

# LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

A SERIES OF LOCAL CASES



## eThekwini Municipality (Durban), South Africa Socio-economic values of ecosystems

**SUMMARY:** eThekwini Municipality is one of the first cities in the world to recognise the economic contribution of open spaces and ecosystems services. To document the important life-sustaining environmental services of ecosystems, the municipality conducted an economic valuation of those services, which has helped inform appropriate management and resourcing of Durban's open space system. With an estimated replacement value of US\$ 400 million per year in 2003, excluding the contribution to annual tourism-related turn-over, eThekwini Municipality has made a strong economic argument for conserving its biodiversity.

### Biodiversity & Biodiversity Management in Durban



One of Durban's beaches - the tourism potential of natural areas has not yet been factored into the conservative valuation of the city's ecosystems services of US\$ 400 million a year.

#### Durban's wealth of biodiversity and its management challenges

The variety of landforms and climatic conditions, as well as the significant biogeographical position of Durban, has resulted in a wide range of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, which are home to a rich diversity of organisms. The challenges to conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity in Durban include:

- land transformation (around 60% of the city has been transformed by urban and rural development);
- invasive alien species;
- uncontrolled mining;
- over-harvesting of fauna and flora.

eThekwini Municipality has reacted with creative and innovative strategies to address these environmental challenges, and in so doing has enhanced social and economic benefits.

#### Economic value of Durban's biodiversity

The natural ecosystems of the eThekwini Municipal Area (EMA) provide a range of valuable goods and services to its citizens. These include climate regulation, water regulation, gas regulation, water supply, erosion control, soil formation, nutrient cycling, waste treatment, biological control, food production, natural products and genetic resources. Durban's ecosystems are also of social, recreational and aesthetic value and contribute immensely towards human well-being. The most recent estimate of the value of the natural areas included in Durban's open space system was done in 2003. Result: the replacement value was conservatively estimated at US\$ 400 million per annum, excluding the contribution to the tourism sector. Assuming a large part of Durban's tourism rate is linked to its natural environment, then a significant portion of the annual tourism-related turn-over can be added to the amount of US\$ 400 million.

## The Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS)

Recognising that the city's open spaces, and the biodiversity that they support, supply a range of valuable environmental goods and services, eThekweni Municipality has considered the role of open spaces in designing the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS).

Much of the desired open space system is not in municipal ownership and is zoned for development purposes. eThekweni Municipality and its partners therefore aim to secure the open space system by activities including: development assessment, development guidelines, environmental servitudes, ecological compensation/offsets, compliance monitoring and enforcement; land acquisition and conservation management.

### Invasive Alien Strategy

Invasive alien organisms pose an enormous threat to Durban's biodiversity assets and could result in major biodiversity losses. eThekweni Municipality is developing an Invasive Alien Species Strategy and a State of Invasive Alien Species Report has been compiled, which details the variety and impacts of invasive species.

For more info on this project, contact:

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### Involvement in international initiatives

Durban has made a name internationally for its early and comprehensive Local Agenda 21 activities and its long-term strategic planning. It was not surprising that this ICLEI member city co-initiated the Local Action for Biodiversity Project and published the first biodiversity report in terms of the project.



Woman collecting ncema rushes for weaving. Many people rely heavily on environmental goods such as these rushes to make a living.

## City contacts & profile



A pioneer in acting to address varied biodiversity challenges including climate change

**ETHEKWINI** municipality is located on the eastern seaboard of South Africa. It covers an area of 2297 km<sup>2</sup> and contains examples of three of the country's eight terrestrial biomes, namely savannah, forest and grassland. The aquatic environment includes freshwater and marine habitats, 18 river catchments and 97 km of coastline. Durban is the largest port and urban area on the east coast of Africa and has a population of just over 3 million people. It is also the second largest industrial hub in South Africa.

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**LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY** is a global urban biodiversity initiative of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability in cooperation with IUCN. This pilot project of 21 cities around the globe focuses on the key roles that local governments play in conserving the world's biodiversity and retaining the relationship between people and nature. See: [www.iclei.org/lab](http://www.iclei.org/lab); [lab@iclei.org](mailto:lab@iclei.org)

**COUNTDOWN 2010** is a powerful network of more than 600 partners working together towards the 2010 biodiversity target. Each partner commits additional efforts to tackle the causes of biodiversity loss. The secretariat – hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – facilitates and encourages action, promotes the importance of the 2010 biodiversity target and assesses progress towards 2010. See: [www.countdown2010.org](http://www.countdown2010.org)

**CITIES & BIODIVERSITY** is an initiative of local governments and UN agencies to increase awareness on the relevant role of cities and towns for conserving and managing biodiversity. See: [www.iclei.org/biodiversity](http://www.iclei.org/biodiversity)

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