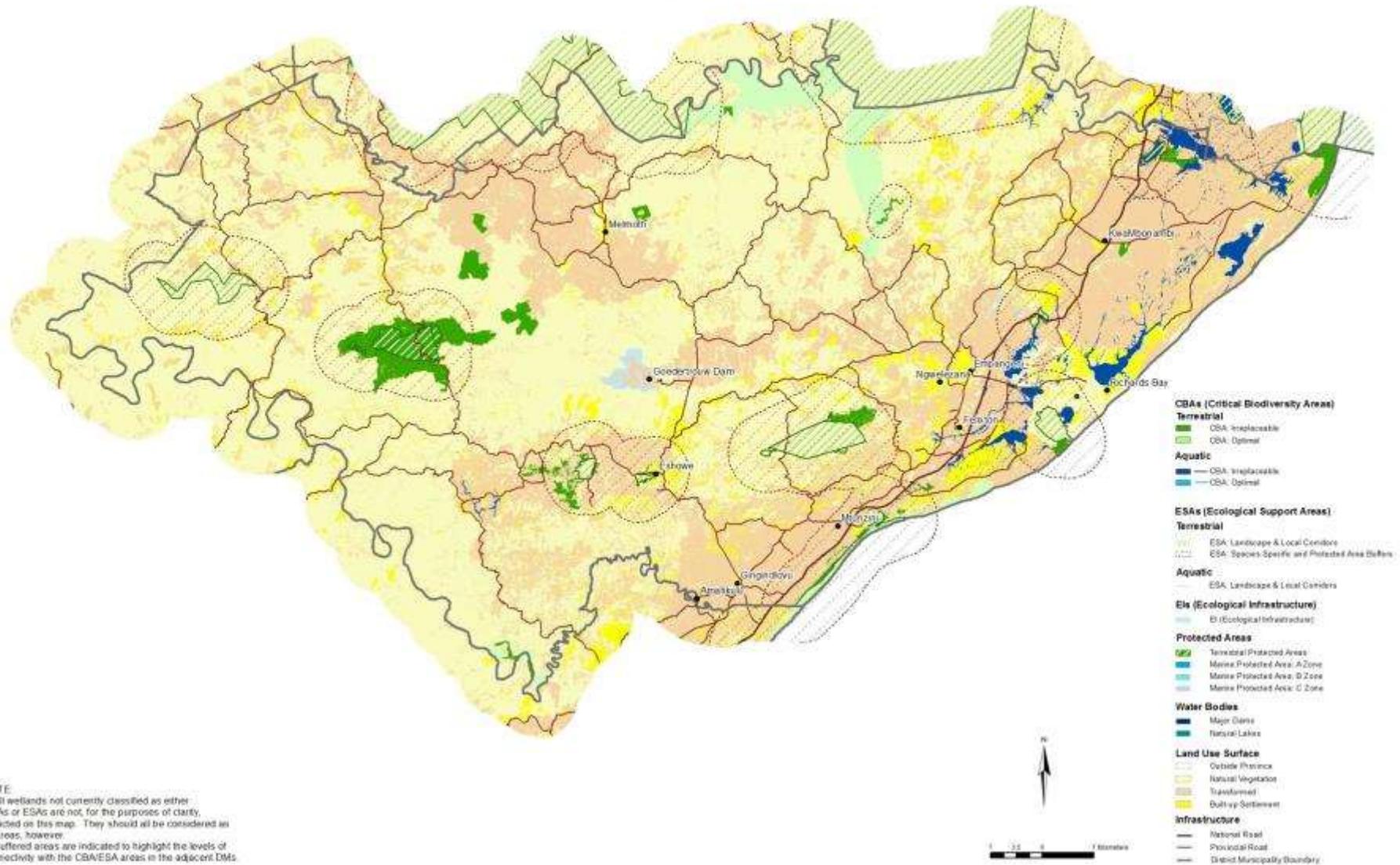
Where do we go from here?

- Need to take a step back and assess our communication strategies within the biodiversity sector.
- “One shop stop” approach has limitations for scale related application, but improvements on how we mainstream plans could resolve this.
- Guidelines for which plans to use, and when and how.
- Biodiversity sector plans, with good data. A lot of good data synthesized into one map, with recommended land use guidelines, preferred land uses, and guidelines for implementation.
- Discuss at the next Municipal and provincial biodiversity planning workshop.
- Garner a greater response from the clients who use our products, both for implementation colleagues and for EAPs. Undertake a formalised study of what they require.
- Get provincial data into national products quicker.

uThungulu District Municipality

CBA and ESA Map

Based on the KZN 2008 Land Cover



NOTE

1. All wetlands not currently classified as either CBAs or ESAs are not, for the purposes of clarity, depicted on this map. They should all be considered as EI areas, however.
2. Buffered areas are indicated to highlight the levels of connectivity with the CBA/ESA areas in the adjacent DMs.

Questions?



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