

APPENDIX 1**STRATEGY ON THE CONSERVATION AND UTILISATION OF REPTILES
AND AMPHIBIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA****CHAPTER 1****INTRODUCTION**

The Constitution states, amongst others, that everyone has the right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that;

- prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
- promote conservation; and
- secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

It is the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's (DEAT) responsibility to ensure the conservation of natural resources and the utilisation thereof takes place in a sustainable manner and has therefor embarked on the development of a national environmental management system through the CONNEP process. This resulted in the development of the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa, which has been submitted to cabinet for approval.

On a more specialised level DEAT also initiated the development of a national policy for the conservation of South Africa's Biodiversity, which resulted in the White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biological Diversity approved by Parliament in September 1997.

To implement the policy on Biological Diversity, certain focus actions in the form of strategies for specialised groups of fauna and flora needs to be taken.

DEAT realised that there is an urgent need for a strategy on the conservation and sustainable utilisation of reptiles and amphibians, after several stake holders such as nature conservation authorities, herpetological associations, traders, etc. approached DEAT with their concerns. Problems such as illegal trade, lack of uniform legislation, as well as habitat destruction, are some of the major issues that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

After two workshops this draft strategy was developed. The strategy document itself falls within the framework of the previously mentioned White papers.

This strategy will contribute directly towards attaining the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, viz. conservation of biodiversity, sustainable

use of natural resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Furthermore, the strategy is aligned towards the following guiding principles contained in:

(i) Policy on the Conservation and Sustainable use of South Africa's Biological Diversity

- I. Intrinsic value
- II. Duty of care
- III. Sustainable use
- IV. The fair and equitable distribution of benefits
- V. Informed and transparent decision making
- VI. Precautionary principle
- VII. Accountability and transparency
- VIII. Subsidiarity
- IX. Participation
- X. Co-ordination and Co-operation
- XI. Global and international responsibilities
- XII. Evaluation and review

(ii) White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa

- I. Accountability
- II. Capacity building and education
- III. Co-ordination
- IV. Equity
- V. Global and international co-operation and responsibilities
- VI. Good Governance
- VII. Participation
- VIII. Precaution

The provisions of international conventions such as, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Wild Animals (CMS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), were taken into account and are expressed throughout the implementation of the strategy.

Furthermore, it should be accepted that the continued maintenance and conservation of viable wild populations of these species are the primary objectives for this strategy.

CHAPTER 2

STEPS IN THE STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS

- Nature conservation is a concurrent competence between central and provincial government and therefore the DEAT took the lead in the development of this strategy by arranging a workshop in May 1997, to which all the provincial nature conservation institutions were invited. During this workshop the Department met with the provincial representatives to discuss the proposed strategy.
- The purpose of this workshop was to identify and discuss all the issues that needed to be addressed in such a policy and to get a document on the table from where the process could continue.
- In view of the deliberations at the workshop and additional comments and suggestions received from the provinces, a discussion document was drafted.
- This document was then submitted to the Minister who approved the document as well as the development of the strategy.
- The document was distributed to all the provincial nature conservation authorities, non-governmental institutions and other relevant role players of whom the DEAT was aware.
- A press release was also issued by the Minister to inform the public of the approved strategy process and the planned workshop.
- A workshop was held in April 1998, to which all stakeholders were invited. The discussion document was discussed in detail at this occasion.
- The discussion document was then amended to accommodate the recommendations and inputs made at the workshop and the document became the Draft Strategy on the Conservation and Sustainable Utilisation of Reptiles and Amphibians.
- The strategy will be submitted to MINMEC and the CEC for final approval where after it will be implemented jointly by all government role players.

CHAPTER 3

STRATEGY FOR THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

GOAL 1. Provide general guidelines, which will ensure the conservation of reptiles and amphibians

1.1 National inventory

There is a need for a national inventory of herpetofauna, which would, at a national level, incorporate information about the distribution of all reptile and amphibian taxa. Knowledge about the taxonomic status of reptile and amphibian taxa is a critical tool for the formulation of conservation plans as well as for the management and utilisation of South Africa's herpetofauna.

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Establish a national inventory of herpetofauna

Actions:

- The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), in collaboration with a panel of experts, will manage the continued compilation of the South African Red Data Books (RDB) on reptiles and amphibians as part of the national inventory.
- RDB's will still be published in hard copy and in due course an electronic database of RDB, which would be accessible to everyone, should also be developed and maintained.
- The RDB's should be revised at intervals of maximum five years.
- DEAT co-ordinate the establishment and maintenance of a national inventory on the distribution and the taxonomic status of reptiles and amphibians in South Africa.
- Uniform terminology should be drafted and applied throughout.
- The first conservation priority for scientists should be to assist in obtaining and compiling these data.
- For the purpose of this document the IUCN criteria will be applied.

1.2 Research

Management of herpetofauna cannot take place without the information, which results from research. Research forms the foundation of the majority of conservation decisions.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Promote research in the field of herpetology

Actions:

- Biologists should be encouraged to engage in research projects on the biology of our indigenous reptiles and amphibians. No distinction needs to be made between foreign scientists and local scientists. (Within the obligations of local capacity building).
- Research on the level of utilisation, which still meets the requirement of sustainable utilisation of indigenous herpetofauna, should be encouraged.
- Researchers should be encouraged to make findings of conservation importance known to the conservation authorities and supply them, if possible, with conservation management recommendations as well as articles and reports resulting from their research.
- Reptile breeders should be encouraged to make available to the relevant nature conservation authorities, any knowledge which may have scientific or conservation value, keeping in mind the issue of Intellectual Property Rights.
- Uniform standards for the screening and approval of research projects on our indigenous herpetofauna need to be defined. Due to a lack of herpetological expertise this could be achieved if a focal point or competent authority for the approval of research projects was instituted at the provincial level.

1.3 Capacity building**OBJECTIVE 1.3**

Create opportunities for capacity building

Actions:

- An acute shortage of herpetological expertise exists within the conservation organisations nationally. Since it is unlikely that additional posts requiring herpetological skills will arise, provinces should be encouraged to allow staff to undergo in-service training. This would allow the provinces to evaluate the conservation status of the herpetofauna within their regions and to make informed decisions about permit applications.
- Institutions such as the S.A. Wildlife College should be encouraged to offer short courses in herpetology, aimed at nature conservation staff and other interested parties such as breeders and traders. In addition, universities should be encouraged to offer degrees with specialisation in herpetology