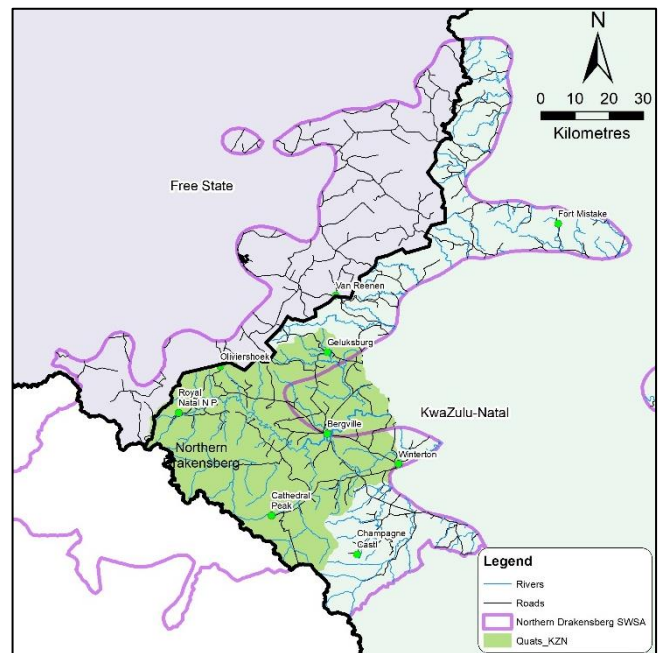


## Background Information Document:

### The Upper uThukela Catchment Partnership

Efforts have been underway to establish a partnership in the portion of the Northern Drakensberg Strategic Water Source Area (SWSA) that falls within the Upper uThukela Catchment. A SWSA is an area that supplies a disproportionate amount of mean annual runoff to a geographical region of interest, meaning that water from that area is exported to other regions and cities.

This process of establishing the partnership was initiated through the Living Catchments Project (LCP) of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), and is being continued through an initiative championed by WWF. A coordinating team comprising the Institute of Natural Resources NPC (INR), Mahlathini Development Foundation (MDF) and the Centre for Water Resources Research (CWRR) at University of KwaZulu-Natal, is leading the process of operationalising and sustaining the partnership.



The objective of the SANBI LCP was to establish a community of practice (CoP) focused on strengthening ecological infrastructure (EI) to ensure water security. The proposed Upper uThukela Catchment Partnership will serve as a Strategic Water Source Partnership. These are community-public-private partnerships that aim to: (1) Enable co-ordinated governance and effective action on the ground to improve the resilience of the water source areas; (2) Create opportunities for communities in the water source areas as well as shared benefits downstream; and (3) Stop degradation of land and water resources in the water source areas and ensure compatible sustainable development<sup>1</sup>.

The INR-led team was appointed by WWF to establish the Strategic Water Source Partnership and its secretariat, and support the process of strategy development and creation of CoPs that are focused on different thematic areas. The team is expected to establish a functional water source forum with a coherent vision, strategy and implementation process, as well as frameworks for blended finance and long-term sustainability.

To date a number of processes have been conducted including a multistakeholder workshop for understanding the issues and role players in the catchment and an adaptive planning process with a smaller group of interested parties. Some work around localised spring protection in the communal tenure communities has been coordinated across a number of implementers and a process of liaising with uThukela Water regarding the desperate need for water access in these communities is underway.

A coherent stakeholder mapping process for all willing and able role players in the catchment and development of a coherent vision, strategy and action plan for the forum are the next steps in this process.

Contact persons: Brigid Letty ([bletty@inr.org.za](mailto:bletty@inr.org.za)), Erna Kruger ([info@mahlathini.org](mailto:info@mahlathini.org)), Rebecka Henriksson ([HenrikssonR@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HenrikssonR@ukzn.ac.za))

<sup>1</sup> [https://wwfafrica.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf\\_water\\_source\\_partnerships\\_web\\_pdf\\_2019.pdf](https://wwfafrica.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_water_source_partnerships_web_pdf_2019.pdf)