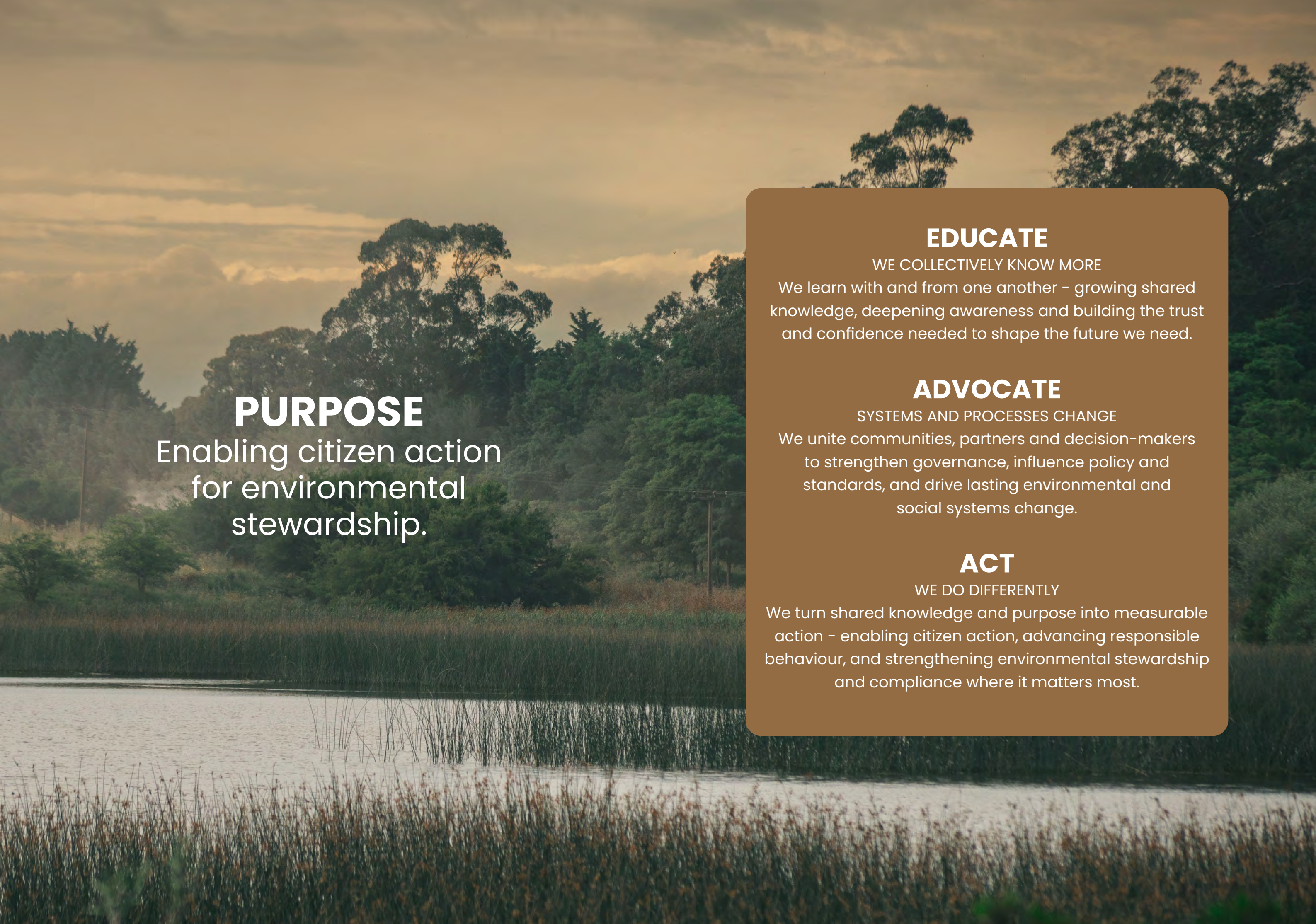


100 YEARS OF PEOPLE CARING FOR THE EARTH



Annual Report
2025-2026





PURPOSE

Enabling citizen action
for environmental
stewardship.

EDUCATE

WE COLLECTIVELY KNOW MORE

We learn with and from one another – growing shared knowledge, deepening awareness and building the trust and confidence needed to shape the future we need.

ADVOCATE

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES CHANGE

We unite communities, partners and decision-makers to strengthen governance, influence policy and standards, and drive lasting environmental and social systems change.

ACT

WE DO DIFFERENTLY

We turn shared knowledge and purpose into measurable action – enabling citizen action, advancing responsible behaviour, and strengthening environmental stewardship and compliance where it matters most.



MISSION

To educate, advocate, and act for environmental and social justice, climate action, biodiversity protection, and reducing pollution in southern Africa.

VISION

To lead citizen action in the region, supporting climate action, fighting biodiversity loss, and promoting a culture of no tolerance of pollution.

VALUES

INTEGRITY

We do the right thing... always.

MUTUAL RESPECT

We value open communication and treat all with compassion and respect.

EXCELLENCE

Excellence is a culture – driven by passion, consistency and professionalism.

INNOVATION

There is no box! We foster a culture of creativity, empowerment, and forward-thinking.

ACCOUNTABILITY

It takes a village. We believe in shared responsibility and collaborative success.

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

**A VERY WARM
WELCOME TO THE
WILDLIFE AND
ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA
(WESSA)'S 100TH
ANNUAL REPORT AND
A SPECIAL WELCOME
TO ALL THE NEW
MEMBERS OF WESSA.**

It is an honour for me to report to you in this auspicious year as we reach our centenary milestone. A century of environmental and conservation impact of people caring for the Earth.



WESSA 100 years

A centenary marks an important 100-year milestone, serving globally as a vital tool for natural and heritage preservation, identity reinforcement, and social cohesion across diverse cultures.

It bridges generational gaps and validates shared historical struggles and triumphs. Above all, it brings past and present members together to secure the organisation's long-term survival through a shared identity.

We pay tribute to the vision and historical resilience of the founders of this wonderful NGO in 1926, and to the determination of all past leaders who collectively steered WESSA to where it is today.

We acknowledge the current Board's responsibility to safeguard this precious organisation on the bumpy road to its next century of achievement and environmental impact.

The Board will continue its oversight of our refreshed strategy, purpose, and focus on climate action, biodiversity and habitat conservation, and pollution reduction on land, at sea, and in the air, while building resilience and long-term financial sustainability.

Considerable progress has been made in strengthening governance, reviewing our Memorandum of Incorporation, and improving the effectiveness of the Board and Management through organisational restructuring and stronger accountability.

One of the highlights of the last year has been the improved alignment among the Board, Management, staff, members, and volunteers across all regions and branches nationwide through our One-WESSA strategic alignment project.

Notwithstanding the challenging economic environment, I am pleased to report that the organisation has significantly improved its financial health and resilience as reflected in the Annual Financial Statement.



R100 million +
Current assets,
for the first time in
our history

I wish to thank my fellow Board members, the CEO, our management team, all staff members, WESSA members and volunteers, and our partners and our funders for their ongoing support and confidence.

Now is the time for a call to action: let us join hands and educate, advocate, and act as never before to build active citizens for environmental stewardship as we move forward over the next 100 years!

The Board has focused on strengthening WESSA's foundations, while the CEO's Report that follows reflects how those foundations are translating into present-day impact.

Janssen Davies

Chair of the Board

CEO'S REPORT

**DEAR WESSA
BOARD, MEMBERS,
VOLUNTEERS, STAFF,
PARTNERS, FUNDERS
AND FRIENDS.**

There are moments in the life of an organisation when its past, present, and future seem to meet in one place. For WESSA, our centenary is such a moment.



One hundred years ago, people who understood that South Africa's natural heritage could not protect itself chose to organise, speak up, and act. Their efforts contributed to the establishment of the National Parks Board, now SANParks, and the proclamation of the Kruger National Park.

In the decades that followed, WESSA advocated for the protection of some of our country's most important natural places, became a founding member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, pioneered environmental education, and helped generations of citizens understand that caring for the Earth is not the responsibility of a few specialists, but the shared work of us all.

This history gives us every reason to be proud, but a centenary cannot simply be a celebration of survival. Longevity, on its own, is not impact.

This year reminded me that WESSA's legacy does not live only in archives, publications, or protected landscapes. It lives in what people are doing today: in young people planting their first trees and discovering their power to create change; in

The true measure of WESSA's first century is our ability to remain useful to the people and places we serve: to turn concern into courage, knowledge into action, and citizens into environmental stewards.

communities restoring degraded land and defending the natural places that sustain them; in members and volunteers challenging harmful development, clearing invasive plants, and monitoring rivers; and in businesses and municipalities choosing to manage their environmental impact more responsibly.

Across our programmes, WESSA continued to translate environmental knowledge into practical citizen action:

Our schools and youth work reached learners, educators, and communities across the country. Our coastal programmes strengthened stewardship of beaches, high-biodiversity coastlines, and marine environments.

Green Key demonstrated that responsible tourism can be both environmentally credible and economically relevant. At uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve, renewed partnerships, volunteerism, and ecological management continued the restoration of a place that has shaped generations of environmental leaders.

These achievements happen in different places and through different programmes, but they are connected by one simple idea: lasting environmental change happens when people are given the knowledge, opportunity, and confidence to act.

One achievement this year holds particular meaning for me. At Blaauwberg Nature Reserve, WESSA launched South Africa's first coastal environmental education signage incorporating Braille. Its significance extends far beyond the signs themselves.

They represent the kind of organisation we must continue becoming, one that recognises that nature belongs to everyone.

Environmental education cannot transform society if people are excluded from it. Inclusion cannot be an optional addition to our work; it must shape how we design programmes, build partnerships, and define impact. In that moment, we did more than share information about the coast.

We affirmed that every person should have the opportunity to experience, understand, and care for the natural world.

As proud as I am of what WESSA delivered this year, I am equally conscious that a strong mission requires a strong organisation behind it.

We clarified our purpose as **enabling citizen action for environmental stewardship** and deepened our strategy around climate literacy and action, biodiversity and habitat integrity, reducing pollution, and long-term financial sustainability.

We also completed a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Framework that will help us move beyond reporting what we do towards understanding what changes because of our work. The next century will demand more than good intentions. It will require evidence, discipline, collaboration, and the courage to make clear choices. We must learn from what succeeds and what does not, demonstrate impact to our communities, partners, and funders, and ensure that the resources entrusted to WESSA are directed where they can make the greatest difference.

WESSA has never been merely an organisation. It is a movement of people. Its history was shaped by volunteers who acted long before citizen action became common language, by educators who turned landscapes into classrooms, by scientists who brought evidence into public debate, and by members who refused to accept that environmental degradation was inevitable. That same spirit sustains us today.

To our members and volunteers, thank you for keeping WESSA rooted in communities and connected to the places where change must happen. To our partners and funders, thank you for trusting us to turn resources into meaningful and lasting impact. To our Board, thank you for your stewardship, guidance, and courage to ask the difficult questions that responsible governance requires. And to our staff, thank you for bringing your knowledge, resilience, and heart to this mission every day.

We must resist the temptation to look backwards for too long. We honour those who came before us not by standing still beside their achievements, but by showing the same courage in our own time.

The environmental challenges facing South Africa today are different in scale and complexity from those confronted in 1926. Climate disruption, biodiversity loss, pollution, and inequality increasingly intersect. Yet the central question remains familiar: will people choose to care, and will that caring become action? I believe the answer can be yes.

As we celebrate 100 years, we must resist the temptation to look backwards for too long. We honour those who came before us not by standing still beside their achievements, but by showing the same courage in our own time.

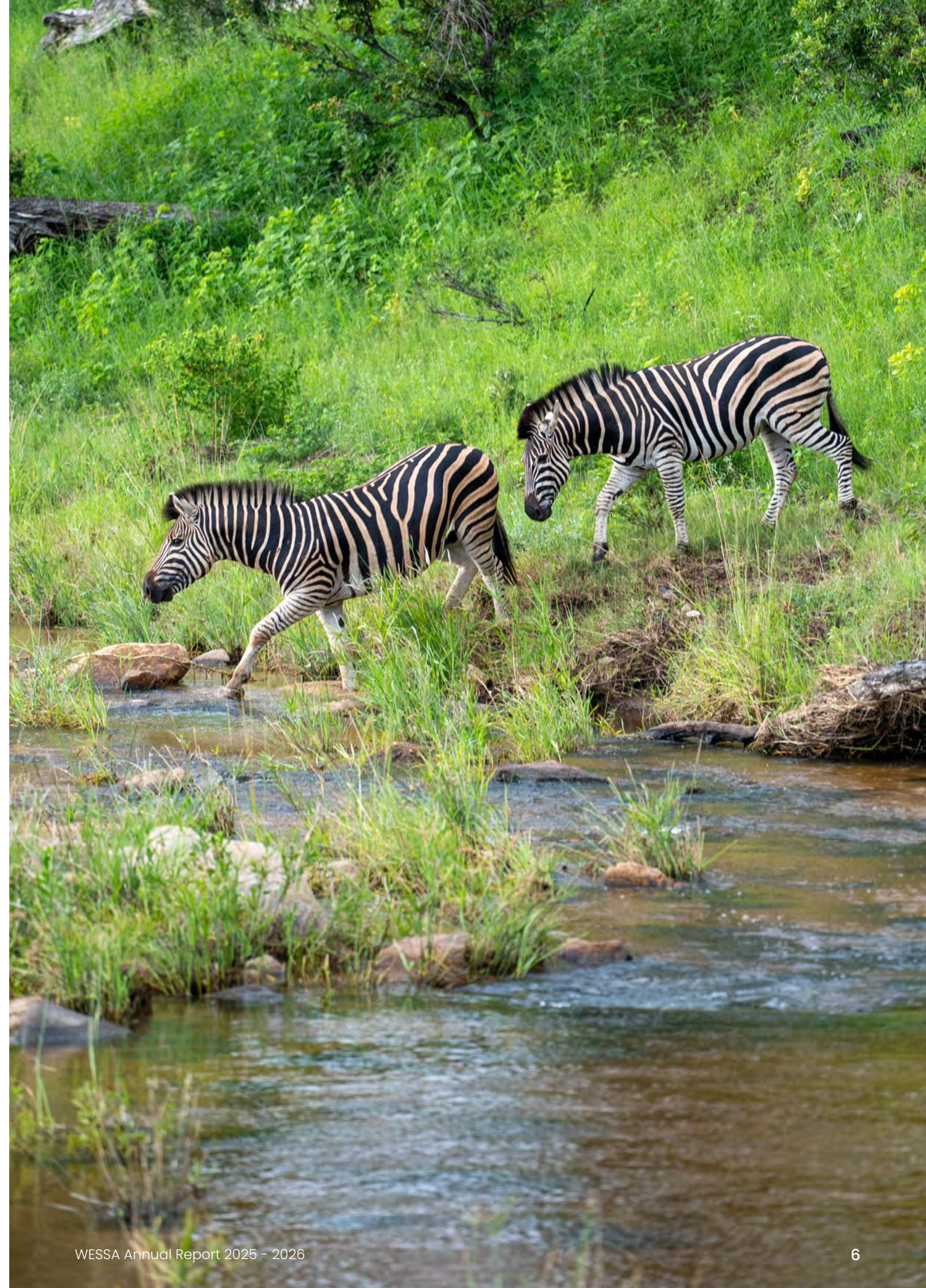
Our roots are deep. Our present is alive with impact. And our next 100 years will be determined by the choices we make now. We must build a WESSA that is more inclusive, courageous, evidence-led, and connected to the people and places we serve. Let us be proud of our history without becoming captive to it. And let us ensure that, a century from now, those who inherit this organisation can say that when our moment came, we did not look away.

With pride in our past and hope for our future,

**We educated.
We advocated.
We acted.**

Cindy-Lee Cloete

WESSA CEO



WESSA: A HISTORY OF OVER 100 YEARS OF PEOPLE CARING FOR THE EARTH



A centenary is a time to reflect together: to learn from our history and let it guide us into the future. It is a time to be thankful to the generations who lit the way and led us here, and to imagine the generations to come and a shared future we can be proud of.

Few non-governmental organisations, let alone those devoted to the environment, reach 100 years.

WESSA is one of the oldest and longest-running environmental NGOs in the world, an achievement built on the hard work of hundreds of thousands of people over a century. An organisation like WESSA endures because so many individuals cared enough to come together and take collective action for their environment.

To mark WESSA's 100th anniversary, we have compiled the most comprehensive timeline to date of the organisation's major milestones and environmental impact in South Africa.

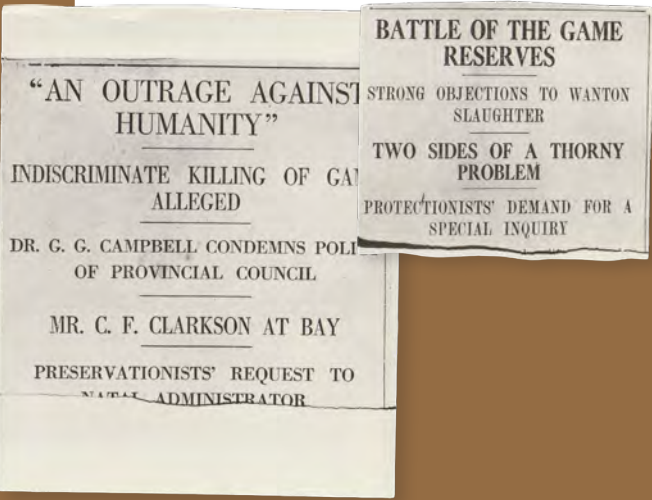
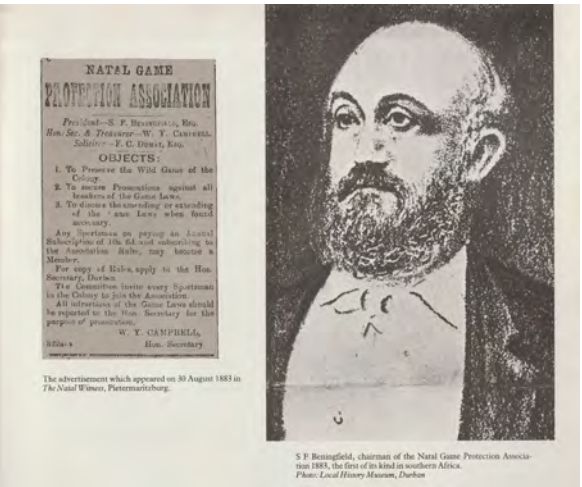
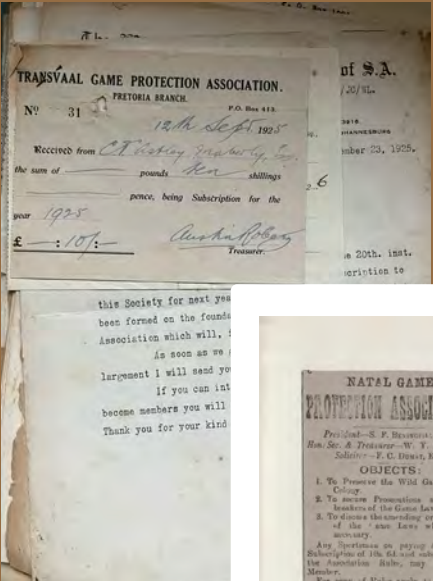
It draws on the many histories, timelines, and reflections that WESSA members and staff have written over the years. The organisation has gone by many names over the decades; for this history, we refer to it throughout as WESSA, while acknowledging those changes.

Repentant hunters and the concern for wildlife (1883 – 1925)



1883

WESSA's history stretches back more than a century to the unchecked hunting that followed colonisation of the Cape, which drove the bloubok to extinction by 1800 and the quagga by 1876, the last dying in captivity in Amsterdam in 1883. That loss stirred a group of repentant hunters to unite in defence of wildlife, and WESSA's earliest lineage traces to the Natal Game Protection Association, founded that same year, as similar associations pressing for protection through legislation emerged across the country. These early impulses shaped the later formation of WESSA and its work, and are reflected in its adoption of the then-threatened sable as its logo.



1883

The Natal Game Protection Association, the first known conservation body in the country, was formed by a small gathering of sportsmen in Durban City Hall on 21 August.

1886/7

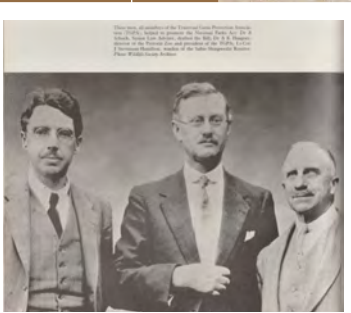
The Transvaal Game Protection Association (TGPA) was formed.



1912

The TGPA passed a resolution recommending the nationalisation of the Sabi and Shingwedzi Game Reserves.

1912



1886

The Western Districts Game and Trout Protection Association was established in the Cape. The same year, the Better Preservation of Game Act regulated hunting and laid the foundation for future conservation law.



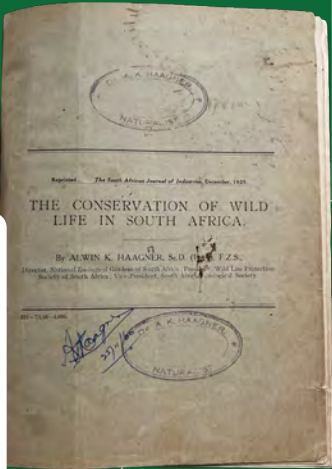
In the year 1920, Major P.J. Pretorius was given permission to shoot one elephant in the Knysna forest "in the interests of science". Five elephants died as a result of this hunt.

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

The establishment of WESSA and conservation areas (1925 – 1938)

1925

Founded in 1926 as the Wildlife and Protection Society of South Africa, WESSA emerged from this growing concern for species and natural areas and helped draft the National Parks Act, promulgated that same year, which gave the newly proclaimed Kruger National Park legal protection and made provision for other national parks and the National Parks Board (now SANParks). WESSA's work at this time centred on lobbying government to create conservation areas, with regional branches forming across the country to campaign for local protection. The prevailing philosophy held that separating people from protected areas was the best way to preserve wildlife and the environment from human harm.



1925–1928

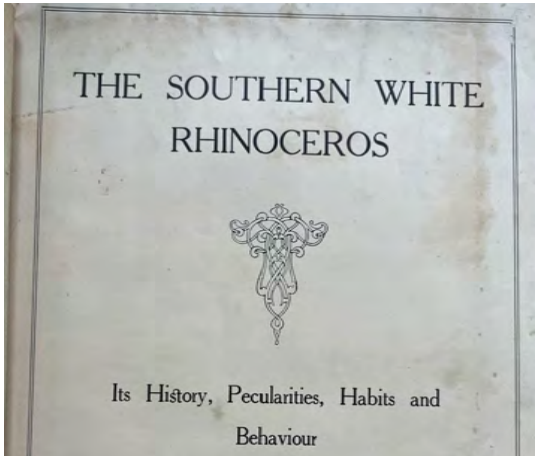
WESSA began its prolific publishing with The Conservation of Wildlife (1925), written by WESSA's first president, followed by The Southern White Rhinoceros and The Tsetse and Nagana in 1928.

1928

The Natal Wildlife Society Branch was formed.

1929

WESSA campaigned successfully to protect the entire Cape Peninsula mountain chain, and the Eastern Province Branch was formed.

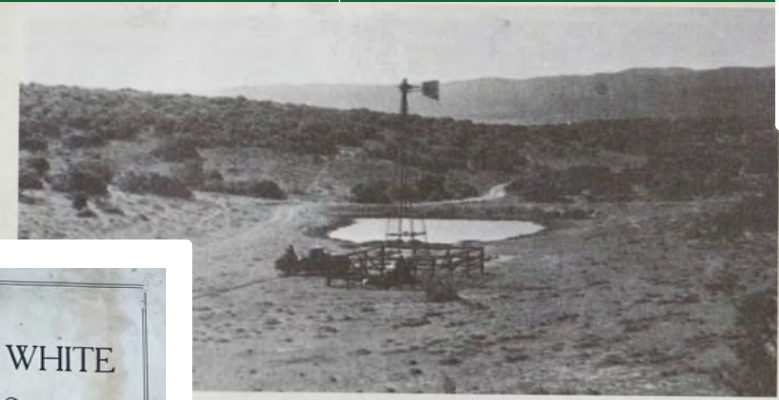


1931

WESSA members campaigned for the establishment of the Addo Elephant, Bontebok, and Kalahari Gemsbok National Parks. Members of WESSA fought the authorities and local farmers to prevent the de-proclamation of Mkuze Game Reserve in the fight against nagana, a disease carried by the tsetse fly.

1933

The Society, then the Wildlife Protection Society of South Africa, was incorporated under the Companies Act.



Waterhole in the Addo Park.

1936

WESSA succeeded in having Loskop Dam declared a bird sanctuary and, later, a game reserve.

1938

1938

Following representation from WESSA, the Vaal Dam and Vaal Hartz were declared nature reserves.

1937

After eight years of petitioning by WESSA members, the Mountain Zebra National Park was proclaimed.

THE TSETSE AND NAGANA
A. Lang
DESTRUCTION OF GAME THEORY
CONCLUSIVELY CHALLENGED
ABLE ANALYSIS OF KNOWN FACTS
AMERICAN INVESTIGATOR CONSIDERS
WILL SOLVE THE PROBLEM



01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Advocating for science in conservation (1940s – late 1950s)

1940

By the mid-twentieth century, WESSA's work centred on science-informed conservation, and much of its effort went into getting scientists onto parks boards and committees.

1946

The first issue of African Wild Life (this is not a typo, it's how they spelled it) magazine (then two words) was published. Still in production 80 years later, and known today as African Wildlife & Environment (AWE), it is South Africa's longest-running conservation magazine.



1947–1948

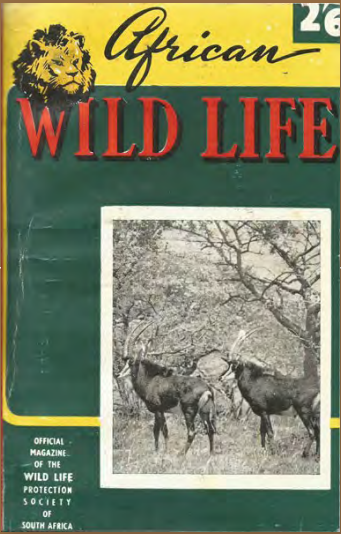
WESSA ran two ecological survey expeditions into Tongaland (now Maputaland), then largely unmapped. Their findings informed the proclamation of reserves such as Ndumo, Kosi Bay, Tembe, St Lucia, and Lake Sibaya.

1948

WESSA became a founder member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), one of only two founder members from Africa, and remains part of the international conservation community. The East London and Western Cape branches were founded, and a Western Cape survey found Bontebok Park overstocked and nutrient-deficient; WESSA's pressure led the National Parks Board to translocate bontebok near Swellendam, securing the species.

1949

WESSA's lobbying secured the appointment of the first scientist to the National Parks Board (now SANParks), followed by the first biologist the next year.



1952

The Twinstreams environmental education centre was founded at Mtunzini in Zululand by WESSA member Dr Ian Garland, beginning with a group of boys camping and learning in the coastal forest on his farm. It grew into a cornerstone of WESSA's work: environmental education.



Bontebok in the former park near Bredasdorp. Note the bush encroachment in the background. Photo: National Parks Board, 1954

1953

WESSA helped the Orange Free State draft a Game Ordinance regulating game management and hunting.



1951

The South African Association for Marine Biological Research (SAAMBR), conceived by WESSA members around a campfire during the Maputaland expeditions, was established, an early voice for marine conservation that still operates today.

Late 1950s

A short-lived Afrikaans magazine, Ons Wild, ran alongside African Wild Life. WESSA members started a campaign to collect R44 000 to build the Stevenson-Hamilton Memorial Library at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park, which was inaugurated in 1961.

1950

1954

The Orange Free State Branch was formed and campaigned for a provincial Department of Nature Conservation.

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Holistic management,
deepening science,
and the rise of
environmental
education
(1960 – 1970)

1960

During the 1960s, WESSA pioneered environmental education in southern Africa, developing the region's first formalised, structured programme of its kind. Beginning largely as bush camps that took learners into nature to experience their surroundings, this move toward education as central to conservation began to reunite people with the natural world.



1963

The Society's name changed from The Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa to The Wildlife Protection and Conservation Society of South Africa, reflecting a shift from protecting species to conserving whole habitats and ecosystems.



1962–1968

WESSA published extensive fieldwork reports, Fieldworker, researching specific conservation issues; they became popular and useful among conservationists, researchers, and policy advocates.

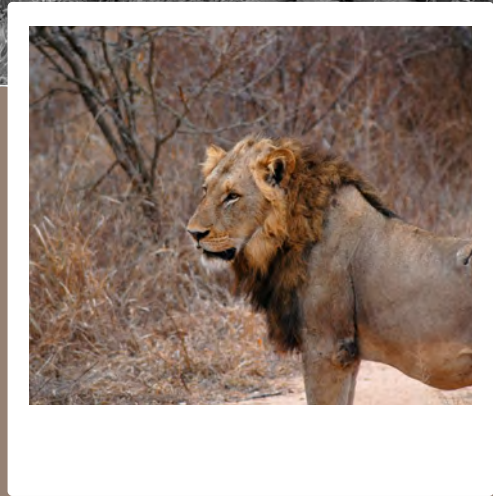
1964–1968

WESSA campaigned successfully to save the Mkuze Game Reserve from de-proclamation.



1964

WESSA raised and gave the University of Pretoria the R50 000 needed to launch South Africa's first postgraduate course in wildlife management.



1968

WESSA started one of South Africa's first structured environmental education projects, a field in which it is now a recognised leader nationally and internationally. This was also the first year WESSA employed staff, having been entirely volunteer- and member-run until then, and the Society campaigned successfully to halt proposed coking-coal mining in the Kruger National Park.

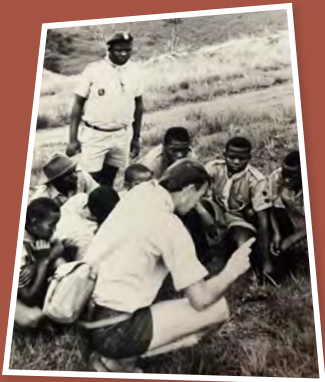
1970

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

A shift toward the whole habitat and humans (1970 – 1980)

Early 1970s

The White River Branch was formed.



1974

The African Conservation Education (ACE) programme was established to train black teachers, lecturers, and students in KwaZulu-Natal, reaching African and Indian communities previously excluded from environmental education. Defying the apartheid Group Areas Act, WESSA ran weekend and week-long courses that drew hundreds of participants. The KZN Region also began its prolific Wildlife Handbooks series; the Bluff Nature Reserve was proclaimed after a 13-year campaign; the Beachwood Mangrove Reserve was established and later declared a National Monument (1975); and the Eastern Province Branch secured the Cape Recife Nature Reserve.

1970

The 1970s brought a marked shift in WESSA's environmental philosophy. Following the Golden Gate conservation meeting in 1972, WESSA broadened its focus from flora and fauna to entire ecosystems, encompassing habitats, soil, air quality, and pollution alongside wildlife. This thinking was later adapted as 'Conservation for People' in the National Strategy for Environmental Conservation that WESSA drew up in 1981.

1972

The KwaZulu-Natal Region led a campaign to incorporate the Eastern Shores into the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (now iSimangaliso, a World Heritage Site). WESSA also launched Toktokkie, the first conservation magazine for young people, later renamed EnviroKids and produced until 2019.

1971

PLANT was established, offering free indigenous trees and shrubs donated by WESSA members; millions were planted at schools and across greater Durban.

1973

The Burman Bush Nature Reserve was established with WESSA's support and is now part of the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (DMOSS). WESSA also unveiled its new unified sable logo at that year's AGM, replacing as many as eight different sable designs then in use.

1975

WESSA introduced a Conservation Division to identify and protect high-priority areas, aiming to conserve examples of every ecosystem.

1976

The Ben Lavin Nature Reserve was established on a former cattle farm donated by Molly Lavin, and the Knysna Branch was formed, later publishing Margo Mackay's The Knysna Elephants and their Forest Home (1984) and raising over R350 000 for environmental education in the Garden Route.



1977

The Society's name changed from The Wildlife Protection and Conservation Society of South Africa to The Wildlife Society of Southern Africa. A WESSA survey showing that 60% of the Cape's fynbos had already been lost helped spark the regular invasive alien plant 'hacks' still run by branches and volunteers today.

1979

With the South African Nature Foundation, WESSA established the Wildlife Club scheme, the first environmental education groups for school-age youth in South Africa, which later became Eco-Schools.



1980

Late 1970s

WESSA staff surveyed the Transkei coast, pioneering its first public hiking trails, and supported the Treasure Beach-Reunion Rocks area, where WESSA led conservation education until 2025.

1974–1977

WESSA appointed its first full-time education officer in 1975. A three-year grassroots fundraising campaign by members enabled the purchase of uMngeni Valley Ranch for WESSA's environmental education programme in 1977.

1978

WESSA helped establish the Balgowan Conservancy in the KZN Midlands, the first in the country and the start of South Africa's conservancy movement.

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

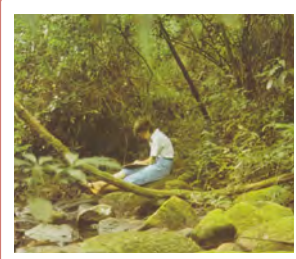
Sustainable use and development (1980 – early 1990s)

1980

The 1980s were dominated by ideas of sustainable use and sustainable development amid growing environmental degradation. WESSA expanded its human-focused work by deepening the ACE programme to reach traditional leaders and teachers, broadening environmental education across all communities, and creating Friends Groups across the country, to build sustainable societies by empowering people to make environmentally conscious decisions.

1980

WESSA developed and promoted the first National Environmental Strategy for South Africa, becoming the first NGO in the world to propose a coherent national conservation strategy. It also created the Conservationist of the Year Award to honour outstanding contributions to conservation.

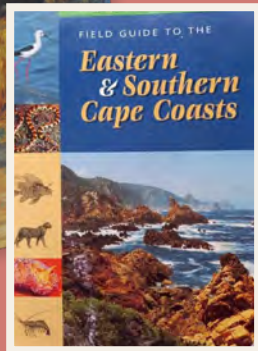


1981

WESSA was a founder member of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA), and remains an active partner today.

1982

Dr John Pringle published *The Conservationists and the Killers*, a comprehensive history of WESSA from the 1880s to the 1980s. WESSA also opposed the transfer of Ingwavuma (Maputaland) to Swaziland (Eswatini) for a port, became the first public body to oppose damming the Umfolozi River (still undammed today), helped establish the Umfolozi-Hluhluwe corridor, and pioneered the influential Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (MOSS), now a 95 000-hectare network of green spaces that inspired other metros to follow.



1983

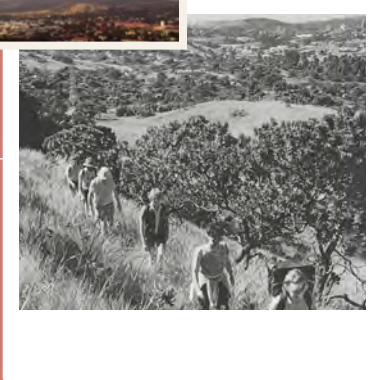
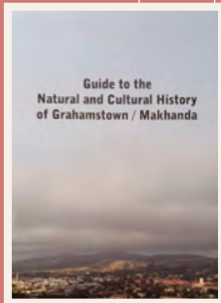
The George Branch was formed (now WESSA Eden).

1985–1988

WESSA took a 50-year lease on the ruined radar station on the Durban Bluff and developed it into the Treasure Beach Environmental Education Centre.

1987

The Drakensberg Wetland Project was established, helping to found the South African (later KZN) Crane Foundation and restore wetlands.



1985

The Western Cape Region pioneered the Friends Group community conservation concept.

1988

The Grahamstown Branch began publishing with *A Field Guide to the Eastern Cape Coast*, followed by further guides in 1998 and 2021.



1989–1992

WESSA campaigned successfully against mining at the Mapelane dune forest and the eastern shores of St Lucia, leading to the establishment of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park in 1992.



1990

1989

The Bushpigs Education Centre was established; WESSA helped create Share-Net, a resource network still vital to environmental educators across southern Africa; and it formed the government-approved Ozone Assessment Board to reduce CFC emissions.

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

South Africa and WESSA in transition (1990 – 2008)

South Africa's transition to democracy created a unique moment to advocate for both human and environmental rights. WESSA took an active part in the major environmental law reforms of the period, particularly the Environment Conservation Act's EIA regulations and the National Environmental Management Act with its Protected Areas, Air Quality,

1990

WESSA successfully lobbied the government to sign the London Amendments to the Montreal Protocol, protecting the ozone layer from harmful chemicals.



1992

A new mission, "to promote public participation in caring for the Earth," gave rise to WESSA's enduring motto, "People Caring for the Earth." WESSA also co-founded the Environmental Education Policy Initiative.



1993

An Environmental Sensitivity Atlas of KZN was published with the Natal Parks Board and others, the first 'ecological' mapping of a province and a valuable land-use planning tool. WESSA updated its logo to a bright green background with a refreshed sable.



1996

WESSA accepted management of the world-famous Twinstreams enviro-education centre from Dr Ian Garland, helped form the Alliance of Wildlife Societies of Africa, and set a legal precedent by challenging illegal cottage-building along the Transkei coast.



1995

WESSA was integral to the People and Parks concept now run by SANParks, and helped proclaim the reserve at Brenton-on-Sea, the only home of the Brenton Blue butterfly (Orachrysops niobe).

2001

WESSA was appointed to implement the international Blue Flag Programme in South Africa, the first country outside Europe to do so, raising standards for coastal water quality, safety, and access.



2003

WESSA began implementing the international Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) Eco-Schools Programme in South Africa.



2004

WESSA launched the Biodiversity Conservation Unit, which pioneered municipal Biodiversity Sector Plans mapping critical biodiversity within development frameworks.

1997

The 14 SADC states chose WESSA's Education Department to establish and manage a regional environmental education office at its Howick base, hosting delegates from across the region for courses, materials, and curriculum development.

2006

WESSA and the Wilderness Foundation surveyed the entire municipal protected-area estate.

2007

WESSA's enviro-education office at uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve was recognised by the United Nations University as a Regional Centre of Excellence in Education for Sustainable Development.



2008

WESSA was a founder member of the Climate Action Partnership (CAP) and launched its circular black sable logo, still in use today.

2009



2009

WESSA started the 'Stop the Spread' campaign to raise public awareness of invasive alien plants and animals.

01 WESSA'S JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

Global agendas,
environmental justice
and biodiversity
(2010 – 2026)

2011

WESSA was named an Institute of Sectoral or Occupational Excellence by the Local Government SETA for its education and training programmes.

2010



2012

EnviroKids turned 40.



2014

WESSA implemented UNESCO's Regional Environmental Education Programme across SADC, which UNESCO selected as one of the five most significant sustainable development projects in Africa.

2013

WESSA was a major partner in SANBI's Groen Sebenza Jobs Fund Programme, building skills and creating jobs for over 1 000 unemployed matriculants and graduates.



2015

WESSA's Eco-Schools Water Project, with the Department of Water and Sanitation, won the UN Water 'Water for Life' Best Practices Award.

2017

WESSA launched the Green Coast Programme for high-biodiversity and culturally significant coastal areas, began youth environmental advocacy through FEE's Young Reporters for the Environment (YRE) and Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) programmes, and, with DFFE, ran a second phase of YES in the Northern Cape and Free State, upskilling 540 young people.



2019

uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve was formally proclaimed a protected area under national legislation.

2025

WESSA developed the Green Jobs for Youth Programme to invest in the next generation of environmentally conscious leaders across South Africa's economy.



2026

2026

WESSA celebrates its 100th anniversary, Blue Flag its 25th in South Africa, and African Wildlife & Environment (AWE) magazine its 80th. In February, WESSA unveiled South Africa's first Braille coastal environmental education signage, a significant step toward making environmental education accessible to all.

It is impossible to read WESSA's history without being moved by the care that generations of members and staff have given to conservation in South Africa. The protected spaces we enjoy, the environmental education our learners receive, and countless smaller victories for nature are owed largely to thousands of WESSA volunteers, members, and staff. It is hard to find a wild place in the country untouched by the giving hand of a WESSA member, student, teacher, or programme.

The past two decades have been shaped by environmental justice, business sustainability, biodiversity and habitat loss, and global action on climate change.

Now, more than ever, the urgency of the climate crisis is understood, with young people worldwide leading the response to the intersecting challenges of climate change, poverty, and social injustice.

The human-nature relationship sits at the heart of this work and has shaped WESSA's Educate, Advocate, Act strategy over the past five years, as the organisation continues to invest in people caring for the Earth.

FROM THE PAST INTO THE PRESENT WESSA'S IMPACT IN 2026



uMnegeni Valley Nature Reserve

ADVOCACY AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

ADVOCATING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

WESSA originated from the desire to advocate for the protection of rapidly dwindling wild game herds and to create sanctuaries for them. Over our century of effort, society's emphasis has shifted from protecting endangered species to protecting habitats to fostering environmental consciousness among all South Africans.

Today, our advocacy recognises a new imperative: integrating social justice into how we address environmental concerns.

WESSA's advocacy staff made important contributions over the year, despite capacity constraints and the need to redirect substantial effort towards operational needs throughout the organisation. We strengthened our positioning in key environmental platforms, including the Environmental NGO Collaboration, the national Working Groups advancing South Africa's contribution to the global *30x30. The global 30x30 target is a commitment to protect at least 30% of the world's land, freshwater,

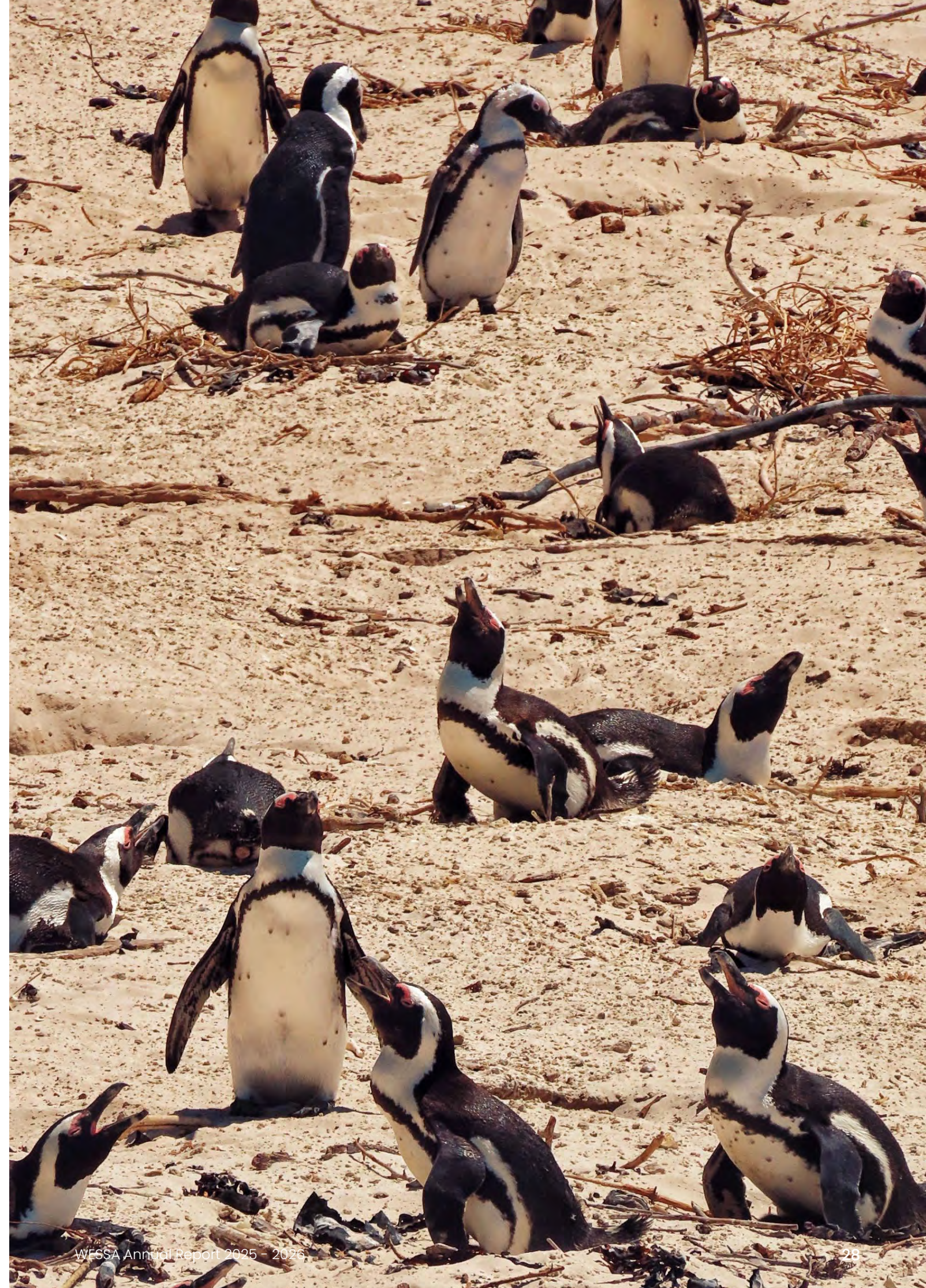
and ocean by 2030. It was adopted as Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in December 2022) protected-areas target for biodiversity conservation, and the IUCN South African National Committee.

We did this while contributing meaningfully to issues such as penguin protection, municipal action to mitigate climate risk, marine pollution, a campaign against lethal shark control in bathing areas, and river water quality monitoring.

Our WESSA volunteers in branches across the country have undertaken considerable work this past year, responding to pollution incidents, biodiversity policy matters, and numerous environmental impact assessment (EIA) applications, many of them for new mines.

Working with the Advocacy Unit, they are collectively guided by our Environmental Governance Committee (EGC), chaired by Dr Gary Koekemoer:

"The EGC is highly appreciative of the considerable efforts and expertise of our members who have engaged with development proposals to safeguard their local environments and communities."



The EGC engages both proactively and reactively with issues of regional, national, and international significance across our three thematic areas (climate action, biodiversity and habitat protection, and pollution reduction), guided by our decision-making and response filter. The EGC also develops

WESSA’S POLICY ON CRITICAL CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

If space and time allows: create a map of SA that plots these points: Algoa Bay, Thyspunt, Durban (UPL), Cape Town, Hout Bay, Umzimkhulu, White River, Madikwe, Magaliesberg and Hartbeespoort
Use images provided: 2. Annual Report 2026 – Advocacy and Environmental Governance

WESSA is deeply grateful for the expertise and considerable efforts of our volunteers, who contribute many valuable hours responding to issues of concern. These have included:

- The **ALGOA BAY BRANCH** is promoting no-fishing zones around penguin colonies to halt the decline of the endangered African penguin, engaging in the public consultation on the proposed Algoa Bay ship bunkering regulations, and protesting against planned seismic surveys for offshore oil and gas fields.

- The **EASTERN CAPE REGION** and Advocacy Unit represented WESSA in the open community engagement sessions on the proposed Thyspunt nuclear reactor, submitting an extensive set of comments on the Draft Scoping Report. WESSA raised significant concerns about the content and processes, and has called on the EIA practitioners to make substantial modifications and additions to the EIA process for this proposed mega-project.
- The **DURBAN BRANCH** is represented on the committee monitoring the clean-up and rehabilitation of the major UPL Limited chemical spill.
- The **WESTERN CAPE REGION** participates in the City of Cape Town’s public committee responsible for monitoring the city’s three marine sewage-pipeline outfalls.
- The **WESTERN CAPE REGION** is also represented on the Hout Bay River Forum, which has worked successfully with the City of Cape Town to limit sewage pollution of the river.
- The **SOUTH COAST BRANCH** is engaging with the EIAs for the controversial Umzimkhulu estuarine weir and lithium-mine proposal.

- The **LOWVELD REGION** is advocating against the proposed major road through the White River Nature Reserve.
- The **NORTHERN AREAS REGION (NAR)** is investigating the scientific rationale behind the proposal to cull elephants in the Madikwe Game Reserve.
- The **NAR** is opposing numerous mining applications in the buffer zones of the Magaliesberg Biosphere.
- The **NAR** is also partnering with other stakeholders to arrange independent water-quality testing of the highly polluted Hartbeespoort Dam, to prompt corrective action by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Looking ahead, WESSA staff and members will come together in September 2026 to workshop WESSA’s 2026–2036 Advocacy strategy.

We will chart WESSA’s expanding advocacy role in the South African environmental landscape, building on our legacy of encouraging and enabling citizens as active environmental stewards.



UMNGENI VALLEY NATURE RESERVE

DELIVERING CONSERVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Strategic partnerships, dedicated staff, volunteers, and donor support have transformed uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve into a stronger, safer, and more resilient protected area. Through collaborative conservation, WESSA is protecting biodiversity, improving visitor experiences, and building a sustainable future for one of KwaZulu-Natal’s most valued natural landscapes.

The past year has been one of remarkable progress for WESSA’s home base, uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve (UVNR). A defining achievement has been the continued success of the **Wildlife Protection Unit (WPU)**, established through generous donor support. Since becoming operational, the unit has strengthened biodiversity protection through daily patrols, snare removal, wildlife monitoring, visitor engagement, and close collaboration with neighbouring landowners.

These efforts have contributed to an estimated 85% reduction in illegal activities, significantly improving the reserve’s ability to protect its biodiversity.

Habitat restoration has continued at an impressive pace through the invaluable support of the **Working on Fire** programme and the Social Employment Fund (SEF) **Enviro-Champs**, implemented by the **Duzi-uMngeni Conservation Trust (DUCT)**. Their work has included clearing invasive alien plants, managing bush encroachment, rehabilitating trails, maintaining roads, repairing infrastructure, and general reserve upkeep. Firebreaks were completed on schedule, while grassland management burns exceeded ecological targets, ensuring the reserve’s ecological integrity and resilience.

WESSA has a long history of working with UNESCO projects and supporting the development of Biospheres in South Africa. These include supporting the development of the Magaliesberg and Kogelberg Biospheres.

In the mid-2010s, WESSA, the Duzi-uMngeni Conservation Trust (DUCT) and other NGOs began discussing the creation of a biosphere along the mid-section of the uMngeni River, with our uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve (UVNR) forming part of the core area. In 2015, the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) supported WESSA in commencing development of the Biosphere concept. This region of KwaZulu-Natal is part of the Maputo-Pondoland Ecological Hotspot, making it a pressing priority for biodiversity conservation.

The **Greater uMngeni Biosphere Reserve Initiative** proposal document was drafted and published by WESSA in 2016, and in 2023, a small group of keen volunteers, led by Tembeka Dambuza and Dr Jim Taylor, both ex-WESSA staff, resuscitated the Biosphere initiative. They realised that without local government support the Biosphere would not be possible. They held workshops with the uMshwathi Local Government, uMngeni Local Government, and uMgungundlovu District Municipalities, which led to their support for the revival of the Greater uMngeni



Blesbok at uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve



Wildebeest at uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve



Renovations to the reserve's Education Centre and main office building

Catchment Biosphere Reserve (GuCBR). Support from other government departments such as the KZN Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (Ed-TEA), landowners, land managers, local businesses, and community members has been secured.

The Concept Document has been updated to form an application to the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme, and has been submitted to the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries & the Environment for review and approval by the Minister.

UVNR is one of the core biosphere areas, with WESSA, under whose auspices it will function, as the legal entity responsible for the administration and management of the GuCBR. Our involvement aims to make UVNR a centre for community-based conservation.

To maintain the initiative's participatory nature, a GuCBR Steering Committee has been convened and meets monthly to drive the application process. WESSA expresses our gratitude to all the members of the Steering Committee who have enthusiastically worked to promote and develop the GuCBR to this point, in particular to Jim and Tembeka.

Visitors are also benefiting from these investments. Walking trails have been upgraded, roads improved, bridges repaired and constructed, picnic areas enhanced, and new signage installed throughout the reserve.

Renovations to the reserve's Entrance, Education Centre, and Main Office Building (in progress) are further strengthening UVNR as a destination for environmental education, recreation, and community engagement.

As one volunteer remarked after participating in a reserve workday, "Every project we complete here leaves the reserve in a better condition than we found it, and that's something we can all be proud of." This spirit of collaboration has become one of UVNR's greatest strengths.

WESSA gratefully acknowledges the support of our donors and partners, including the Wildlife Protection Unit funders, Working on Fire, DUCT, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment for herbicide support, the Lions River Charter of the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Honorary Officers, Friends of uMngeni Valley, neighbouring landowners, volunteers, and local community members. Together, these partnerships are ensuring that uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve continues to protect biodiversity, inspire environmental stewardship, and provide exceptional nature experiences for generations to come.



Restored Fire Engine at uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve

WESSA EDUCATION CENTRES

Throughout the 2025–2026 reporting period, WESSA’s Education Centres at uMngeni Valley and Twinstreams continued to deliver transformative, curriculum-aligned environmental education through immersive day and overnight programmes.

By connecting learners, educators, and tertiary students with South Africa’s diverse ecosystems, the Centres fostered environmental stewardship while equipping participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to become active custodians of the environment.

The year also marked an important transition for WESSA’s Education Centres. The Treasure Beach Education Centre was returned to the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure due to a lack of secured tenure or ownership.

WESSA can still access the rocky shores and surrounding areas for environmental education programmes. Importantly, all Education Centre staff were retained and redeployed to uMngeni Valley, preserving institutional knowledge and strengthening programme delivery capacity across the remaining Centres.

The year’s focus centred on expanding STEAM-based environmental education, strengthening youth leadership, and building pathways for future environmental professionals.

Through strategic partnerships, innovative funded projects, and experiential learning, the Education Centres continued to advance WESSA’s theory of change by educating, advocating for sustainable practices, and enabling meaningful environmental action.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Our Education Centres continued to welcome schools from across the country for curriculum-aligned day visits and overnight environmental education programmes. Experiential learning remained central to the delivery, enabling learners to investigate ecosystems firsthand, strengthen their scientific inquiry skills, and deepen their understanding of environmental challenges through outdoor exploration.

Each Centre maintained its ecological specialisation, with Twinstreams Environmental Education Centre focusing on marine and coastal ecosystems, and uMngeni Valley Education Centre providing immersive learning in terrestrial biodiversity, freshwater systems, and grassland ecology. A significant milestone during the year was the upgrade of the newly named Conservation Hall and the e-STEAM Laboratory at uMngeni Valley, supported by funding from NRF/SAASTA.

These enhancements strengthened the Centres’ capacity to deliver innovative, technology-enabled, and inquiry-based environmental education through improved spaces for collaborative learning, scientific exploration, and creative problem-solving. In addition, reserve signage across uMngeni Valley was upgraded, improving visitor orientation, strengthening environmental interpretation, and enhancing the overall learning experience within the reserve.

The Education Centres successfully implemented several externally funded initiatives that broadened access to innovative environmental education. The OMI e-STEAM Project engaged learners from both the uMngeni Valley and Twinstreams catchment areas in interdisciplinary learning integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to address environmental challenges.

In February 2026, two new programmes commenced at uMngeni Valley. The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)–funded e-STEAM and Biomimicry Project introduced arts-based environmental learning and nature-inspired design thinking, while the Concord e-STEAM Project strengthened learners’ critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation through practical environmental investigations.

The Cricket South Africa Green Wickets Programme was successfully concluded at uMngeni Valley (November 2025–January 2026), combining environmental education with sport to promote water stewardship, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable environmental practices among young participants. This is part of a new Sports for the Environment Programme that WESSA has launched to enable our sports community to care for the Earth as well.

Youth leadership development remained a priority through the continued partnership with the Sani Branch Eco-Champs Programme.

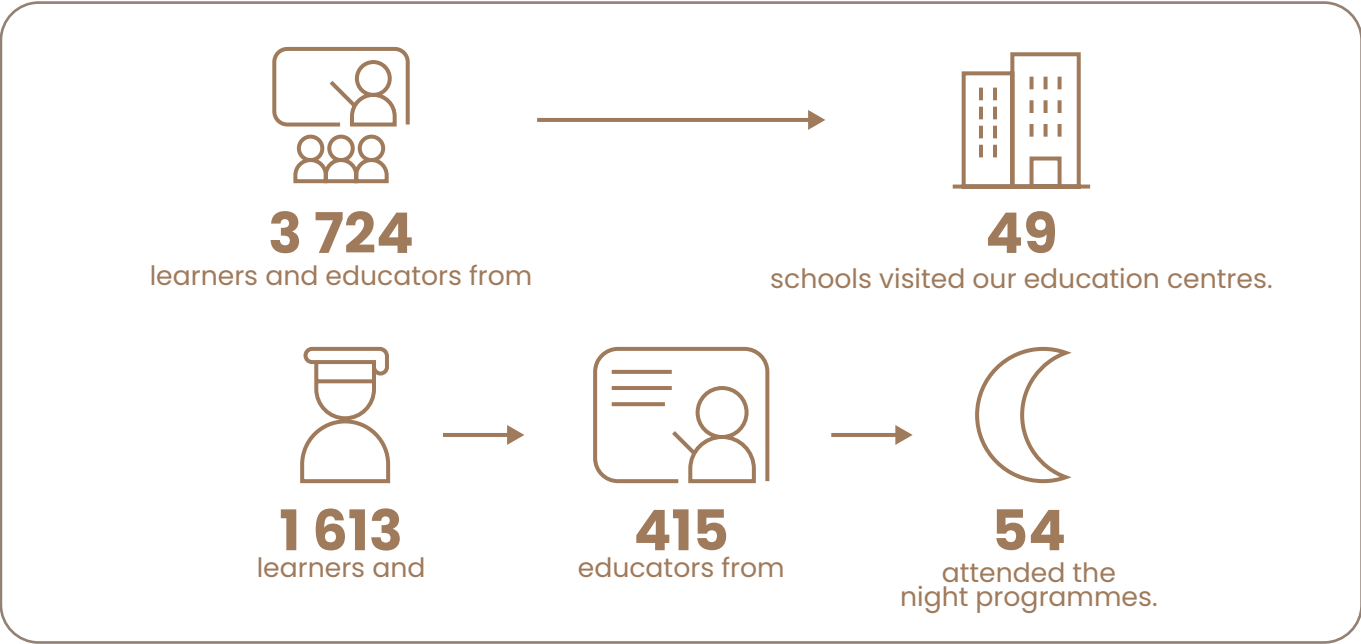
The Grade 7 Eco-Champs group participated in residential learning experiences at uMngeni Valley during December 2025, followed by the launch of a Grade 11 capacity-development programme in March 2026, which strengthened leadership, teamwork, and community engagement.

The Education Centres continued to support higher education through long-standing partnerships with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the University of the Free State, and New Bridge Graduate Institute, offering field-based learning across multiple disciplines.

WESSA’s Work Integrated Learning Programme also hosted 11 interns across both Centres from Tshwane University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology, Durban University of Technology, and New Bridge Graduate Institute, providing practical workplace experience in environmental education and conservation practice – a cornerstone of WESSA’s contribution to transform the sector.



Learners interacting with a MiniSASS at a local water body



**THESE INITIATIVES COLLECTIVELY
ADVANCED WESSA'S THEORY OF CHANGE:**

- Educate: Delivering curriculum-aligned, experiential, and STEAM-based environmental education.
- Advocate: Strengthening partnerships that promote environmental awareness and sustainability.
- Act: Developing young environmental leaders through practical learning, leadership opportunities, and workplace experience.

HUMAN IMPACT

Despite organisational transition during the year, WESSA's commitment to environmental education remained unwavering. The successful redeployment of Treasure Beach staff to uMngeni Valley ensured continuity of expertise and strengthened programme delivery capacity. Whether exploring coastal ecosystems at Twinstreams or engaging with freshwater and terrestrial environments at uMngeni Valley, learners continued to benefit from immersive, high-quality learning experiences delivered by passionate and dedicated educators.

LOOKING AHEAD

As WESSA's Education Centres continue to evolve, we remain committed to exploring new opportunities that strengthen and expand our environmental education offering. Guided by the expertise and passion of our staff, we will continue to build strategic partnerships, secure sustainable funding, and develop innovative programmes that respond to the changing needs of learners, educators, communities and our environment.

With continued investment in upgraded facilities, expanded programme offerings, and strengthened partnerships, WESSA is well positioned to deepen its impact, broaden access to experiential learning, and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders committed to a sustainable future.



Kevin Lakani – Senior environmental education officer



Buhle Mthembu – Business Development Coordinator



Learners graduating from the OMI e-STEAM Project



Learners develop critical STEM capabilities through hands-on problem-solving activities

EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABILITY UNIT SCHOOLS AND YOUTH PROGRAMME

EDUCATING, ADVOCATING, AND ACTING
OVER THE LAST YEAR.

Across South Africa, schools and communities are feeling the effects of climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and food insecurity, often with limited access to practical environmental learning. Learners are often aware of these challenges but need the competencies, support, and opportunities to take meaningful action.

Through our Schools and Youth portfolio, WESSA responded to this need by enabling learners, educators, and school communities to move from awareness to action, strengthening environmental literacy, youth leadership, and whole-school sustainability.

These activities strengthened WESSA’s theory of change by helping learners move from knowledge to voice to meaningful action.

The Eco-Schools programme remained the foundation of our work, supporting more than 600 schools nationally on their sustainability journey. Through partnerships with funders, government, municipalities, and community organisations, schools turned environmental learning into practical action through waste management, biodiversity conservation, food gardens, water stewardship, climate action, and learner-led campaigns.

A major highlight was the continued growth of the South African Waste Management and Education Project (funded by eWASA), which expanded waste management and circular-economy education into the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape.

Through this partnership, schools received training, practical support, and resources to improve recycling, source separation, waste awareness, and learner participation. The project reached over 5 000 learners and educators, while also supporting income generation from recycling and local jobs linked to waste recovery.

The Clear Skies Eco-Schools initiative, delivered in partnership with the South African Waste Pickers Association, the Clean Air Fund, and groundWork, addressed the harmful impacts of open waste burning in South African communities. Supporting three Eco-Schools in the Vaal Triangle, Highveld, and Watergate-Bojanala air-quality priority areas, the project raised awareness about air pollution, health risks, and responsible waste management.

Learners, educators, communities, and waste pickers were engaged as champions for cleaner air, stronger recycling practices, and healthier, more resilient communities.

In partnership with Globeleq, WESSA launched two projects in the Northern Cape: the De Aar Solar Power Circular Economy Eco-Schools Green Business Project, implemented in De Aar, Britstown, and Phillipstown, three communities within the Pixley Ka Seme District Municipality; and the Droogfontein Solar Park Circular Economy Eco-Schools Green Business Project, implemented across six schools, two each in Ritchie, Barkly West, and Kimberley.

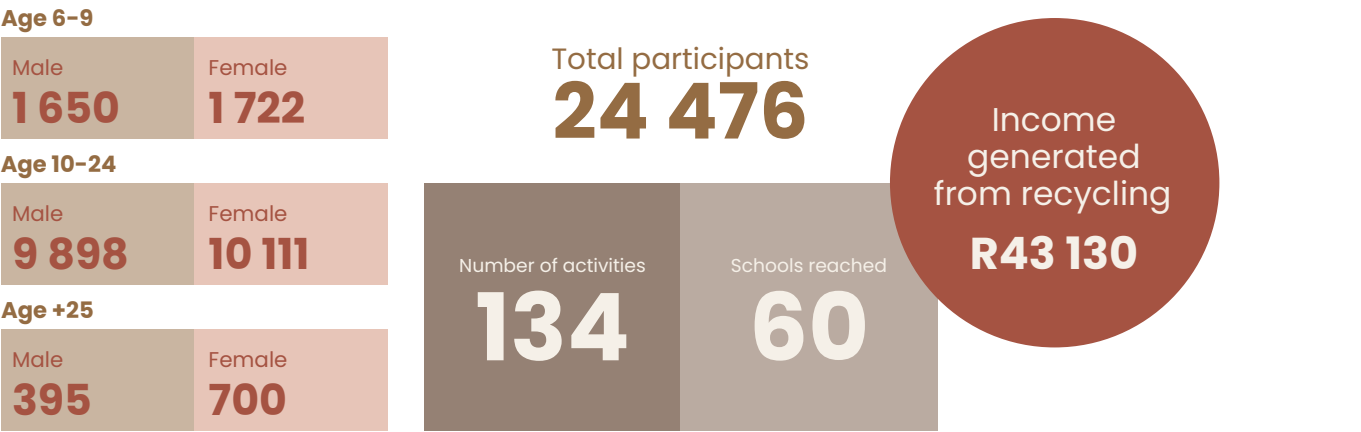
The projects leverage the internationally recognised Eco-Schools Programme to build a culture of sustainability, green entrepreneurship and innovation in schools and communities within the Northern Cape.

Over the next three years, the initiative will focus on advancing circular-economy principles, strengthening environmental education, improving sustainable waste management, and enhancing local food security. By establishing sustainable green school businesses, the project will empower learners and educators to become catalysts for positive social, economic, and environmental change. Schools will also generate income from their Eco-Schools activities and model circular-economy practices within their communities.

WESSA’s partnership with UNICEF through the Green Rising Phase 2 initiative continued to mobilise young people around climate justice and environmental action. Learners and youth participated in cleanups, invasive alien plant clearing, biodiversity activities, waste collection, and land rehabilitation initiatives. These actions helped young people understand that climate change is not a distant issue, but something that affects their communities, water systems, food security, and natural spaces.

GREEN RISING STATISTICS

PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED IN CLIMATE ACTION



Food gardens established	Tons waste collected	Trees planted	Tons waste recycled	Hectares rehabilitated
15	538.79	1 067	24.22	143.96



Learner from Tshepiso Primary School participating in school clean-up initiative



Moremogolo Primary School learners taking in part in the tree planting



Learners from Moduopo Primary School cleaning their adopted wetland

02

PROGRAMME REPORTS:
OUR IMPACT OVER THE LAST YEAR

The Learning about Ecosystems and Forests (LEAF) programme continued to support five schools in partnership with AECI and the Modderfontein Conservation Society. Through excursions to Modderfontein Reserve and facilitated environmental education activities, learners experienced nature as a living classroom. These outdoor learning opportunities helped learners understand biodiversity, ecosystems, conservation, and their roles in protecting natural spaces near their schools and communities.

Our partnership with Wispeco Aluminium continued to grow, supporting two Eco-Schools, Monde and Tamaho Primary Schools, with practical water and waste management action. We also hosted our first Eco-Christmas celebration at Zizameleni Itekeng Pre-School. In partnership with Wispeco, the school was transformed into a safer and more welcoming learning space, including a new environmental reading corner under our Eco-Lit Theme and essential refurbishments that supported children’s health and wellbeing.

Through the **N3 Toll Concession (N3TC)** Eco-Schools project, WESSA continued to support four Early Childhood Development centres, nurturing environmental awareness from the earliest years of learning. The project supported young children, educators, and caregivers to introduce simple sustainability practices through food gardens, tree planting, waste awareness, and nature-based learning.

The Nedbank Circular Economy project supported 10 schools in exploring waste reduction, upcycling, and green enterprise opportunities, turning classroom learning into practical action. The Glencore Eco-Schools project also continued to support 10 Eco-Schools, focusing on sustainable waste management and learner-led environmental action.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND CLIMATE ACTION

Youth participation remained central to WESSA’s work this year. Through Green Rising, young people participated in climate action activities, including rehabilitating illegal dumping sites, community cleanups, greening initiatives, and environmental awareness campaigns. These initiatives gave youth practical opportunities to lead, serve their communities, and contribute to healthier, safer, and more resilient local environments.

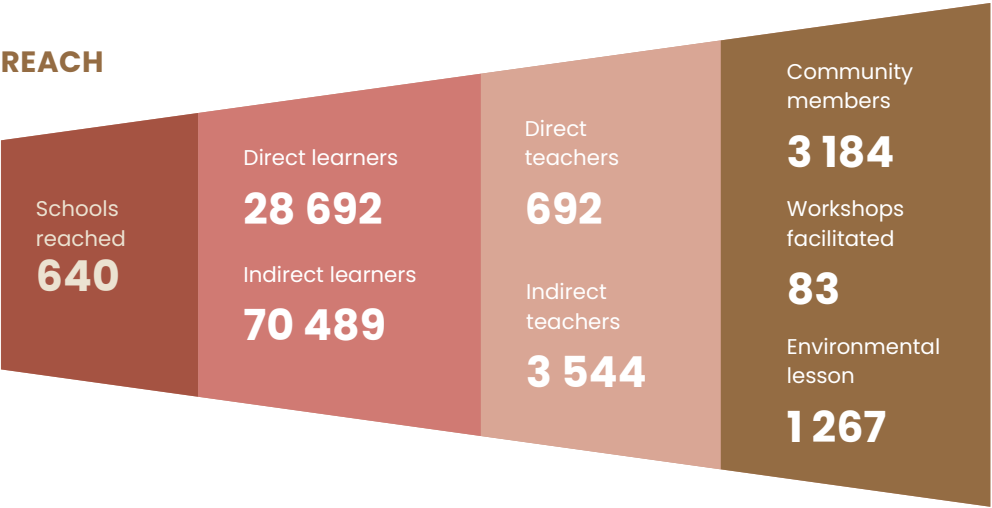
A significant milestone during the year was the completion of community baseline assessments and stakeholder engagement for **Red Rocket’s Brandvalley and Rietkloof Community Eco-Hub Projects**, supporting the beneficiary partnering communities of the Brandvalley and Rietkloof Wind Farms. The baselines focused on the feasibility of establishing community agricultural Eco-Hubs to strengthen environmental education, build climate resilience, and create opportunities for youth development and enterprise, ensuring that communities are equipped to respond to both environmental and socio-economic challenges.



Clearing an illegal dumping area at Tshepiso Primary School

WESSA SCHOOL AND YOUTH STATS 2025

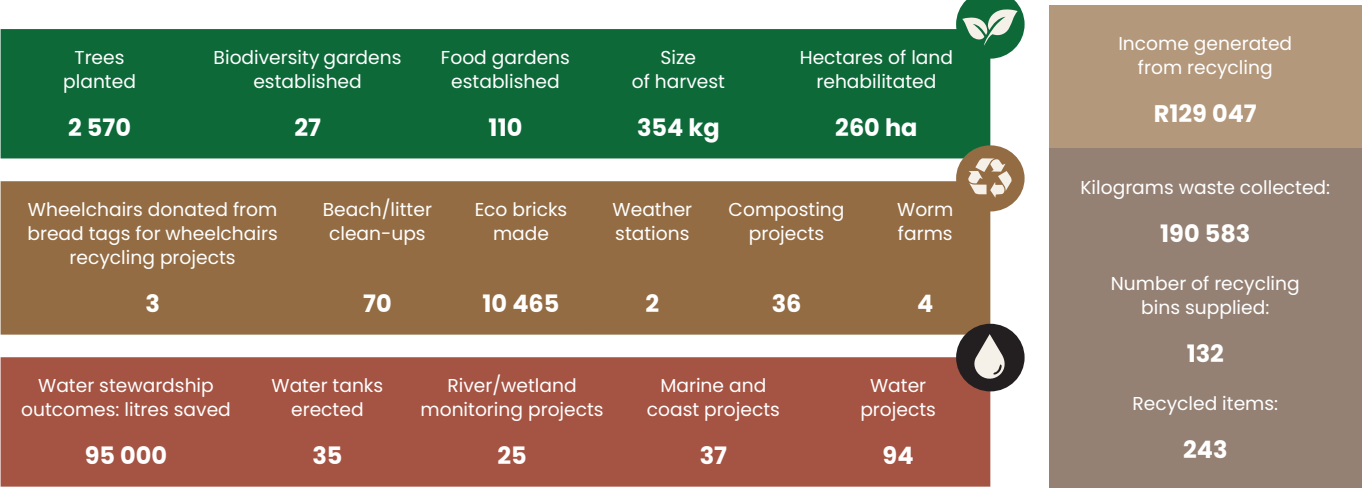
REACH



AWARDS

- Bronze 10
- Silver 37
- Green flag 6
- Gold 22
- International Flag 5
- Platinum 35
- Diamond 2
- Bronze Decade 5
- Silver Decade 5
- Green Flag Decade 5
- International Flag Decade 6
- Platinum Decade 9
- Emerald 4
- Strelitzia 1
- Arum Lily 3

PROJECTS



ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIAL DAYS CELEBRATIONS:

World Recycling Day	World Environment Day	Water Week	Heritage Day	Earth Day	Coastal Clean-up	World Bee Day	Mandela Day	World Wildlife Day	Arbour Day	World Oceans Day
33	34	7	66	30	9	28	27	7	73	10

As WESSA moves into its second centenary, the Schools and Youth portfolio remains committed to nurturing a generation of environmentally conscious, skilled, and active citizens. Through our national school network, strategic partnerships, and youth-centred programmes, we will continue to build greener schools, stronger communities, and young leaders who are ready to shape a more just, resilient, and sustainable future.

GREEN KEY PROGRAMME

GROWING SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY

Green Key is the world’s leading sustainability certification programme for tourism establishments, with more than 9 000 certified establishments across over 90 countries. Operated internationally by the Foundation for Environmental Education and nationally in South Africa by WESSA, the programme supports tourism establishments in embedding internationally recognised sustainability practices into their operations while demonstrating environmental leadership to guests, staff, and communities.

During the 2025–2026 financial year, our primary focus was to expand the programme nationally, increase the number of certified establishments, and provide hands-on support to establishments on their sustainability journeys.

The Green Key programme achieved a 333% increase in the number of certified establishments, rising from three sites in 2024–2025 to 13 in 2025–2026.

This remarkable growth reflected the increasing demand for credible sustainability certification in South Africa’s hospitality sector and demonstrated the value of environmental stewardship to businesses and travellers alike.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

A significant milestone this year was signing an agreement with Marriott International, through which 20 hotels committed to joining the Green Key programme and will work towards certification over the coming year. This partnership marked a major step forward in embedding sustainable tourism practices across one of the world’s leading hotel groups and reinforced confidence in WESSA’s role as the national operator for Green Key.

THE YEAR ALSO SAW
SEVERAL PIONEERING ACHIEVEMENTS.

Century City Conference Centre became the first Green Key-certified conference centre in Africa and the Southern Hemisphere, while accommodation at Boschendal became the first wine-estate accommodation in the world to achieve Green Key certification.

Three establishments successfully renewed their certification during the year: Cape Grace, Pullman Cape Town City Centre, and President Hotel.

Ten new certifications were achieved across the country: Protea Hotel Waterfront Breakwater Lodge, Protea Hotel OR Tambo Airport, The Westin Cape Town, Radisson RED V&A Waterfront, Johannesburg Marriott Hotel Melrose Arch, Cape Town Marriott Hotel Crystal Towers, Hyde Johannesburg Rosebank, Century City Hotel Urban Square, the Century City Conference Centre, and Boschendal Accommodation.

Beyond certification, WESSA invested significant time in supporting establishments in preparing for audits, strengthening environmental management systems, engaging staff, improving resource efficiency, and implementing sustainability initiatives that deliver measurable environmental and financial benefits. This close collaboration helped establishments move beyond compliance and embed sustainability into everyday operations.

THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THESE EFFORTS
ARE ALREADY EVIDENT.

Maintenance Coordinator at Pullman Cape Town City Centre, reflected: “Our guest satisfaction scores

increased due to sustainability initiatives, significantly reduced water consumption, and the amount of laundry we send away decreased following the implementation of the skip-the-clean concept.”

Barbara Murphy, Compliance Manager at President Hotel, shared: “Our biggest saving is in waste and our overall carbon footprint. We have maintained over 90% recycling since starting Green Key, and from May 2025 to May 2026 we halved our guest carbon footprint from 21.98 kg CO^e to 10.7 kg CO^e. The greatest benefit, beyond the savings, is the advantage it gives us in securing corporate business.”

These achievements demonstrate that sustainability is delivering tangible environmental, operational, and commercial benefits while strengthening South Africa’s reputation as a destination committed to responsible tourism.

Through Green Key, WESSA continues to educate, advocate, and inspire action, helping the hospitality sector build a more sustainable future for people and planet.



The Cape Town Marriott Hotel Crystal Towers Handover Group



Century City Conference Centre Handover



Boschendal Handover_WESSA CEO and Boschendal CEO



Cape Town Marriott Hotel Crystal Towers Handover Group



Hyde Johannesburg Rosebank Green Key Handover

BLUE FLAG PROGRAMME AND GREEN COAST PROGRAMME

TURNING THE TIDE THROUGH COASTAL ACTION

WESSA's Coastal Programme continued to protect, restore, and celebrate South Africa's coastline through our eco-labels, national action campaigns, inclusive access work, and strong coastal partnerships. In 2025–2026, we continued to focus on strengthening the quality and reach of Blue Flag and Green Coast, while mobilising practical action around marine pollution, coastal stewardship, and more inclusive coastal experiences.

WESSA enjoyed a successful 2025–2026 Blue Flag season, with 50 full-status Blue Flag beaches, 20 pilot beaches, seven tourism boats, and five marinas awarded and recognised under the programme.



Stop the Strangle handover with
Southbroom Conservancy

These awards recognised municipalities, private operators, and coastal partners who continue to work towards high international standards for water quality, environmental management, safety, universal accessibility, and environmental education.

Blue Flag remains a powerful mechanism for improving destination quality, supporting responsible tourism, and strengthening public confidence in our coastal spaces.

Green Coast's growing network was recognised through 15 site awards across diverse coastal destinations. The programme expanded by more than 100%, with high-profile partners including CapeNature, J-Bay Surf Alliance, Wild Coast, and KZN sites. Through Green Coast, WESSA continued to support citizen science, local stewardship, biodiversity awareness, and low-impact nature-based tourism. Green Coast forums created practical spaces for implementers to share lessons, improve site management, and strengthen communities' role as custodians of coastal ecosystems.

The Stop the Strangle marine pollution action campaign, which focuses on the negative impacts of ghost gear and ghost fishing, has evolved from a local initiative into a stronger national marine pollution platform. Support from the Ford Wildlife Foundation enabled a scaling up of awareness-raising, fishing-line recovery, and efforts to address the marine entanglement risks associated with ghost

gear. The campaign mobilised coastal communities, schools, NGOs, conservancies, and ocean-user groups around a simple but powerful action: remove harmful gear, record what is collected, and build public awareness of the impact of marine litter on birds, marine life, and coastal ecosystems.

Inclusive coastal access became one of the strongest stories of the year. WESSA launched the **Inclusive Coastal Access Braille Signage Pilot at Blaauwberg Nature Reserve** in partnership with Blind SA, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the City of Cape Town, and Nedbank.

The project introduced Braille ecosystem-interpretation coastal signage and showed how Blue Flag and Green Coast can help shift coastal tourism towards universal access and design. The project was well received and profiled strongly through partner networks.

The Coastal Programme strengthened WESSA's positioning through national platforms and strategic partnerships. WESSA presented and participated in forums including the Integrated Coastal Management Lekgotla, BARSA Aviation Summit, Africa Maritime and Marine Tourism Summit, provincial coastal committees, and sector forums.

These engagements reinforced WESSA as a practical partner in coastal governance, sustainable tourism, access and inclusivity, marine pollution response, and Blue Economy skills development.

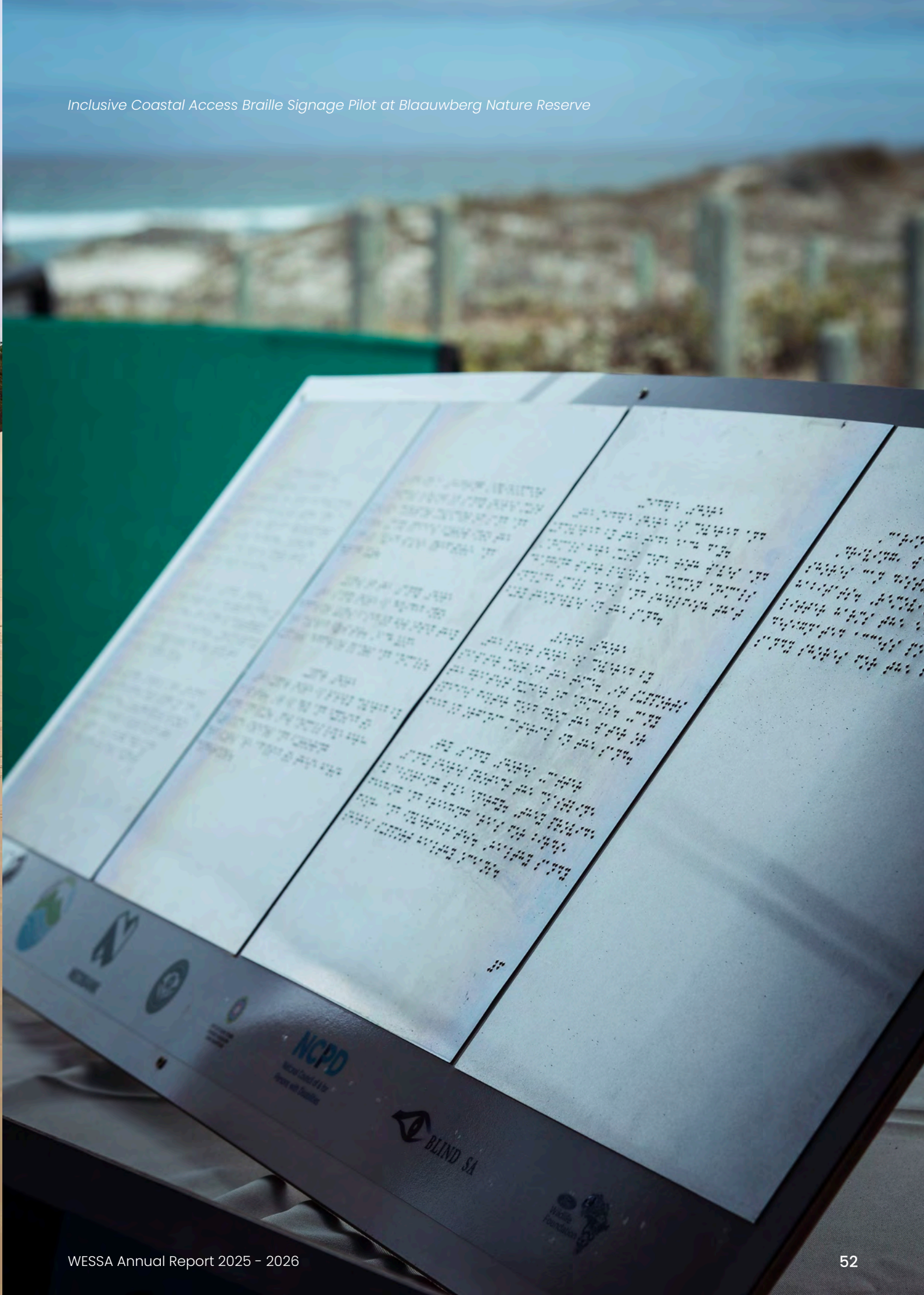
The year was not without challenges. Sewage, stormwater contamination, coastal pollution, funding constraints, and limited operational capacity continued to place pressure on programme delivery. However, these challenges also confirmed the importance of WESSA's role as a convenor, advocate, and implementation partner.

Through Blue Flag, Green Coast, Stop the Strangle, and inclusive access work, WESSA continued to Educate, Advocate, and Act with coastal partners across South Africa. The programme enters the next period with strong momentum to deepen impact, strengthen fundraising, and grow collaborative conservation action along the full coastline.

Green Coast Beach cleanups addressing ghost gear as part of Stop the Strangle action-campaign



Inclusive Coastal Access Braille Signage Pilot at Blaauwberg Nature Reserve



02

PROGRAMME REPORTS:
OUR IMPACT OVER THE LAST YEAR

BLUE FLAG BEACHES AND PILOT SITES FOR 2025/2026 SEASON

BOAT

MARINA

BEACH

PILOT SITE 

MARINA

GREEN COAST SITE

WESTERN CAPE

City of Cape Town		Cape Agulhas		George	
Bikini Beach		Struisbaai		Herold's Bay	
Camps Bay Beach		Hessequa		Victoria Bay Beach	
Clifton 4th		Lappiesbaai		Wilderness	
Fish Hoek Beach		Gouritzmond		Leentjiesklip	
Llandudno Beach		Stilbaai-Wes		Gwaing Beach	
Melkbosstrand		Witsands		Bitou (Plettenberg Bay)	
Muizenberg Beach		Jongensfontein		Robberg	
Silwerstroomstrand		Preekstoel		The Dunes	
Blaauwberg Nature Reserve		Mossel Bay		The Waves	
V&A Waterfront		De Bakke Beach		Singing Kettle	
Saldanha Bay		Hartenbos Beach		Nature's Valley	
Club Mykonos Marina		Kleinbrak Beach		Lookout Beach	
Overstrand		Santos Beach		Nature's Valley	
Grotto Beach		Suiderkruis		Offshore Adventures	
Kleinmond Beach		Tweekuilen			
Castle Beach		Knysna			
Hawston Beach		Swartvlei Beach			
Onrus Beach		Thesen Harbour Town Marina			
Walker Bay		Thesen Islands Home Owners Marina			
Marine Dynamics Shark					
Whale Tours					
Dyer Island Conservation Trust					
White Shark Diving Company					

NORTHERN CAPE

Port Nolloth		
McDougall's Bay		



EASTERN CAPE

Great Kei		NMMB		Ndlambe	
Kei Mouth		Hobie Beach Full		Kelly's Beach	
Morgan Bay		Humewood Beach Full		Middle Beach	
Chintsa		Kings Beach Full		Kenton-on-Sea	
Kouga		Bluewater Bay Pilot		Mbashe	
Dolphin Main Beach		Wells Estate Pilot		Lubanzi Beach	
Cape St Francis Bay Beach		Buffalo City Metro		Qatywa Beach	
J Bay Supertubes		Kidds Beach		Cwebe Beach	
Paradise Beach		Gonubie			

KWAZULU NATAL

Ray Nkonyeni		Umdoni		Mandeni	
Hibberdene Beach		Pennington		Tugela Mouth Beach	
Marina Beach		Rocky Bay		Dokodweni Beach	
Ramsgate Beach		Preston			
Southport Beach		Umthwalume			
Trafalgar Beach		Scottburgh			
Umzumbe Beach		Kwadukuza			
St Michaels Beach		Blythedale Beach			
Middle Beach Kenton-on-Sea		Salt Rock Main Beach			
Port Edward Beach		Thompson Bay Beach			
Mtwentweni Beach		Willard Beach			
Mpenjati Trafalgar					
Leisure Bay Conservancy					

MEMBERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

WESSA’S BEDROCK OF SUPPORT

A One-WESSA approach in action

In October 2024, WESSA’s staff and volunteers committed to a unified ‘One-WESSA’ approach: working together to achieve impact in our three focus areas, and mutually supporting each other’s activities. This approach was embedded across our volunteer structures, programmes, and activities over 2025–2026, with visible gains under the One-WESSA banner in the Green Rising Project and in community support for upgrades at the uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve.

Strengthening membership governance

WESSA achieved significant gains through the Board-appointed Membership and Volunteer Committee (MVC), its raison d’être being to strategically guide the growth and governance of WESSA’s Membership arm. Its initial achievement was driving the revision of our membership categories and fee structures, the new ones implemented from the end of September 2025. The new Standard membership, with its low subscription amount, has provided an affordable entry point for many students, interns, and unemployed youth to join WESSA and contribute towards our aims, objectives, and impact. In particular, it is providing an opportunity for youth members to join and contribute to our membership leadership structures. A case in point is the Durban Branch, which is being reinvigorated by young leaders willing to step up and organise events and activities.

The MVC has also been supporting the consultation process for testing a new branch and regional model

for financial budgeting, support, and reporting. This is crucial to align all membership-related financial transactions with the WESSA financial ecosystem and audit requirements, and to provide staff support for the volunteer treasurer functions.

The MVC also focused over the past year on developing supportive governance tools for our membership structures. These have included developing a Code of Conduct for our members and volunteers to sign when joining WESSA and updating the Guidebook for Friends Groups (FGs) and the Handbook for Successfully Running WESSA Branches. The Guidebook is a very useful toolkit for our 47 FGs across the country, helping them to manage themselves and coordinate with WESSA to achieve community impact at the local level.

While some of these FGs have only a few members, others have hundreds of supporters who leverage their skills and time towards local environmental stewardship.

The Membership Office also supported the Western Cape Region to develop a Guidebook for FGs operating specifically in the City of Cape Town (CoCT), to foster their ability to work alongside the CoCT to address environmental and operational issues.

Growing and connecting our membership

Giving substance to the One-WESSA unified approach, the KZN Region generously volunteered to share a bequest made to the Region, funding the appointment of a National Membership (NM) Coordinator and providing security of tenure for the existing National Membership Administrator.



KZN youth participating in the Great Southern Bioblitz

The NM Coordinator has made positive gains in synergising membership and staff activities and projects, notably enabling members in various branches to contribute to the staff-led Green Rising Project targets. Bi-monthly WESSA-in-Action webinars that have featured WESSA staff and membership projects as well as those of our partners and Green Coast sites were hosted through this portfolio. During this period, we launched the new membership webpages, which feature a calendar of all upcoming WESSA membership and staff events, to enable member and supporter participation.

Over the past year, WESSA recruited 259 new members and supporters, with most gains in the KZN Region.

OUR MEMBERSHIP FIGURES AS AT 31 MARCH 2026: REDESIGN THIS TABLE

CATEGORY	EASTERN CAPE	KZN	LOWVELD	NORTHERN AREAS	WESTERN CAPE	OTHER AREAS	TOTAL
General and schools	43	175	15	222	136	3	594
Friends groups and conservancies	1	4	1	30	11	0	47
Business members	0	3	0	5	0	0	8
Supporters	56	548	15	217	93	12	941
Life and complimentary	2	32	1	36	33	5	109
Special donors	0	2	0	6	0	0	8
TOTAL	102	764	32	516	273	20	1 707



Lowveld members logging citizen science observations, White River Nature Reserve



Lowveld members logging citizen science observations, White River Nature Reserve



Lowveld team lunch after the Great Southern Bioblitz



Algoa Bay Branch members protesting seismic surveys

02

PROGRAMME REPORTS:
OUR IMPACT OVER THE LAST YEAR

The Western Cape Region facilitated the establishment of a new Cape Town branch, the Southern Suburbs Branch, with a committee of young leaders. The Region has also initiated the creation of a new Northern Areas Branch. The KZN Region has also reformatted its youth membership from a stand-alone Youth Branch to integrating these youth into the existing branches, with a new Midlands Branch also in the offing. The Boksburg Branch has elected a new group of leaders, who have kicked off various community-level clean-ups and small rehabilitation actions. A new Northern Areas Branch is in its genesis.

REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Some highlights of our membership activities for the year, excluding advocacy actions that are showcased in the Advocacy Report, include:

WESTERN CAPE

The Western Cape Regional Committee has changed leadership and adopted a focus on reviving old and initiating new branches. Committee members have also represented WESSA at the CoCT’s Marine Outfall Pipeline Monitoring Committee meetings when Blue Flag Programme staff have been unable to attend.

The City of Cape Town’s Water and Sanitation Department and the region have been exploring collaborating on a workshop similar to the successful water-quality workshop held in partnership with CoCT in 2024. Given the positive outcomes of that event, this presents a strong opportunity to continue building a productive partnership with the City of Cape Town.

A key highlight was the publication of the WESSA Western Cape Guide for Friends Groups Operating within the CoCT, shared with members, Friends Groups, and Big Friends Group (BFG) gathering attendees. The handbook was well received, with positive feedback highlighting its practical value in supporting engagement with the CoCT and strengthening collaboration.

The guide serves as a key communication and capacity-building tool, helping to strengthen relationships across the network and support the growth of Friends Groups in the Western Cape.



Northern Region Areas (NAR) members sampling river pollution

It is commendable to see how the new Southern Suburbs Branch, with its vibrant youth leaders, has quickly set about arranging new activities, leveraging a network of community and environmental groups, and securing funds from the CoCT to initiate community-led conservation actions through its Roots to Resilience Project. Through their Steenberg Adventure Squad, Enviro Reading and Writing Club, and the launch of the Roots to Resilience Project, the Branch has delivered a range of education, advocacy, and action-based initiatives with a strong focus on youth engagement, community development, and environmental stewardship within Cape Flats communities.

“Our Roots to Resilience Project is providing opportunities for grass-roots community involvement in caring for local habitats.”

Chelsey Bevie, Chair of the Southern Suburbs Branch The Eden Branch arranged several regular talks and field trips, and continued to produce its highly informative and impressive newsletters for its members. The Eden Branch also supported the dissemination of information relating to the debate on the proposal to release captive elephants into the Knysna Forest.



KZN youth beach clean-up

EASTERN CAPE

This Region comprises 46 members and 56 supporters, organised into the Makhanda Branch and the Algoa Bay Branch (ABB), with its Ibhayi Sub-branch. In addition to its coordinating functions, the Regional Committee has supported the inception and establishment of the Ibhayi Sub-branch. This Sub-branch has enthusiastically initiated several waste-recycling and community food-garden projects in the Ibhayi township.

The ABB has staged monthly beach clean-ups that have removed hundreds of kilograms of rubbish and encouraged several school groups to join. ABB also conducts monthly invasive alien plant hacks in green spaces across Gqeberha and supports strong peer learning and networking with other groups undertaking similar hacks and restoration projects. A pleasingly large section of the Baakens Valley was cleared on one such hack with the help of 140 VW employees and their family members.

Continuing with its “Know Your Bay” series of talks, ABB held various public presentations on marine pollution, alien clearing, and Marine Week. Branch members protested in solidarity with other NGOs in the Wild Coast-Shell seismic testing court case. They advocated for strengthened environmental management outcomes in various local environmental oversight committees, including the Algoa Bay Aquaculture Development Zone, the Swartkops Environmental Management Plan, the

Coega Enviro Committee, the Beachfront Safety Forum, the Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB) Civil Society Forum, and the NMB Chamber (Sanitation technical committee, Water and Electricity). The Eastern Cape Region is also extensively involved in the EIA process for the proposed Thyspunt nuclear power station, collaborating with the Thyspunt Nuclear Alliance, a coalition of civil society groups.

Makhanda Branch hosted regular public talks, including one on a controversial wind-farm project. It ran nature walks and its River Rescue clean-ups, as well as supporting a new recycling initiative in the town.

KWAZULU-NATAL

The WESSA KwaZulu-Natal Region is WESSA’s largest region, with 216 members and 548 supporters across five branches: Durban, Kingsburgh, Southern KZN, Upper South Coast, and Sani Wildlife. Its conservation legacy sits within WESSA’s national history, which dates back to March 1926, and to the earlier Natal Game Protection Association, established in 1883.

Membership growth was steady, especially supported by youth volunteers, many of whom were graduates in nature conservation or environmental management. Active volunteers completed inductions, submitted Green Matchmaking profiles, and joined regional activities and communication groups.

02

PROGRAMME REPORTS:

OUR IMPACT OVER THE LAST YEAR

Branches delivered a wide range of environmental programmes, including hikes, beach and river clean-ups, nature workshops, guided trails, and public talks. Following consultation, the eThekwin Branch amalgamated with the KZN Youth Branch to form the Durban Branch, with youth leaders establishing a new committee and monthly programmes. Youth leaders organised a cultural knowledge workshop in Eshowe to mark Global Recycling Day, focusing on recycling, skills development, and sustainable livelihoods.

The Sani Wildlife Branch hosted its annual environmental essay competition for learners, with winners attending an educational course at uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve and Education Centre. It also supported waste sorting, anti-litter projects, wildflower walks, and botanical and wildlife monitoring. Other branch work included botanical walks, invasive alien plant clearing, and participation in local network development processes.

The region remained active in environmental advocacy and governance, including serving as WESSA's representative on the UPL Limited Chemical Spill Rehabilitation Monitoring Committee. Members monitored and responded to local concerns, including a proposed solar power plant on conservation-zoned land, municipal estuary and infrastructure interventions, landfill and waste-disposal problems, and over scaled development proposals threatening heritage and biodiversity. Activities included inspecting the Oatlands Landfill site in Margate and participating in public processes on coastal water discharges and draft national and municipal biodiversity by-laws.

THE REGION SUSTAINED IMPORTANT EDUCATION AND CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS.

These included the long-running relationship with the AECI Umbogintwini Industrial Park in Amanzimtoti to support environmental education at Umbogavango Nature Reserve, with oversight transferred to the Upper South Coast Branch. Collaboration also continued with the eThekwin Natural Science Museum, uShaka Marine, Adopt-a-River, local conservancies, and citizen science initiatives. Youth leaders and eco-rangers remained active in the Hawaan and uMhlanga forests, participated in teacher training, and contributed to monitoring events such as the iNaturalist City Nature Challenge and the Great Southern Bioblitz.

WESSA recognises how the KZN Region has embraced the #OneWESSA ethos by financially supporting the Wildlife Protection Unit and the Social Employment Fund Phase 4 (SEF4) Eco Champions Project, both of which contribute to grassroots ecological work at the WESSA uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve.

NORTHERN AREAS

The Region (NAR) and its four active branches, Boksburg, Springs-Nigel, Tshwane, and Magaliesberg Biosphere, have undertaken a large number of activities this past year, many coordinated by the regional leaders. In addition to the many EIA cases, NAR led significant efforts in water-quality sampling and monitoring across several important rivers and the Hartbeespoort Dam. This was done in collaboration with several other community organisations. This work tied in with monitoring aquatic invasive alien plant growth over the dam and the impact of the biocontrol methods promoted by NAR. The twice-yearly Clean and Restore Harties project drew hundreds of volunteers, with over 1 000 bags of rubbish collected at each event.

In 2024, NAR helped establish the Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve, with activities this year centred on consolidating this gain, especially in opposing mining applications within its buffer zone. NAR has also been involved in the proposal to declare part of the Makgabeng plateau a World Heritage Site; supported the Friends of Nylsvlei in engaging with the Gauteng Conservation Department over the introduction of buffalo to Nylsvlei Nature Reserve; and arranged participation for 100 members in the Great Southern Bioblitz. NAR assisted with upgrades to the Nyoka Vulture hide (a partnership with Rotary and BirdLife Harties), arranged several environmental talks for members, and enabled members to participate in the annual waterbird census. NAR also partnered with BirdLife Harties in publishing Birds of the Magaliesberg Biosphere, a free e-book that has received national and international attention.

The Chair of NAR also chairs the National Conservancies Association, and supported the re-establishment of the Buffelspoort Dam Conservancy. NAR members had the opportunity to participate in the WESSA-staffed Green Rising Project, which supported the clearing of lantana, bugweed, and Spanish bamboo from the Magaliesberg Biosphere. NAR also extended its Queen of the Night Biocontrol project into the Waterberg region and completed

the work in Northern KZN around Hluhluwe. From removing alien plants to cultivating indigenous plants, NAR partnered with the Aloe Farm in re-establishing viable populations of the endangered endemic Aloe peglerae in the Magaliesberg mountains.

The Boksburg Branch has elected a new committee and has begun arranging rehabilitation events in local nature reserves and at the cemetery. The Tshwane Branch facilitated the annual Tshwane Friends Groups Forum, with a focus on networking and co-learning. These 29 Friends Groups collectively assemble thousands of volunteers to support conservation and education activities in Tshwane's local nature reserves and green corridors, in collaboration with the Tshwane Nature Conservation Department.

LOWVELD

The Lowveld Region has also continued its long-standing project in partnership with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) to conserve the critically endangered Aloe simii. Many of its members are also keen citizen scientists, regularly contributing observations to the WESSA Lowveld iNaturalist Project and taking part in the iNaturalist Great Southern Bioblitz in September, as well as various frogging events. They continued to monitor the Bat Hawk nesting site as part of a multi-year research project.

Lowveld volunteers have continued to support the White River Youth Forum as they undertake community work and local activism in the White River Nature Reserve. Lowveld volunteers also regularly participated in the ReCover Wild Ecosystems Rehabilitation Project, a collaboration of organisations undertaking alien hacking in Mbombela.

WESSA is a membership-based organisation, and our members and supporters provide a bedrock of support to all that WESSA does. Our volunteers create opportunities throughout South Africa to get involved and to make a difference in their local communities.

In 2026, we look forward to celebrating the gains our members have led and contributed to in all that WESSA has achieved. We look forward to the next generation of volunteer impact shaping the environmental consciousness of South Africa.



KZN Region, Sani Pass flower walk



Southern Suburbs branch members conducting a beach clean-up

WESSA FRIENDS GROUPS

A REFLECTION ON THE HISTORY OF THE WESSA FRIENDS GROUPS CONCEPT

As one of the oldest environmental NGO in South Africa, WESSA’s century of environmental work reflects its commitment to people and planet. Friends Groups, made up of volunteers and the brainchild of Western Cape member Ann Bean in the 1980s, continue to play a vital role, upholding WESSA’s pillars of educate, advocate, and act by mentoring youth, speaking out, and preserving natural areas for future generations.

Ann, concerned that a lack of funds, human resources, and interest from conservation authorities was leading to degradation and even de-proclamation of nature reserves, believed public collaboration with authorities was critical. In 1994, the right to be consulted in decision-making shifted Friends Groups from overseeing reserves to include the natural, semi-natural, or built environment, large or small, enabling increased participation in monitoring and rehabilitation. The result is hundreds of volunteer working hours.

In 2024–2025, the Tshwane Branch contributed R2 537 363 to Nature Conservation in goods and services.
– Carol Martin, Chair, Tshwane Branch.

In the 1990s, the focus was on building the capacity to negotiate environmental legislation. Today, much of this is online via local authority websites. With rapid urbanisation, Friends Groups play an increasingly important role in ensuring decision-makers are sensitive to the local voice.

The end of the 1990s saw a brief fracas over the view that Friends Groups attracted volunteers away from becoming paying members. John Green, Chair of the Western Cape Region at that time, recalls his defence of Friends Groups: “Friends Groups, although not necessarily contributing to WESSA financially as members, contributed as People Caring for the Earth; and WESSA benefitted from that.” At WESSA’s 75th Anniversary AGM in 2001, WESSA National was urged to promote Friends Groups. At the 2002 AGM, Ann Bean was awarded the WESSA Gold Medal.

By the early 2000s, largely in the Western and Southern Cape, and the Northern Area, Friends Groups were growing from strength to strength. Marion Dunkeld, champion of Friends in the Northern Area and a builder of relationships with Johannesburg and Pretoria municipal authorities, was appointed National Friends Coordinator, a role she held for many years. Marion liaised with Ann Bean and Western Cape Friends Groups to develop the Friends Manual, which is still in use. Due to the 2008 international financial crisis, WESSA’s funds were curtailed, but volunteers in Friends Groups were equipped to carry the torch. Scientists who serve Friends Groups in a voluntary capacity and readily advise in discussions with authorities are an invaluable asset.

Today, the Tshwane Branch of the Northern Region, home to 29 Friends Groups, continues its successful collaboration with the Municipality. At the annual Tshwane Friends Forum (also their AGM), activities are presented by all Friends Groups. The AGM Report makes impressive reading.



2015 Coastal clean-up at Groot Brak



2026 Mandela Day, Princess Vlei



2022 Clean-up of Westlake River

The early 2000s recorded an increase in Western Cape Friends Groups, to well over 30. A twice-yearly BFG (Big Friends Group) networking gathering was brought to an end by Covid restrictions. The 1983 Southern Cape George Wildlife Society underwent many iterations until 2022, when it brought together Sedgefield, Knysna, Plettenberg Bay, and George under the Eden Branch.

Over the decades, this branch has taken on issues of national importance: forest elephants, the Garden Route Botanical Garden, the Garden Route Dam, Karoo fracking, ocean oil prospecting, and Pinnacle Point conservation. Eden and its members have received numerous awards. Activities offered by Eden would fill a book.

However, Secretary Christene Ridge-Schnauffer, who has held roles at Eden for more than 40 years, explains, ‘Insufficient wide-based support today means more non-members than Members participate.’

The Friends Group concept, pioneered by WESSA 40 years ago, is expanding; however, the majority of Friends Groups are no longer WESSA-affiliated, and many that were affiliated have not retained their WESSA connection. Today, all Friends Groups are required to register with their local authority.

PHILANTHROPY AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

ENABLING IMPACT

Behind every environmental education programme, restored ecosystem, empowered community, and conservation success featured in this report are the individuals, foundations, companies, and institutions that choose to invest in WESSA's mission. Their partnerships enable us to respond to emerging and complex environmental challenges, deliver meaningful impact across South Africa, and remain steadfast in our commitment to people caring for the Earth.

This year, we were proud to welcome new individual philanthropists and corporate donors to WESSA. More than funders, they have become valued partners, sharing our vision for a more sustainable and resilient future. The commitment of our long-standing supporters reflects growing confidence in WESSA's ability to deliver meaningful and lasting impact.

Alongside growing our network of philanthropic and funding partners, WESSA has continued to strengthen the systems, processes, and practices that underpin effective donor stewardship and resource mobilisation.

WESSA is committed to ensuring that every contribution entrusted to the organisation is managed responsibly and transparently, and directed towards creating lasting environmental and social outcomes.

LOOKING AHEAD

As WESSA enters its second century, strengthening the organisation's long-term financial sustainability remains a strategic priority. We will continue to cultivate meaningful partnerships with donors, trusts, foundations, corporate partners, and institutional funders who share our vision of a more sustainable future.

WESSA is also laying the foundations for the WESSA Legacy Fund and Club 100, two interlinked strategic initiatives designed to inspire transformational philanthropy and build a permanent source of funding for the organisation's mission. Together, these initiatives provide philanthropic partners with an opportunity to create an enduring legacy by investing in South Africa's environmental future.

By strengthening relationships, diversifying income, and investing in long-term sustainability, WESSA is building the resilience needed to continue protecting and restoring our natural environment for generations to come.

WITH GRATITUDE

To every individual philanthropist, trust, foundation, corporate partner, institutional funder, and supporter who invested in WESSA during the year, thank you.

Your confidence in our mission makes our work possible. Every contribution, whether funding environmental education, conserving biodiversity, strengthening communities, or supporting the organisation where it is needed most, helps create lasting impact for people and the planet. As WESSA celebrates 100 years of people caring for the Earth, we are deeply grateful for your partnership and the shared commitment that will carry our mission into its second century.

Philanthropy and resource mobilisation are about more than securing funding. They are about building trusted, long-term relationships founded on shared values, accountability, and measurable impact.



LAST YEAR’S IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Over the past year, WESSA has translated its mission into meaningful outcomes and impact for people and planet. The table below provides a snapshot of how we have educated, advocated and acted to protect biodiversity, reduce pollution and advance climate action across South Africa.



STRATEGIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN FY26

INDICATOR	BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION	POLLUTION REDUCTION	CLIMATE ACTION
Educate	- Supported the development of the Greater uMngeni Biosphere Reserve. - New ecological management plan developed for UVNR. 111 environmental special day events implemented. - Launched the first-ever inclusive Coastal Access Braille signage in South Africa.	640 schools supported, with programmes involving 28 692 learners, 692 teachers and 3 184 community members directly. 70 489 learners and 3 544 teachers benefited indirectly. 104 environmental special day events implemented. - Presented at three major tourism-related conferences, plus numerous regional coastal committees.	103 environmental special day events implemented. - Green Rising Project engaging 20 000 youth in climate action.
Advocate	- Initiated campaign against shark nets and drum lines. - NAR protection efforts against mining in the Magaliesberg Biosphere Reserve. - Algoa Bay members provided scientific input into protecting penguin breeding colonies. - Inappropriate mining applications in the NAR, KZN and Lowveld regions opposed.	- Promoted water quality management improvements at 50 beaches within 19 local municipalities. - NAR citizen monitoring and reporting of pollution in rivers and dams. - Water stewardship projects saved 95 000 L. 25 River and wetland monitoring projects. - Stop the Strangle marine pollution campaign started installing 100 fishing line bins across our coast as an advocacy tool for reduced marine pollution.	- Algoa Bay Branch members directly contributing to the local government climate action response plan. - Green Key hotel and conference centre participants certified. - Participation in the consultation process for the revised Thyspunt nuclear power station application.
Act	- New UVNR Wildlife Protection Unit has apprehended poachers and cleared snares. - Improved UVNR maintenance has generated higher visitor numbers and community events. - Volunteer groups assisting UVNR management and maintenance. 2 570 trees planted by eco-schoolers, with 27 biodiversity and 110 food gardens established. 100 ha of land rehabilitated by Green Rising Project.	- The new Southern Suburbs Branch has secured funding to promote community participation in local nature areas rehabilitation and conservation. 190 583 kgs of waste collected by Eco-Schools and Green Rising Projects, with R129 047 income generated from recycling projects. 500 tonnes of waste removed from Green Rising communities. 1 300 bags of rubbish collected at the annual Hartbeespoort Dam clean-up. - Gauteng Friends Groups removed 1 400 bags of rubbish from areas of local conservation importance.	42 project staff have cleared approx. 25 ha of IAPs at UVNR, reducing fire risk and water loss.

WESSA PEOPLE – 'OUR WESSENCE'

EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE FOR IMPACT

WESSA's Human Resources function is dedicated to building a capable, engaged, and values-driven team that advances our mission to educate, advocate, and act for environmental sustainability. In the 2025–2026 period, our primary focus was on strengthening organisational capacity through strategic recruitment, modernising policies and remuneration frameworks, and fostering a supportive workplace culture. These efforts ensured we could deliver effectively on conservation, education, and community programmes while investing in the wellbeing and development of our team.

LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

We strengthened ExCo and senior leadership with key appointments. Melenie Parsons joined as Head of HR in April 2025, providing strategic direction to talent management, policy development, and employee engagement. Adrienne West was appointed Head of Philanthropy and Resource Mobilisation in May 2025, bolstering our funding and partnership capabilities.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS

Morgan Griffiths was appointed Chief Operating Officer effective 1 October 2025, taking a central role in day-to-day operations and cross-unit collaboration.

Nana Mchunu assumed the role of Head of Finance on 1 September 2025, strengthening financial leadership.

OPERATIONAL RECRUITMENT

We successfully filled critical positions to enhance programme delivery. New team members included Education Centres Manager Kristi Garland, Junior Reserve Manager Jaco Van Der Merwe, Wildlife Protection Unit Rangers Ernest Chisale and Hendrik Isaks, and National Membership Coordinator Lufuno Khabane. These appointments brought essential expertise in anti-poaching, environmental education, reserve management, community engagement, and membership growth.

POLICY COMPLIANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A comprehensive policy audit tracker was created to prioritise and review frameworks. Key policies drafted and advanced for the Social and Ethics Committee and Board approval included the Code of Ethics, Anti-Corruption and Bribery, Harassment and Discrimination, Fraud, and Fraternisation policies. Plans for staff and membership training were developed for 2026 to improve awareness and implementation.

REMUNERATION STRATEGY

WESSA completed a comprehensive remuneration benchmarking exercise and developed a three-year strategy focused on internal equity and phased adjustments to close gaps. Financial modelling was completed for FY2027 budget integration, with proposals progressing through our Remuneration and Audit, Risk and Assurance Committees.

Workforce management and engagement Workforce diversity remained largely stable with targeted improvements. Staff engagement initiatives, including "What's Up WESSA" sessions, Watercooler Wednesdays, and fun awards, increased connection and knowledge-sharing across our teams.



Our Schools and Youth Team

HUMAN IMPACT

Morgan Griffiths marks 22 years of dedicated service to WESSA this year. Since joining the organisation in 2004, he has made a lasting contribution to environmental governance, advocacy, youth development programmes, and membership engagement.

His expertise, passion, and commitment have helped strengthen WESSA's work across South Africa, supporting both people and the planet. We celebrate Morgan's outstanding contribution and the positive impact he continues to make. In his words,

"I am passionate about empowering our employees and members, driving strong advocacy for effective environmental governance."

Newer team members also embody our mission. Ernest Chisale started his journey with WESSA as a volunteer, and over the years, his passion and commitment earned him the position of Wildlife Protection Unit Ranger. Kristi Garland's appointment as Education Centres Manager was a full-circle moment:

These stories reflect WESSA's commitment to nurturing talent that bridges knowledge with action. Across all of this work, HR contributed directly to WESSA's theory of change: we Educated our people through training and cross-departmental knowledge-sharing, Advocated for a fair and ethical workplace through our policy and remuneration reforms, and Acted by recruiting the rangers, educators, and coordinators who deliver WESSA's programmes on the ground every day.

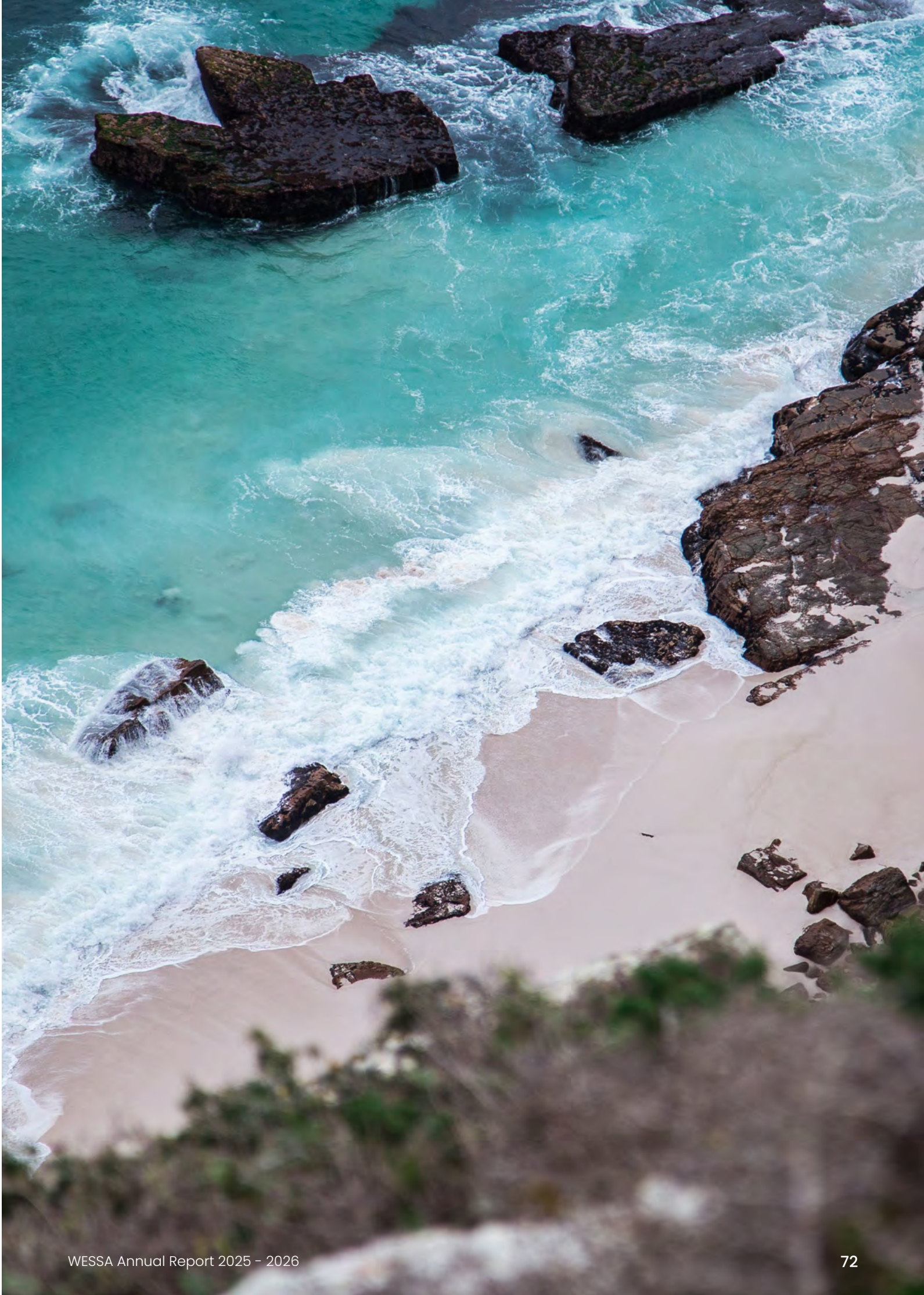
As we celebrate and move beyond WESSA's centenary year, HR will continue aligning people strategies with long-term sustainability goals, building the capability, culture, and continuity required to carry our mission confidently into the next 100 years.

She first joined WESSA as an Education Officer in 1999, and returns 26 years later to lead the very centres where her WESSA career began.

03
HUMAN RESOURCES

WESSA STAFF – 2025/2026

Adrienne West	Kudzai Chagadama	Nonsikelelo Ndlovu
Asanda Kunene	Kuhle Buthelezi	Noxolo Mzileni
Bongani Chisale	Lindokuhle Mkhize	Phumelele Ngcobo
Buhle Mthembu	Londeka Maphisa	Pravin Vishnupersadh
Cielle Trichardt	Lufuno Khabane	S’nethemba M Sima
Cindy-Lee Cloete	Melenie Parsons	Sabelo Sithole
Daniel Jackson	Michael Denison	Sharnay Wagner
Donda Nkwanyana	Morgan Griffiths	Sheivine Datadin
Gugulethu Shezi	Nana Mchunu	Simphiwe Nkosi
Hazel Khoza	Nkanyiso Msomi	Sindisiwe Nzama
Hendrik Isaks	Nomfanelo Thutshini	Silungile Kunene
Hopewell Sambo	Nomfundo Ngidi	Siyabonga Mkhuma
Iphendule Xhakana	Nomfundo Ndlovu	Tevya Visser
Jaco Van Der Merwe	Nomonde Mabika	Thabiso Mtshali
Kelly Alcock	Nomusa Gwala	Thabo Tsoeute
Kevin Lakani	Nomusa Zungu	Thokozani Maphalala
Kgomotso Kotlai	Nonhlanhla Maphanga	Zwakele Ngwenya
Khwezi Dlomo	Nonhlanhla Zungu	
Kristi Garland	Nonsikelelo Mbokazi	



TREASURER'S REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2026

“An unqualified audit opinion, long considered obligatory, marks the point at which WESSA’s financial recovery becomes a financial foundation.”

The 2026 financial year was, in my view as Treasurer, the year in which the work of the preceding three years came together. The Group received an unqualified audit opinion, following a long history of qualified opinions due simply to the potential incompleteness of donations and cash collections. Due to the significant effort by both the corporate teams and the WESSA membership that single outcome tells our members, donors and funding partners that the financial information on which WESSA reports its impact can be relied upon.

The continued financial improvement, albeit remains less predictable than we would like, is also now visible in the results. The Group recorded an operational surplus of R3.3 million, compared with a deficit in the prior year, and a surplus for the year of R6.1 million against R2.5 million in FY2025. Including the fair value revaluation of investments of R11.6 million — a non-cash movement reflecting the market value of the Group’s investment portfolio — total surplus and other comprehensive income amounted to R17.7 million. Total assets grew from R84.6 million to R102 million, and funds and reserves from R66.1 million to R83.8 million.

Key matters impacting the financial stability of the organisation during the year were:



STEWARDSHIP OF CASH AND THE STRENGTHENING OF THE INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO

Cash balances closed the year at R34,384,525, in line with the R34,432,594 held at the prior year end, with the composition shifting as project funding was applied to programme delivery.

For WESSA NPC Ring-fenced funds grew to R12,162,060 (2025: R9,637,787), unrestricted funds held at R9,269,152 (2025: R8,995,672), restricted funds reduced to R7,830,799 (2025: R11,269,785) and membership funds increased to R5,122,514 (2025: R4,529,350).

The four-bucket framework continues to give the Board a clear view of which rands are genuinely available to support strategy and which are committed to funders. Working capital and acid test ratios of 2:1 confirm that current assets comfortably cover current liabilities.

The investment portfolio grew to R56.9 million and contributed dividend income of R2.8 million and interest of R1.4 million — income that remains our most dependable source of unrestricted funding. The Revenue generation and Investments Committee, chaired by Augustine Morkel, completed its first full year of dedicated oversight of these assets.

INCOME GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION

Total income excluding revaluations rose to R38.8 million from R30 million.

Growth came from education centre income, as visitor numbers and funder-supported groups increased; from donations, with meaningful support from the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, the Balderson Foundation, the Sue and Basil Robin Trust, Suntera Global and many others; and from certification programmes, with Green Key growing from three certified establishments to thirteen.

Project income declined as several large projects concluded in the prior year, which is the nature of restricted funding and a reminder of why unrestricted income matters. The drive to grow unrestricted income remains the single most important financial priority in front of this organisation.

MEMBERSHIP AND THE RICHRATH BEQUEST

WESSA received a bequest of R6.8 million from the Richrath Estate, designated for the KwaZulu-Natal Membership Region.

Membership funds grew to R5,122,514. A gift of this scale is both a vote of confidence and a responsibility, and the Board will look to see it applied in a way that builds lasting regional capability rather than a single year of activity.

Financial alignment and integration with membership continued to progress and remains a focus in the year ahead.

THE LEGACY FUND AND OUR CENTENARY

As we enter our centenary, establishing the WESSA Legacy Fund becomes a priority rather than an aspiration.

The Fund is designed to build a capital base of R100 million, preserved in perpetuity, from which WESSA would generate non-operational income to pursue its strategy.

A permanent source of unrestricted funding is what will allow this organisation to withstand the volatility of the donor environment and to act on opportunity rather than only on available funding.

RESOLUTION OF LONG-STANDING LEGACY OBLIGATIONS

During the year WESSA identified an historical Skills Development Levy liability and volunteered to go through the SARS Voluntary Disclosure Programme (VDP).

The settlement of approximately R4.5 million was provided for in the year under review and paid in FY2027, being funded from ring-fenced reserves so as not to affect the effectiveness of the WESSA’s initiatives.

The ring fenced reserves will be replenished in the years ahead.



GROUP RESTRUCTURING

WESSA has begun a restructuring of its subsidiary entities, consolidating many of the assets and liabilities within the various legal entities into the main WESSA NPC. This will reduce complexity, costs and tax risks and improve visibility and control. The complex corporate structure I referred to in last year's report is being simplified.

But it is people that make WESSA work and a big thanks must go to Nana Mchunu, our Head of Finance, and her team. They carried the finance function through a year without a CFO, and delivered an unqualified audit while doing so. That is a considerable achievement, earned through sustained and unglamorous work on controls, reconciliations and reporting discipline.

WESSA has again established a Chief Financial Officer role in FY2027, having held the position open since August 2025 while we assessed the Group's needs. I would like to formally welcome the incoming CFO, Kabi Kolobe who joined us effective 1 August 2026. We are excited with the boost that this appointment will give us both internally and as we grow our place in the communities we serve.

Finally, I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee for their rigour and their time, and the Board for their continued support in understanding that the exciting and valuable work done by this organisation must be built on sound financial principles.

In conclusion, I am pleased to report that WESSA enters its centenary year financially stronger, structurally simpler and, for the first time in several years, with an unqualified set of accounts. There is more to do — particularly on unrestricted income and on rebuilding reserves — but the foundation is now sound.

Ms Deborah Millar

WESSA Treasurer

FINANCIAL REVIEW

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Executive Statement

The 2026 financial year represented another year of strengthening WESSA’s financial position and reinforcing the organisation’s commitment to responsible financial stewardship. Building on the improvements in previous years, management remained focused on maintaining strong financial governance, supporting programme delivery, and ensuring that organisational resources were managed efficiently. Throughout the year emphasis remained on balancing financial resilience with delivering meaningful impact.

A significant achievement during the year was the Group receiving an unqualified audit opinion, following several years of qualified opinions. This outcome reflects the culmination of sustained efforts to resolve historical matters, improve financial reporting and embed a culture of accountability and good governance across the organisation.

The year also presented opportunities to further strengthen the organisation’s financial position. Through disciplined expenditure management, improved financial planning and continued oversight of organisational resources, WESSA continued to build financial resilience while supporting its strategic priorities.

The year also saw the successful resolution of long-standing financial matters that had been carried forward over a number of years. A significant item was the resolution of WESSA’s historical Skills Development Levy (SDL) obligation through the South African Revenue Service’s Voluntary Disclosure Programme.

While the settlement amounted to approximately R4.5m and was paid during FY2027, it was funded from ring-fenced reserves that had been prudently set aside for strategic financial obligations. This approach ensured that operational activities, donor-funded programmes and unrestricted working capital were not adversely affected, while bringing closure to a long-standing compliance matter. Initiatives have been put in place by management to replenish the organisations ring-fenced funds.

The year also saw WESSA receive a generous R6.8m bequest from the Richrath Estate, designated for the KwaZulu-Natal Membership Region. This exceptional contribution will play an important role in supporting the long-term sustainability and impact of the region’s initiatives.

In support of improved governance and organisational efficiency, the Group also has a strategic restructuring of its subsidiary entities. This process will consolidate the majority of the Group’s assets and liabilities within WESSA, simplifying the Group structure, enhancing transparency and strengthening financial oversight and reporting.

As we look ahead, management remains focused on growing and diversifying unrestricted income, strengthening reserves, enhancing programme delivery and project implementation while strengthening operational efficiency and ensuring that every financial decision supports WESSA’s strategic objectives.

WESSA GROUP FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

INDICATOR	FY2026	FY2026 % INCREASE / DECREASE	FY2025	FY2025 % INCREASE / DECREASE
Total income	R38.8m	23%	R30m	
Operation income	R34.2m	25%	R25.6m	
Operational surplus / (deficit)	R3.3m	143%	(R1.4m)	
Other comprehensive income	R11.6m	20%	R9.2m	
Total assets	R102m	17%	R84.6m	
Investments	R56.9m	39%	R38.8m	
Cash and cash equivalents	R34.4m	0%	R34.4m	
Funds and Reserves	R83.8m	21%	R66.1m	
Audit opinion	Unqualified		Qualified	

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

The WESSA Group continued to strengthen its financial performance during FY2026, recording an operational surplus of **R3.3m**, compared to a deficit of **R1.4m** in FY2025.

Despite a decrease in project income, the overall improvement was largely driven by an increase in donations and bequests income, which includes a bequest of **R6.8m** to the KZN membership region from the Richrath estate; increased education centre income and an increase in registration fee income. The surplus for the year, which includes non-operational income was **R6.1m** compared to **R2.5m** in FY2025, this included dividend income of **R2.8m** and interest on cash and cash equivalents of **R1.4m**.

Including the fair value revaluation of investments of **R11.6m**, representing the year-end movement in the market value of the Group’s investment portfolio, a non-cash accounting adjustment, the total surplus and other comprehensive income amounted to **R17.7m**.

The continued improvement in operating performance demonstrates WESSA’s ongoing commitment to balancing financial sustainability with education, advocacy and action (Educate, Advocate, Act).

REVENUE AND FUNDING COMPONENTS

Diversified income remains fundamental to WESSA’s long-term sustainability. During FY2026, total income (excluding revaluations) increased to R38.8 million compared to R30 million in the previous year.

Growth in income was primarily driven by:

- An increase in Education Centre income due to groups visiting the Education Centres (University of the Free State, Just Footprints, University of KZN, and more) and funders secured – Old Mutual Investments, Cricket South Africa, North American Association for Environmental Education, Educo Africa, and a partnership with Sani Wildlife on a scholar development programme, to name a few.
- An increase in membership income which includes the R6.8 million Richrath bequest.
- An increase in donations income, with major donations from donors including but not limited to Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, Suntera Global, The Sue and Basil Robin Trust, the Balderson Foundation, and many other donors mentioned in this report.

- Major funders including EPR Waste Association of South Africa and UNICEF amongst others.
- The Green Key Programme achieved a 333% increase in certified establishments, grow-ing from three sites in FY2025 to 13 in FY2026.

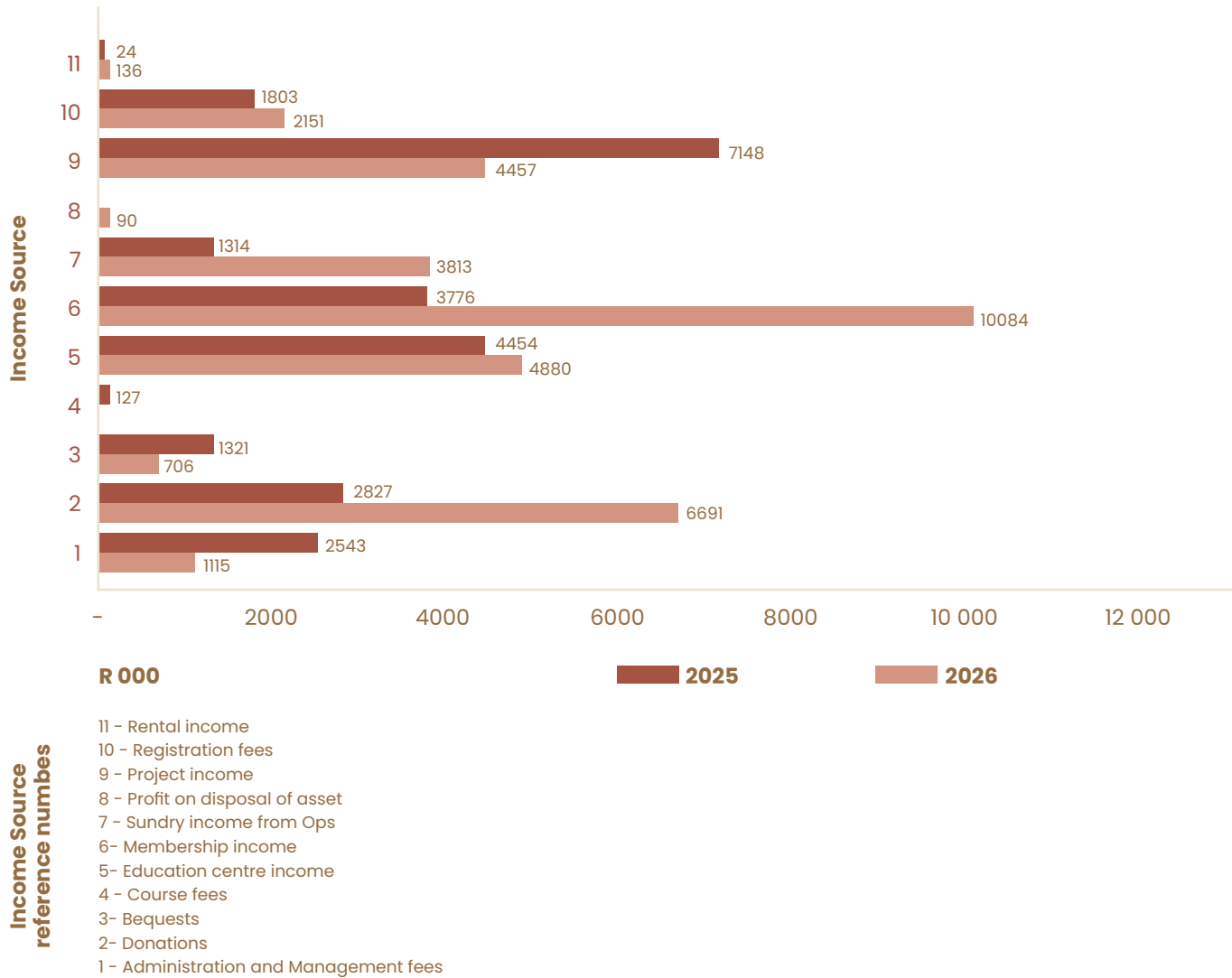
* Please refer to the funder/donor list in this report for the full list of funders and donors.

A decrease in project income was noted as project funding continued to be utilised in line with programme delivery, and we saw some larger projects like the Sun International project come to an end in the previous financial year.

Investment income remained an important source of unrestricted funding, enabling WESSA to support activities not directly funded by projects and strengthening the organisation’s financial resilience.

OPERATIONAL INCOME SOURCE: F2025 VS FY 2026

Note: The Bequest of R6.8 million to the KZN region is included in membership income for visibility purposes.

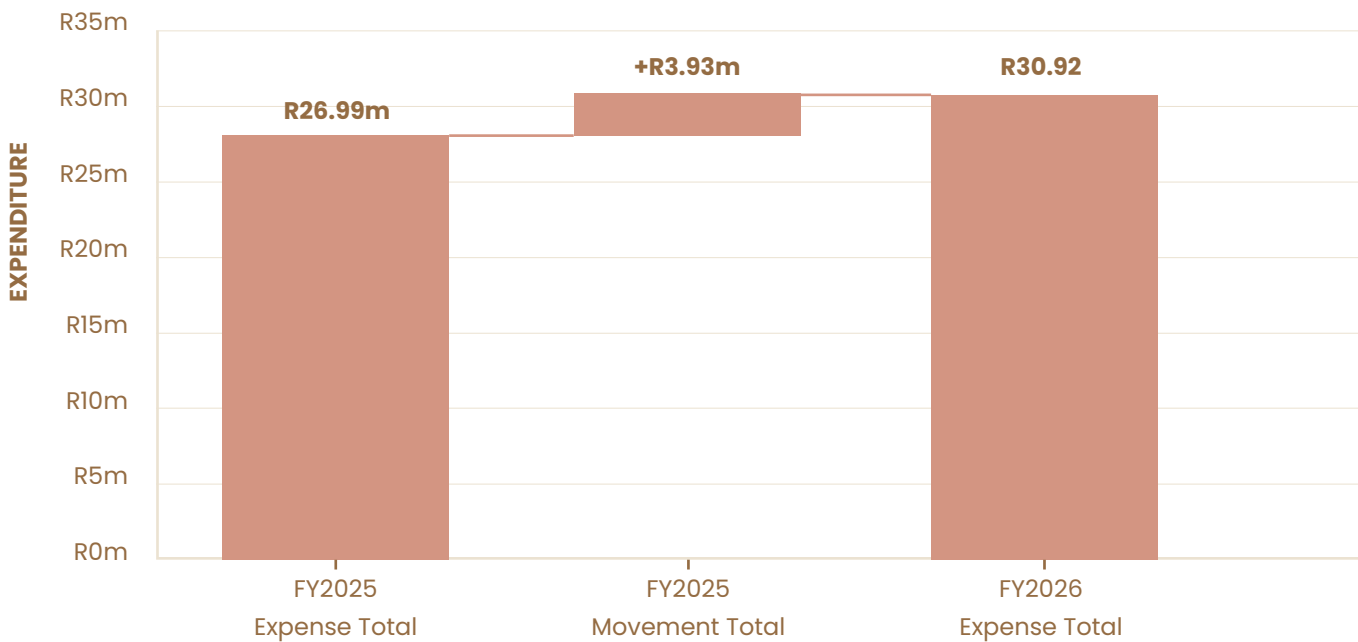


RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Every rand entrusted to WESSA represents an investment in environmental education, advocacy, and action and supports sustainable development. Throughout FY2026, management continued to apply disciplined financial management practices to ensure resources were directed towards strategic priorities while maintaining organisational sustainability. Expenditure was carefully monitored throughout the year, with procurement decisions aligned to approved budgets and organisational priorities.

EXPENDITURE INCREASED IN LINE WITH INFLATION

TOTAL EXPENDITURE: FY2025 VS FY2026



- Total increase of 14,6% year on year
- 10,4% relates to the SDL liability (R2,8m)
- Balance of 4,2% in line with inflation

FINANCIAL POSITION

The Group’s financial position strengthened during the year. Total assets increased from R84.6 million in FY2025 to R102 million in FY2026, supported mainly by investment growth. Funds and reserves increased to R83.8 million, reflecting improved financial performance together with growth in the investment portfolio. Cash resources remained healthy throughout the year, providing sufficient liquidity to meet operational requirements.

Liabilities decreased slightly as project funding continued to be utilised in line with programme delivery and the SDL was included as a liability, while funds and reserves increased, reflecting the year’s positive financial performance and fair value gains. As indicated by the working capital and acid test ratios of 2:1, WESSA’s current assets exceed its liabilities, which means WESSA’s current assets are sufficient to meet its current liabilities using its liquid assets.

Item	FY2026	FY2025
Total assets	R102m	R84.6m
Investments	R56.9m	R38.8m
Cash and cash equivalents	R34.4m	R34.4m
Liabilities	R18.1m	R18.5m
Funds and reserves	R83.8m	R66.1m

Please refer to the Annual Financial Statements on the WESSA website for the full set of AFS.

CASH MANAGEMENT

WESSA continues to apply a disciplined approach to cash management by categorising available funds according to their intended purpose.

This framework enhances governance, strengthens financial oversight, and ensures that donor funding is used in accordance with funding agreements while maintaining sufficient unrestricted funds to support operations.

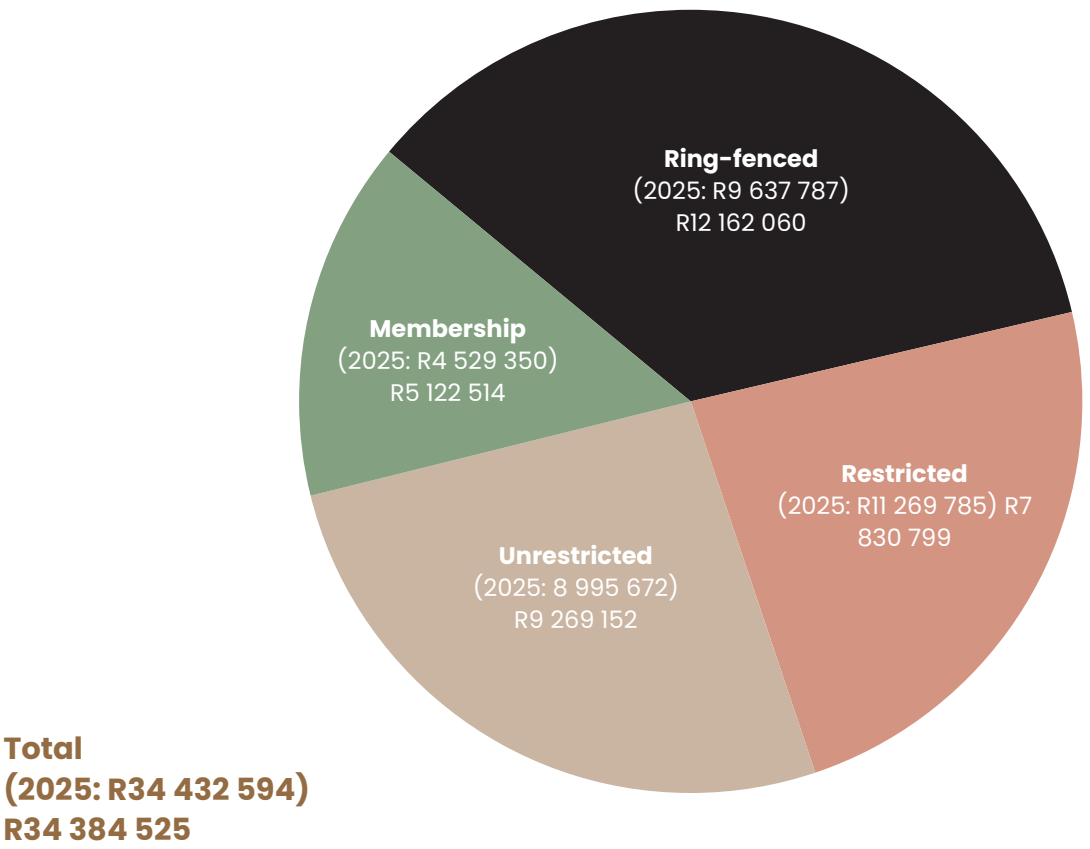
WESSA’s cash is categorised into:

- Unrestricted funds
- Ring-fenced funds
- Restricted funds
- Membership funds

This framework enables management and the Board to clearly distinguish operational liquidity from donor-restricted funding, thereby supporting more effective financial planning and risk management.

FUNDS CATEGORY	SOURCES AND USES OF FUNDS	FINANCIAL CONTROL AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK
1. Unrestricted funds	Unrestricted funds relate to operational and investment income generated by the company. For example, management and professional fees from project implementation; donations raised, dividend income, and interest earned on cash balances These funds are utilised for day-to-day operations and working capital requirements, supporting the organisation’s vision and mission. These funds provide the flexibility needed to support ongoing operational requirements and financial stability.	The company’s Executive Committee and senior managers oversee the allocation of unrestricted funds in line with the delegation of authority and budgets approved by the Board. By isolating unrestricted funds, we gain a clearer understanding of our operational liquidity and financial health. This separation allows us to closely monitor cash flow patterns and ensure that we have sufficient resources to meet immediate operational demands. It also facilitates more accurate budgeting and forecasting for our operational activities.
2. Ring-fenced funds	Ring-fenced funds are unrestricted funds that are reserved for the following purposes: a) as a safety net for unforeseen financial requirements; or b) for allocation to special pro-jects or initiatives that are not funded by external funders.	The oversight and allocation of ring-fenced funds is as follows: a) The Audit and Risk Committee guides allocation towards un-foreseen financial require-ments; and b) The Business Development Committee guides allocation towards special projects or ini-tiatives. This approach to funds allocation provides a robust governance framework to ensure financial sustainability and alignment to the group’s strategic imperatives.
3. Restricted funds	Restricted funds are funds received from donors and funders for the implementation of specific projects or initiatives, as agreed with them. These funds are used exclusively for the purposes specified in the funding agreements.	Allocation of these funds is overseen by the relevant Senior Manager, in line with the respective donor and funder agreements. Separating restricted funds from other funds allows for precise tracking of fund utilisation in line with donor restrictions and project requirements. This segregation improves compliance requirements and ensures that project expenditures are aligned with the intended use of funds. Detailed reporting on these funds provides transparency and accountability, facilitating accurate reporting and fostering trust with our donors and stakeholders.
4. Membership funds	Membership funds relate to funds generated through: a) WESSA membership subscrip-tions and b) Donations raised at regional and branch levels. These funds are used for the groundwork required at regional and branch levels in line with the company’s strategy.	While these funds are managed by specific membership branches and regions, oversight over regional and branch activities is governed by the Membership Regional Leaders and ExCo Committee (RL/ExCo Committee). This oversight framework enhances the company’s ability to report on branch and regional financial activities, ensuring that funds are used appropriately and aligned with the company’s strategy. It also promotes greater accountability and transparency into the financial performance of individual branches and regions.

WESSA GROUP CASH ANALYSIS



KEY MILESTONES

During FY2026, management continued to strengthen the organisation's financial governance and sustainability through several strategic initiatives.

- Settlements of historical SDL liability.
- Growth in investment portfolio.
- Improvement in financial controls and systems.
- Strengthened donor compliance.
- Unqualified audit opinion.

LOOKING AHEAD

As WESSA looks to the future, the organisation remains committed to strengthening its long-term financial sustainability while continuing to maximise its environmental and social impact. Although the funding environment for the non-profit sector remains competitive and increasingly uncertain, WESSA is well positioned to build on the progress achieved over recent years through prudent financial management, strong governance, and strategic investment in organisational capacity.

A key strategic priority for the coming year will be establishing the WESSA Legacy Fund, a long-term investment vehicle designed to strengthen the organisation's financial sustainability for future generations. The Legacy Fund will seek to preserve and grow capital over time while generating sustainable investment returns that can support WESSA's strategic objectives. By creating a permanent source of unrestricted funding, the Legacy Fund will enhance WESSA's ability to navigate funding uncertainties, respond to emerging opportunities, and continue delivering meaningful impact for decades to come.

To further strengthen financial leadership and organisational capability, WESSA has established a CFO role in FY2027. This strategic appointment reflects the organisation's continued growth and increasing operational complexity and will enhance financial leadership, planning, governance, risk management, and long-term sustainability initiatives across the Group.

In addition to these strategic initiatives, management will continue to focus on:

- Diversifying unrestricted income through new funding partnerships and innovative revenue streams.
- Replenishing and strengthening reserves and maintaining a healthy liquidity position.
- Enhancing financial systems, reporting, and data-driven decision-making.
- Maintaining disciplined expenditure management while investing in organisational capability.

- Supporting programme growth and ensuring that financial resources continue to be directed towards delivering measurable impact.

Through these initiatives, WESSA aims not only to remain financially sustainable but also to build a lasting financial legacy that will enable the organisation to continue protecting and conserving South Africa's natural heritage for generations to come.

Through these priorities, WESSA aims to build a financially resilient organisation that is equipped not only to respond to future challenges but also to seize new opportunities in advancing its mission.

CONCLUSION

The 2026 financial year reflects another significant step forward in WESSA's journey towards long-term financial sustainability. Continued improvements in financial performance, strengthened governance, prudent resource management, and transparent financial reporting demonstrate the organisation's commitment to responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to it by members, donors, partners, and other stakeholders.

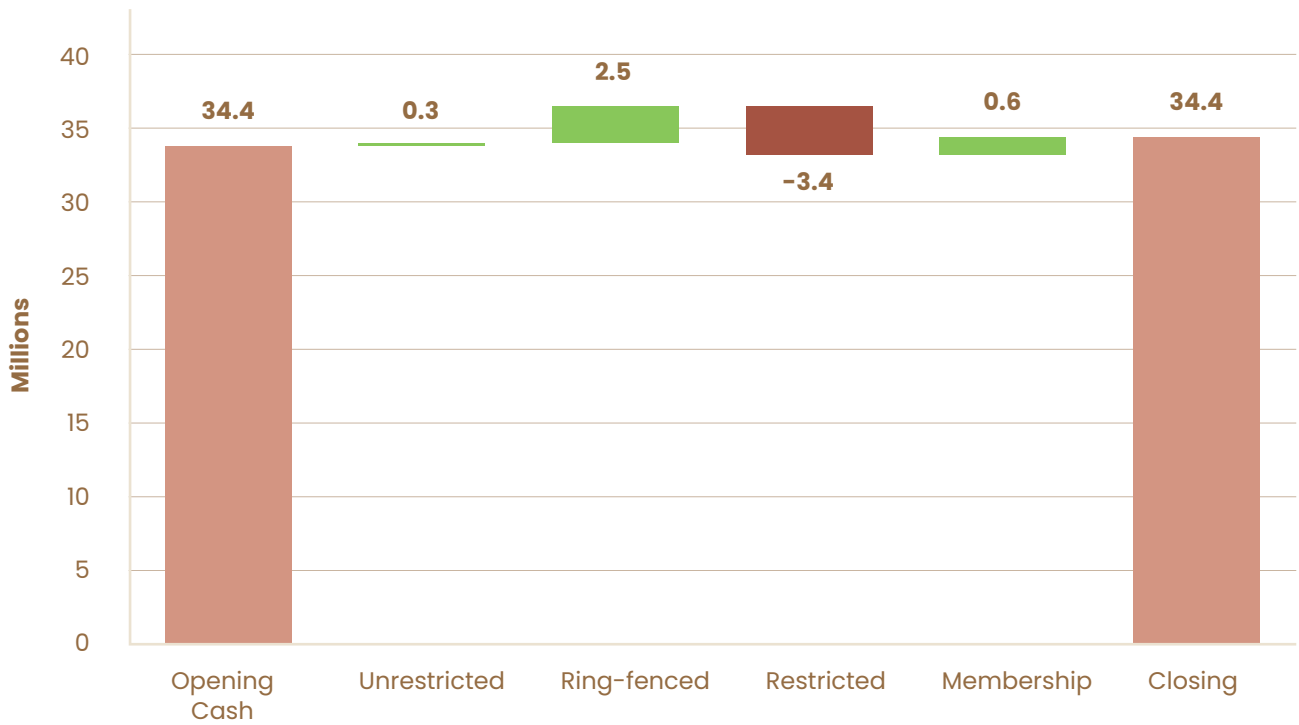
The progress achieved during the year extends beyond the financial results. It reflects an organisation that continues to strengthen its governance, invest in its people and systems, and make strategic decisions that will support its mission well into the future. As WESSA continues to evolve, sound financial management will remain central to enabling the organisation to deliver meaningful and lasting environmental impact.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors and the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee for their guidance, oversight, and continued commitment to good governance. We also thank our employees, members, volunteers, donors, funding partners, and supporters whose dedication and collaboration make WESSA's work possible.

Together, we remain committed to ensuring that every rand entrusted to WESSA is managed responsibly, invested wisely, and translated into meaningful outcomes for people, nature, and future generations.

Nana Mchunu
Head of Finance

WESSA NPC MOVEMENT IN CASH BY FUNDING CATEGORY



GOVERNANCE

Strong governance remains the foundation of WESSA’s credibility, sustainability, and impact. As we celebrate our centenary year, our Board continues to provide strategic leadership and oversight, ensuring the organisation operates with integrity and accountability, and maintains a steadfast commitment to its mission.

Through a system of specialised governance committees, including Audit, Risk and Assurance; Social and Ethics; Revenue Generation and Investment; Remuneration and Nominations; Environmental Governance; and Membership and Volunteer, the Board oversees key areas of organisational performance, risk management, compliance, and stakeholder accountability. These structures support informed decision-making and uphold the high standards expected of one of South Africa’s oldest and most respected environmental organisations.

Operationally, WESSA continues to advance its One-WESSA approach, integrating expertise across shared services, biodiversity stewardship, education and sustainability, coastal programmes, membership and advocacy, and philanthropy and resource mobilisation under the leadership of the CEO and Executive Committee. This collaborative model strengthens organisational effectiveness by enabling the leverage of resources, knowledge, and systems across the organisation to achieve greater environmental and social impact.

As WESSA enters its second century, our governance framework provides the stability, transparency, and strategic foresight required to navigate an evolving environmental landscape. It gives members, donors, partners, communities, and other stakeholders confidence that WESSA remains a trusted, resilient, and future-focused organisation dedicated to creating lasting positive change for people and the planet.



Learners participating in the OMI e-STEAM programme at Twinstreams Environmental Education Centre

In partnership with the Crane Foundation Education Programme in Nottingham Road, uMngeni Valley staff supported a water monitoring session with educators



BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Janssen Davies
Chairman

Chair of WESSA since 2023 and former Chair of SANParks Honorary Rangers, Janssen brings extensive business and conservation leadership. He guides WESSA's strategy on climate action, biodiversity, and pollution reduction, working with members and partners to advance impactful conservation.

Augustine Morkel
Non-executive Director

Augustine is a conservation strategist with a B.Tech in Nature Conservation, an MBA, and a PhD in progress on NPO success theory. He has held senior roles at SANParks, Kirstenbosch, and WWF South Africa, and currently leads SANParks' AFD-funded cooperation with Réunion Island National Park.

Debbie Millar
Treasurer

Debbie is a finance and communications executive with 21+ years' experience in ICT, telecommunications, and retail. She held senior treasury and investor relations roles at Vodacom, MTN, EOH, and Edcon, and now runs a corporate advisory company called 8Hundred. Debbie is also chair of the Investor Relations Society of South Africa.



John Wesson
Non-executive Director

John has nearly 50 years of experience in parks and conservation management, including leadership in the Free State and WESSA Regional Manager roles. He chairs several conservation bodies, edits African Wildlife and Environment magazine, and is a respected birder, photographer, and Rotarian.

Dr Llewellyn (Llew) Taylor
Non-executive Director

Llew is a zoologist with 40+ years in conservation, aquaculture, and education. Holding a PhD in Zoology and MSc with distinction, he now leads Taylor Environmental, specialising in ecological assessments, wetland delineation, and water resource risk management at local, regional, and international levels.

Bongani Luthuli
Non-executive Director

Bongani is an Acting Judge of the Labour Court and Director of Bongani Khanyile Attorneys. An admitted attorney of the High Court, he specialises in labour and corporate law, frequently appears before courts and dispute forums, and is a regular legal commentator on SAFM, Power FM, eNCA, and SABC News.



Cindy-Lee Cloete
Chief Executive Officer

Cindy has over 15 years' experience in environmental education and sustainable development. A Mandela Washington Fellow, she also completed her postgraduate studies in African Philanthropy, driving youth empowerment and social-environmental justice through innovative education and leadership.

Dr Gary Koekemoer
Non-executive Director

Gary is a leadership and governance specialist with a PhD in philosophy and a Master's in Labour Relations. With decades in HR, marine conservation, and climate resilience, he leads WESSA's Eastern Cape branch and advocates for environmental and social sustainability.

Marc Immerman
Non-executive Director

Marc is a Principal, Director, and Shareholder at Metier, an African private equity firm. With 16+ years' investment experience in renewable energy, water, and waste, he co-founded the award-winning Bokpoort CSP solar project. His background spans software leadership, equity analysis, and merchant banking.



Pearl Pillay
Non-executive Director

Pearl is a youth development and policy specialist, Managing Director of Youth Lab, and Commissioner on the National Planning Commission. A Mandela Washington Fellow and published academic, she has trained officials across Africa, written for leading publications, and advocates for youth inclusion, social justice, and environmental sustainability.

Tracy-Lynn Field
Non-executive Director

Tracy-Lynn is Director of the Mandela Institute and Professor of Law at Wits, where she has worked since 2003. Promoted to full professor in 2017, she has held the Claude Leon Chair in Earth Justice since 2022. She specialises in water, climate, energy, and mining law.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



CINDY-LEE CLOETE
Chief Executive Officer

NANA MCHUNU
Head of Finance

MORGAN GRIFFITHS
Senior Manager: Advocacy,
Membership and Governance



KELLY GRACE ALCOCK
Head of Education and
Sustainability

MELÉNIE PARSONS
Head of Human Resources

ADRIENNE WEST
Head of Philanthropy and
Resource Mobilisation

SENIOR MANAGEMENT



MIKE DENISON
Senior Programme
Manager: Coastal

TEVYA VISSER
Senior Programme Manager:
Sustainability

NOMFUNDO NDLOVU
Senior Programme Manager:
Schools and Youth



JACO VAN DER MERWE
Junior Reserve and Maintenance
Manager

KRISTI ANNE GARLAND
Education Centres and
Hospitality Manager

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

WESSA's Operational Structure



BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETING ATTENDANCE SCHEDULE

BOARD	28 June 2025	30 August 2025	29 November 2025	28 March 2026
Janssen Davies (Board Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Augustine Morkel (Board Vice Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Debbie Millar (Board Treasurer)	Apologies	Present	Present	Present
Bongani Luthuli (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Gary Koekemoer (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Pearl Pillay (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
John Wesson (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Marc Immerman (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Tracy-Lynn Field (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Llew Taylor (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kelebogile Ntlha (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Resigned	Resigned
Nana Mchunu (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	On maternity leave	Present
Kabi Kolobe (Committee Invitee - Interim Head of Finance)	N/A	N/A	Present	N/A

AUDIT RISK AND ASSUR- ANCE COMMITTEE “ARAC”	19 JUNE 2025	31 JULY 2025	11 SEPTEMBER 2025	20 NOVEMBER 2025	12 MARCH 2026
Debbie Millar (Committee Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Augustine Morkel (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Marc Immerman (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Tracy-Lynn Field (Committee Member)	Present	Apologies	Apologies	Present	Present
Llew Taylor (Committee Member)	Present	Apologies	Present	Present	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kelebogile Ntlha (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Resigned	Resigned	Resigned
Nana Mchunu (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	On maternity leave	Present
Kabi Kolobe (Committee Invitee Interim Head of Finance)	N/A	N/A	Present	Present	N/A

REVENUE GENERATION AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE “RIC”	01 JUNE 2025	06 AUGUST 2025	11 NOVEMBER 2025	10 MARCH 2026
Augustine Morkel (Committee Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Debbie Millar (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Marc Immerman (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Apologies
Pearl Pillay (Committee Member)	Apologies	Present	Apologies	Present
John Wesson (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kelebogile Ntlha (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Resigned	Resigned
Adrienne West (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kelly Alcock (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Nana Mchunu (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	On maternity leave	Present

05

GOVERNANCE

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE “EGC”	12 JUNE 2025	07 AUGUST 2025	12 NOVEMBER 2025	05 MARCH 2026
Gary Koekemoer (Committee Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Tracy-Lynn Field (Committee Member)	Apologies	Apologies	Present	Apologies
Augustine Morkel (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Llew Taylor (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
John Wesson (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Paddy Norman (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Patrick Dowling (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Apologies
Kelly Alcock (Committee Invitee)	Apologies	Present	Present	Apologies
Morgan Griffiths (Committee Invitee)	Present	Apologies	Present	Present

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE “NOMCOM”	05 AUGUST 2025	11 MARCH 2026
Janssen Davies (Committee Chair)	Present	Present
Gary Koekemoer (Committee Member)	Present	Present
Bongani Luthuli (Committee Member)	Present	Present
Augustine Morkel (Committee Member)	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present
Melenie Parsons (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present
Kelebogile Ntlha (Committee Invitee)	Present	Resigned

SOCIAL AND ETHICS COMMITTEE “SEC”	22 MAY 25	24 JULY 25	06 NOVEMBER 25	19 FEBRUARY 26
Bongani Luthuli (Committee Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Llew Taylor (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Apologies	Present
Pearl Pillay (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
John Wesson (Committee Member)	Apologies	Present	Apologies	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kabi Kolobe (Committee Invitee Interim Head of Finance)	N/A	N/A	Present	N/A
Melenie Parsons (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	Present
Nana Mchunu (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	On maternity leave	Present

REMUNERATION COMMITTEE “REMCOM”	30 JULY 2025	25 FEBRUARY 2026
Gary Koekemoer (Committee Chair)	Present	Present
Bongani Luthuli (Committee Member)	Present	Apologies
Augustine Morkel (Committee Member)	Present	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Member)	Present	Present
Cindy-Lee Cloete (CEO)	Present	Present
Melenie Parsons (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present
Nana Mchunu (Committee Invitee)	Present	Apologies
Kelebogile Ntlha (Committee Invitee)	Present	Resigned

05
GOVERNANCE

MEMBERSHIP AND VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE “MEMBERSHIP”	10 APRIL 2025	17 JUNE 2025	13 AUGUST 2025	28 OCTOBER 2025	18 FEBRUARY 2026
Cindy-Lee Cloete (Committee Chair)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Gary Koekemoer (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Margaret Burger (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Llew Taylor (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
John Wesson (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Vince Shacks (Committee Member)	Absent	Present	Resigned	Resigned	Resigned
Denisha Anand (Committee Member)	Not yet appointed	Not yet appointed	Apologies	Apologies	Present
Pearl Pillay (Committee Member)	Apologies	Present	Present	Present	Present
Augustine Morkel (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Janssen Davies (Committee Member)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Morgan Griffiths (Committee Invitee)	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present
Kelly Alcock (Committee Invitee)	Apologies	Present	Present	Present	Present



Learners participating in soil science activities to classify different soil types

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