

Agulhas National Park Zoning Plan:

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of a Conservation Development Framework (CDF) is to establish a coherent spatial framework in and around a park to guide and co-ordinate conservation, tourism and visitor experience initiatives. A key part of the CDF is the zoning plan, which plays an important role in minimizing conflicts between different users of a park by separating potentially conflicting activities such as game viewing and day-visitor picnic areas whilst ensuring that activities which do not conflict with the park's values and objectives (especially the conservation of the protected area's natural systems and its biodiversity) can continue in appropriate areas. A zoning plan is also a legislated requirement of the Protected Areas Act, which stipulates that the management plan, which is to be approved by the Minister, must contain "a zoning of the area indicating what activities may take place in different sections of the area and the conservation objectives of those sections".

The zoning of Agulhas National Park was based on an analysis and mapping of the sensitivity and value of a park's biophysical, heritage and scenic resources; an assessment of the regional context; and an assessment of the park's current and planned infrastructure and tourist routes/products; all interpreted in the context of park objectives. This was undertaken in an iterative and consultative process. This document, which is extracted from the full *Conservation Development Framework for Agulhas National Park* (2006) sets out the rationale for use zones, describes the zones, and provides management guidelines for each of the zones.

2. RATIONALE FOR USE ZONES

The prime function of a protected area is to conserve biodiversity. Other functions such as the need to ensure that visitors have access to the park, and that adjoining communities and local economies derive benefits from the area, potentially conflict with and compromise this primary function. Use zoning is the primary tool to ensure that visitors can have a wide range of quality experiences without comprising the integrity of the environment.

Further, people visit a park with differing expectations and recreational objectives. Some people are visiting a park purely to see wildlife as well as natural landscapes. Others wish to experience intangible attributes such as solitude, remoteness, wildness, and serenity (which can be grouped as wilderness qualities), while some visit to engage in a range of nature-based recreational activities, or to socialize in the rest camp. Different people have different accommodation requirements ranging from extreme roughing it up to luxury catered accommodation. There is often conflict between the requirements different users and different activities. Appropriate use zoning serves to minimizing conflicts between different users of a park by separating potentially conflicting activities such as game viewing and day-visitor picnic areas whilst ensuring that activities which do not conflict with the park's values and objectives (especially the conservation of the protected area's natural systems and its biodiversity) can continue in appropriate areas. Use zones serve to ensure that high intensity facilities and activities are placed in areas that are robust enough to tolerate intensive use, as well as to protect more sensitive areas of the park from over-utilization.

3. PARK USE ZONATION SYSTEM:

The Zoning System

SANParks has adopted a dual zoning system for its parks. The system comprises:

- a) Visitor use zones covering the entire park, and
- b) Special management overlays which designate specific areas of a park that require special management interventions.

The use zoning of Agulhas National Park is shown in Map 4, and summarised in Table One.

The Zoning process and its linkage to the underlying environmental analysis

The zoning for Agulhas National Park was underpinned by an analysis and mapping of the sensitivity and value of a park's biophysical, heritage and scenic resources. This analysis examined the biophysical attributes of the park including habitat value (in particular the contribution to national conservation objectives), special habitat value (the value of the area to rare and endangered species), hydrological sensitivity (areas vulnerable to disruption of hydrological processes such as floodplains and wetlands), topographic sensitivity (steep slopes), soil sensitivity (soils that are vulnerable to erosion) and vegetation vulnerability to physical disturbance. In addition, the heritage value and sensitivity of sites was examined (including palaeontological, archaeological, historical and current cultural aspects). The visual sensitivity of the landscape was also examined in order to identify sites where infrastructure development could have a strong aesthetic impact. This analysis was used to inform the appropriate use of different areas of the park, as well as to help define the boundaries between zones. The zoning was also informed by the park's current infrastructure and tourism products, as well as the regional context (especially linkages to neighbouring areas and impacts from activities outside the reserve). Planned infrastructure and tourism products were also accommodated where these were compatible with the environmental informants. These were all interpreted in the context of the park objectives. This was undertaken in an iterative and consultative process.

Map 5 shows the relationship between the use zoning and the summary products of the biodiversity and landscape sensitivity-value analysis. This indicates that in general it was possible to include most of the environmentally sensitive and valuable areas into zones that are strongly orientated towards resource conservation rather than tourist use. Further, in many cases the boundaries between zones are based on changes in environmental sensitivity. Table 2 summarises the percentage area of the park covered by each zone, as well as the percentage of the highly environmentally sensitive and valuable areas (defined as areas with values in the top quartile of the sensitivity value analysis) that are in each zone. This indicates that three quarters (73%) of the park is covered by zones that are strongly conservation orientated in terms of their objectives (i.e. Remote and Primitive). Further, the table shows a good correlation between spatial distribution of environmentally sensitive habitats and the conservation orientated zones, with the Remote zone covering 32% of the park yet containing almost 50% of the highly valuable and sensitive areas. Conversely, the tourist orientated Low Intensity Leisure zone covers approximately 18% of the park yet contains only around 9% of the sensitive habitats.

Table 1: Summary of Use Zone Characteristics

Zone	General Characteristics	Experiential Qualities	Interaction between users	Type of Access	Type of activities	Type of Facilities	Conservation Objectives	Limits of acceptable change: Biophysical	Limits of acceptable change: Aesthetics and recreational
REMOTE*	Retains an intrinsically wild appearance and character, or capable of being restored to such.	Solitude and awe inspiring natural characteristics	None to very low	Controlled access, only on foot	Hiking in small groups	Established footpaths where erosion may be a problem. Essentially undeveloped and roadless	Maintain the zone in a natural state with no impact on biodiversity pattern or processes. Existing impacts on biodiversity either from historical usage or originating from outside the zone should be minimized.	Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be minimized, and existing impacts should be reduced	Activities which impact on the intrinsically wild appearance and character of the area will not be tolerated.
PRIMITIVE	Generally retains wilderness qualities, but with basic self-catering facilities. Access is controlled. Provides access to the Remote Zone, and can serve as a buffer.	Experience wilderness qualities	Low	Controlled access. Accompanied or unaccompanied. Foot; 4x4 vehicles	Hiking; 4x4 drives; game viewing; horse riding	Small, basic, self-catering; or limited concessions with limited numbers; 4x4 trails; hiking trails	Maintain the zone in a generally natural state with little or no impact on biodiversity processes, and very limited and site specific impacts on biodiversity pattern. Existing impacts on biodiversity either from historical usage or originating from outside the zone should be minimized.	Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be small and limited to restricted impact footprints. Existing impacts should be reduced.	Activities which impact on the intrinsically wild appearance and character of the area should be restricted, and impacts limited to the site of the facility.
QUIET	This zone allows non-motorised access to areas which generally retain a natural appearance and character. Access is not specifically controlled.	Wide range of activities; relaxation in a natural environment	Moderate to high	Unaccompanied non-motorised access. Mainly on foot, non-motorised access to specific facilities.	Hiking; walking; rock climbing; bird watching; possibly mountain biking and horse riding	Hiking trails; footpaths; management tracks; bird hides. Ablution facilities may be provided in high use areas. No accommodation; and no tourist access by vehicle.	Maintain the zone in a generally natural state, with the proviso that limited impacts on biodiversity patterns and processes are allowed in order to accommodate park recreational and tourism objectives.	Some deviation from a natural/pristine state is allowed, but care should be taken to restrict the development footprint. Infrastructure, especially paths and viewpoints should be designed to limit the impacts of large numbers of visitors on the biophysical environment	Activities which impact on the relatively natural appearance and character of the area should be restricted, though the presence of larger numbers of visitors and the facilities they require, may impact on the feeling of wildness found in this zone
LOW INTENSITY LEISURE	The underlying characteristic of this zone is motorised self-drive access with basic self-catering facilities. The numbers of visitors are higher than in the Remote and Primitive Zones. Camps are without modern facilities such as shops and restaurants.	Comfortable facilities in a relatively natural environment.	Moderate to high	Motorised self-drive access.	Motorised self-drive game viewing, picnicking, walking, cycling; rock climbing; hiking; adventure activities.	Facilities limited to basic self-catering picnic sites; ablation facilities; information/education centres; parking areas. Small to medium self-catering (incl. camping) rest camps with ablation facilities, but not shops or restaurants. Low spec access roads to provide a more wild experience.	Mitigate the biodiversity impacts of the relatively high levels of tourism activity and infrastructure that are accommodated within this zone through careful planning and active management, and to ensure that both the negative effects of the activities and infrastructure are restricted to the zone, and that the zone is maintained in a generally natural state that is in keeping with the character of a Protected Area.	Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be minimized and limited to restricted impact footprints as far as possible. However, it is accepted that some damage to the biophysical environment associated with tourist activities and facilities will be inevitable	Although it is inevitable that activities and facilities will impact on the wild appearance and reduce the wilderness characteristics of the area, these should be managed and limited to ensure that the area still provides a relatively natural outdoor experience
HIGH INTENSITY LEISURE	The main characteristic is that of a high density tourist development node, with modern amenities, where more concentrated human activities are allowed.	Comfortable and sophisticated facilities while retaining a natural ambiance	High	Accessible by motorised transport (car/bus) on high volume transport routes, including delivery vehicles.	As above. Additional sophisticated infrastructure. Larger, organised adventure activities (orienteeing, fun runs). Dining at restaurants.	High density tourist camps with modern amenities. Footpaths, transport systems, accommodation, restaurants, curio and refreshment stalls; education centres. High volume roads.	Ensure that the high levels of tourism activity and infrastructure that are accommodated within this zone have a minimal effect on the surrounding natural environment.	The greatest level of deviation from a natural/pristine state is allowed in this zone, and it is accepted that damage to the biophysical environment associated with tourist activities and facilities will be inevitable.	Although it is inevitable that the high visitor numbers, activities and facilities will impact on the wild appearance and reduce the wilderness characteristics of the area, these should be managed and limited to ensure that the area generally still provides a relatively natural outdoor experience appropriate for a national park.

*Wilderness areas need to be investigated and officially designated.

Table 2: Summary of the percentage area of the park covered by each zone, as well as the percentage of the highly environmentally sensitive and valuable areas (defined as areas with values in the top quartile of the sensitivity value analysis) that are in each zone.

		Zone as a percentage of park area	Percentage of highly sensitive areas that are in the zone
Agulhas National Park			
Conservation orientated zones	Remote	32.1	47.7
	Primitive	40.9	37.1
Tourism orientated zones	Quiet	9.1	6.0
	Low Intensity Leisure	17.7	9.2
	High Intensity Leisure	0.1	0.0

Remote Zone:

Characteristics:

This is an area retaining an intrinsically wild appearance and character, or capable of being restored to such, and which is undeveloped. There are no permanent improvements or any form of human habitation. It provides outstanding opportunities for solitude with awe inspiring natural characteristics. If present at all, sight and sound of human habitation and activities are barely discernable and at a far distance. The zone also serves to protect sensitive environments from development impacts and tourism pressure.

Visitor activities and experience:

Activities: Access is strictly controlled and on foot. Groups must be small, and can either be accompanied by a guide or unaccompanied. Several groups may be in area at the same time, but if necessary densities and routes should be defined so that no signs can be seen or heard between the groups. The principles of “Pack it in Pack it out” must be applied.

Interaction with other users: There is no interaction between groups. The numbers of groups within the area will be determined by the ability to ensure that there is no interaction between groups.

Conservation objectives of the zone (Limits of acceptable change):

The conservation objective is to maintain the zone in a natural state with no impact on biodiversity pattern or processes. Existing impacts on biodiversity either from historical usage or originating from outside the zone should be minimized. The zone should be managed within the following Limits of Acceptable Change:

Biophysical environment: Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be minimized, and existing impacts should be reduced.

Aesthetics and recreational environment: Activities which impact on the intrinsically wild appearance and character of the area, or which impact on the wilderness characteristics of the area (solitude, remoteness, wildness, serenity, peace etc) will not be tolerated.

Facilities:

Type and size: No facilities are provided. Should overnight facilities be required to serve this zone, these should be placed in the adjoining zones.

Sophistication of facilities: No facilities except self carried portable tents. Guidelines for washing, ablution and cooking must be defined according to the "Pack it in Pack" it out principles. Camping only at designated sites.

Audible equipment and communication structures: None.

Access and roads: Public access is non-motorized. Vehicular access and parking is provided in the adjoining Primitive zone. Established footpaths may be provided where erosion risks occur. Limited low specification management tracks (i.e. not built up roads) are acceptable within this zone, though these should be rationalized, and eventually removed.

Location in Park: In Agulhas NP, Remote areas were designated in the area between Ratelrivier and Rietfontein, and in the area around the Soetanyenberg, which are both landscapes with high environmental sensitivity and value.

Primitive Zone:**Characteristics:**

The prime characteristic of the zone is the experience of wilderness qualities with the accent on controlled access. Access is controlled in terms of numbers, frequency and size of groups. The zone shares the wilderness qualities of Wilderness Areas and Remote zones, but with the provision of basic self-catering facilities and access. It also provides access to the Remote zone and Wilderness Area. Views of human activities and development outside of the park may be visible from this zone.

This zone has the following functions:

- It provides the basic facilities and access to serve Wilderness Areas and Remote zones.
- It contains concession sites and other facilities where impacts are managed through strict control of the movement and numbers of tourists, for example if all tourists are in concession safari vehicles.
- It serves as a buffer to the fringe of the park and other zones, in particular Wilderness and Remote.
- It serves to protect sensitive environments from high levels of development.

Visitor activities and experience:

Activities: Access is controlled in terms of numbers, frequency and size of groups. Activities include hiking, 4x4 drives and game viewing. Access is controlled either through only allowing access to those with bookings for specific facilities, or alternatively through a specific booking or permit for a particular hiking trail or 4x4 route. Several groups may be in area at the same time, but access should be managed to minimize interaction between groups if necessary.

Interaction with other users: Interaction between groups of users is low, and care must be taken in determining the number and nature of facilities located in the area in order to minimize these interactions.

Conservation objectives of the zone (Limits of acceptable change):

The conservation objective is to maintain the zone in a generally natural state with little or no impact on biodiversity processes, and very limited and site specific impacts on biodiversity pattern. Existing impacts on biodiversity either from historical usage or originating from outside the zone should be minimized. The zone should be managed within the following Limits of Acceptable Change:

Biophysical environment: Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be small and limited to restricted impact footprints. Existing impacts should be reduced. Any facilities constructed in these areas, and activities undertaken here should be done in a way that limits environmental impacts. Road and infrastructure specifications should be designed to limit impacts.

Aesthetics and recreational environment: Activities which impact on the intrinsically wild appearance and character of the area, or which impact on the wilderness characteristics of the area (solitude, remoteness, wildness, serenity, peace etc) should be restricted and impacts limited to the site of the facility. Ideally visitors should only be aware of the facility or infrastructure that they are using, and this infrastructure/facility should be designed to fit in with the environment within which it is located in order to avoid aesthetic impacts.

Facilities:

Type and size: Facilities are small, often very basic, and are distributed to avoid contact between users. Alternatively facilities designed for high levels of luxury, but limited visitor numbers can be accommodated here (e.g. controlled access private camps or concession sites).

Sophistication of facilities: Generally facilities are small, basic and self-catering, though concession facilities may be significantly more sophisticated.

Audible equipment and communication structures: None.

Access and roads: Vehicular access to facilities is limited to low-spec roads, often 4x4 only. Tourist and game viewing roads are 4x4 only. Established footpaths are provided to avoid erosion and braiding.

Location in Park:

In Agulhas NP, Primitive areas were designated to buffer Remote areas from external impacts and to protect most of the remaining sensitive areas from high levels of tourist activity. To allow controlled access to the view site on the Soetansberg the area along the existing track has been zoned Primitive. Before the route to the summit is made available to visitors strict management protocols need to be in place regarding number of visitors, access control methods, routes, modes of transport, etc.

Quiet Zone:

Characteristics:

This zone is characterized by unaccompanied non-motorized access without specific access control and permits. Visitors are allowed unaccompanied (or accompanied)

access, mainly on foot, for a wide range of experiences. Larger numbers of visitors are allowed than in the Primitive zone and contact between visitors is frequent. The main accent is on unaccompanied non motorized access. Larger numbers of visitors are allowed and contact between visitors is frequent. It is important to note that this zone may have different interpretations in different parks and the CDF documentation for each park should set the objectives specific to that park. Thus, in some instances horses and mountain bikes could be accommodated. This zone can also provide non motorized access within Low and High Intensity Leisure zones away from vehicular access roads.

Visitor activities and experience:

Activities: Hiking, rock climbing, bird watching, self-guided constructed trails and walks.

Interaction with other users: Interaction between groups of users is frequent.

Conservation objectives of the zone (Limits of acceptable change):

The conservation objective is to maintain the zone in a generally natural state, with the proviso that limited impacts on biodiversity patterns and processes are allowed in order to accommodate park recreational and tourism objectives. The zone should be managed within the following Limits of Acceptable Change:

Biophysical environment: Some deviation from a natural/pristine state is allowed, but care should be taken to restrict the development footprint. Infrastructure, especially paths and viewpoints should be designed to limit the impacts of large numbers of visitors on the biophysical environment.

Aesthetics and recreational environment: Activities which impact on the relatively natural appearance and character of the area should be restricted, though the presence of larger numbers of visitors and the facilities they require, may impact on the feeling of “wildness” found in this zone.

Facilities:

Type and size: Hiking trails, footpaths, bird hides. No accommodation. Ablution facilities may be provided in high use areas. Heritage structures may be used for recreation purposes.

Sophistication of facilities: Where provided these should be basic.

Audible equipment and communication structures: Allowed, but should be managed to retain a relative level of solitude.

Access and roads: Essentially pedestrian access, but in certain parks horse and Mountain bikes can be accommodated. Pedestrian only or in some cases cycles. No access for tourists by vehicle. The only roads are essential two wheeled management tracks.

Location in Park:

In Agulhas NP, Quiet areas were designated in the lower use pedestrian areas surrounding the Southern Tip precinct in order to enhance the experience of visitors. Detailed planning around the Southern Tip precinct may modify the boundaries of the Quiet Zone in this area. Quiet areas have also been designated around the coastal settlements adjacent to the park and around the visitor nodes (e.g. Ratel River, Rietfontein and Renosterkop) within the park. These Quiet zones provide active and

passive non-motorised recreation space for the relatively large numbers of park visitors that will be accommodated there.

Low Intensity Leisure Zone:

Characteristics:

The underlying characteristic of this zone is motorized self-drive access with basic self-catering facilities. The numbers of visitors are higher than in the Remote and Primitive zones. These camps are without modern facilities such as shops and restaurants. Relatively comfortable facilities are positioned in the landscape retaining the inherent natural and visual quality which enhances the visitor experience of a more natural and self providing experience. Access roads are low key, preferably gravel roads and/or tracks to provide a more wild experience. Facilities along roads are limited to basic self-catering picnic sites with toilet facilities. In some parks, large busses and open safari vehicles are not permitted.

Visitor activities and experience:

Activities: Self drive motorized game viewing, picnicking, walking, cycling, rock climbing, hiking, adventure activities.

Interaction with other users: Moderate to high

Conservation objectives of the zone (Limits of acceptable change):

The conservation objective is to mitigate the biodiversity impacts of the relatively high levels of tourism activity and infrastructure that are accommodated within this zone through careful planning and active management, and to ensure that both the negative effects of the activities and infrastructure are restricted to the zone, and that the zone is maintained in a generally natural state that is in keeping with the character of a Protected Area. The zone should be managed within the following Limits of Acceptable Change:

Biophysical environment: Deviation from a natural/pristine state should be minimized and limited to restricted impact footprints as far as possible. However, it is accepted that some damage to the biophysical environment associated with tourist activities and facilities will be inevitable.

Aesthetics and recreational environment: Although it is inevitable that activities and facilities will impact on the wild appearance and reduce the wilderness characteristics of the area (solitude, remoteness, wildness etc), these should be managed and limited to ensure that the area still provides a relatively natural outdoor experience.

Facilities:

Type and size: Picnic sites, view sites, information centres, ablution facilities, parking areas, education centres etc. Small self-catering (including camping) camps of low to medium density 25-35 beds. Additional facilities can include swimming pools. Trails for 4x4 vehicles can also be provided. Day visitor sites are not placed within the camps. Day visitor sites must be compliant with the general self-catering characteristic of the zone.

Sophistication of facilities: Self contained self-catering units with bathroom facilities. Camp sites will include ablution facilities. These camps are without modern facilities such as shops and restaurants.

Audible equipment and communication structures: Cell phone coverage in vicinity of camps. Code of use for cell phones and radios required to retain relative level of solitude.

Access and roads: Motorized self drive sedan car access (traditional game viewing) on designated routes which are preferably gravel roads. In some parks, large busses and open safari vehicles are not permitted. When busses are permitted some roads should be designated as accessible to self drive only. Roads are secondary gravel tourist roads or minor game viewing roads.

Location in Park:

Low intensity leisure areas were designated around a rationalized road network (incorporating existing useful and environmentally acceptable roads, proposed park link roads, and closure and rehabilitation of certain environmentally inappropriate existing roads), to include facilities along this road network (Ratelrivier, Rietfontein, Bergplaas, Springfield, Rietfontein se Baai and Renosterkop), to accommodate the rest camp site at Pietie se Punt, and to include relatively high tourist use coastal sections east of Suiderstrand. In addition, unavoidable regional roads that cut through the park were included in this zone. Low intensity leisure areas were only designated if relatively high tourist activity did not conflict with the underlying landscape sensitivity and value analysis.

High Intensity Leisure Zone:

Characteristics:

The main characteristic is that of a high density tourist development node with modern amenities such as restaurants and shops. This is the zone where more concentrated human activities are allowed. As impacts and particularly cumulative impacts are higher, such facilities should be placed on the periphery of the park. Staff not directly associated with tourism facilities should be accommodated outside of the park if possible. All industrial type facilities such as laundries, abattoirs, maintenance depots and workshops should ideally be located outside of the park within suitably zoned adjoining urban or rural areas. Accessible by motorized transport (Car/bus) on high volume transport routes. More concentrated activities occur than in than Low Intensity leisure.

Visitor activities and experience:

Activities: Traditional game viewing routes with associated more sophisticated infrastructure, sight seeing at tourist destinations, picnicking, walking, cycling, rock climbing, hiking, adventure activities (orienteering, scuba diving, fun runs), activities associated with amenities such as dining in restaurants.

Interaction with other users: High

Conservation objectives of the zone (Limits of acceptable change):

The conservation objective is to ensure that the high levels of tourism activity and infrastructure that are accommodated within this zone have a minimal effect on the surrounding natural environment. The zone should be managed within the following Limits of Acceptable Change:

Biophysical environment: The greatest level of deviation from a natural/pristine state is allowed in this zone, and it is accepted that damage to the biophysical environment associated with tourist activities and facilities will be inevitable. However, care must

be taken to ensure that the zone still retains a level of ecological integrity consistent with a protected area.

Aesthetics and recreational environment: Although it is inevitable that the high visitor numbers, activities and facilities will impact on the wild appearance and reduce the wilderness characteristics of the area (solitude, remoteness, wildness etc), these should be managed and limited to ensure that the area generally still provides a relatively natural outdoor experience.

Facilities:

Type and size: High density camps providing tourist accommodation with modern amenities. Restaurants, shops, education centres, botanical gardens. Day visitor sites are provided outside of main camps. Day visitor sites or picnic sites may provide catered facilities and kiosks. In some parks it may be necessary to provide high density recreational sites with a wide range of intensive activities close to the periphery of the park. Picnic sites, view sites, information centres, ablution facilities, parking areas, education centres etc. Staff villages and administrative centres restricted to core staff. Non essential staff housing, administration and industrial activities positioned outside of or peripheral to the park.

Sophistication of facilities: Moderate to high density facilities. Self catering and catered. These camps have modern facilities such as shops and restaurants.

Audible equipment and communication structures: Cell phone coverage in vicinity of camps. Code of use for cell phones and radios required to retain relative level of solitude.

Access and roads: The zone is highly motorized including busses and delivery vehicles on designated routes which are often tarred. Care must be taken to distinguish between roads that serve as high access delivery routes to camps, link roads between camps, and game viewing roads to minimize conflict between users.

Location in Park:

In Agulhas NP, a High intensity leisure zone was designated around the Southern Tip and Lighthouse development nodes to accommodate visitor reception and interpretation facilities, as well as park management infrastructure.

4. THE PARK INTERFACE ZONE

The Park Interface Zones shows the areas within which landuse changes could affect a national Park. The zones, in combination with guidelines, will serve as a basis for a.) identifying the focus areas in which park management and scientists should respond to EIA's, b.) helping to identify the sort of impacts that would be important at a particular site, and most importantly c.) serving as the basis for integrating long term protection of a national park into the spatial development plans of municipalities (SDF/IDP) and other local authorities. In terms of EIA response, the zones serve largely to raise red-flags and do not remove the need for carefully considering the exact impact of a proposed development. In particular, they do not address activities with broad regional aesthetic or biodiversity impacts.

In Agulhas National Park, there are three categories within the Park Interface Zone. The first two are mutually exclusive, but the final visual/aesthetic category can overlay the others (Map 6).

Priority Natural Areas:

This zone aims to ensure the long term persistence of biodiversity, within and around the park, by identifying the key areas on which the long term survival of the park depends. This includes areas important to both biodiversity pattern (especially reasonably intact high priority natural habitats) and processes (ecological linkages, catchments, intact hydrological systems, etc.). This does not imply any loss of existing rights (e.g. current agricultural activities or legal extractive biodiversity use such as fishing), but rather aims to ensure the park's survival in a living landscape.

Priority natural areas include areas identified for future park expansion as well as reasonably natural areas of high biodiversity value which are critical for the long-term persistence of biodiversity within the park. These include adjacent natural areas (especially high priority habitats) which function as an ecologically integrated unit with the park, as well as areas critical for maintaining ecological links and connectivity with the broader landscape.

Development guidelines:

Inappropriate developments and negative land use changes (such as additional ploughing permits for natural veld, development beyond existing transformation footprints, urban expansion, intensification of land use through golf estates etc) should be opposed within this area. Developments with site specific impacts (e.g. a lodge on a game farm) should be favourably viewed if they contribute to ensuring conservation friendly land use within a broader area. Guidelines applicable for the Catchment Protection Section would also apply to these areas.

Catchment Protection:

These are areas important for maintaining key hydrological processes (surface and groundwater) within the park.

Development guidelines:

Within these areas inappropriate development such as dam construction, loss of riparian vegetation and excessive aquifer exploitation should be opposed. In addition, the control of alien vegetation, the control of soil erosion, and appropriate land care (e.g. appropriate stocking rates) should be promoted.

Viewshed protection:

These are areas where developments could impact on the aesthetic quality of a visitor's experience in a park. This zone is particularly concerned with visual impacts (both day and night), but could also include sound pollution.

Development guidelines:

Within these areas any development proposals should be carefully screened to ensure that they do not impact excessively on the aesthetics of the park. The areas identified are only broadly indicative of sensitive areas, as at a fine scale many areas within this zone would be perfectly suited for development. Further, very invasive developments outside this zone would also have to be considered.

5. CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS:

Certain elements of the Agulhas National Park CDF have not yet been finalized. Remote areas will still be investigated for possible formal declaration as Wilderness Areas in terms of Section 22 of the PAA. Special management overlays which designate specific areas of a park that require special management interventions (e.g. areas requiring rehabilitation) will also be identified. Further, as the park is rapidly expanding, it is anticipated that the zoning will need to be updated regularly. Once the Nuwejaars River Protected Environment is established, the zonation of the park in areas adjacent to the Protected Environment may need to be adjusted to take advantage of any additional opportunities for a more restrictive conservation orientated zoning for areas that are currently on the periphery of the park, as well as to accommodate any joint projects and connections.

6. REFERENCES:

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