



KOGELBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

In December 1998, the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve was registered by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) under its Man and the Biosphere Programme. It was the first biosphere to be registered in South Africa and Eskom was a signatory to the application for Biosphere Reserve status.

Palmiet Pumped Storage Scheme is located inside the Biosphere Reserve but was built before the Biosphere Reserve registration. However, at the time, Eskom recognised the ecological sensitivity of the area and took measures to protect the environment even before such legislation existed. The scheme became recognised as a “forerunner in environmental engineering”.

In 1988, when construction was completed, Palmiet won the EPPIC (Environmental Planning Professions Interdisciplinary Committee) Award for integrated environmental planning and management.

What is a Biosphere Reserve?

A biosphere reserve is a specific type of conservation area, which accommodates and benefits both the natural environment and the communities living in and around it. This is possible because a biosphere reserve consists of three different but associated zones:



Core: most ecologically sensitive and pristine area where nature conservation is a priority and low-impact activities (e.g. hiking and bird watching) are allowed.

Buffer: less ecologically sensitive but mostly natural area where recreation (e.g. camping, boating, mountain biking), and sustainable utilisation of natural products (e.g. fishing, wildflower harvesting) can be accommodated.

Transition: least ecologically sensitive area where a great variety of land uses occur (e.g. farms, commercial plantations and towns).

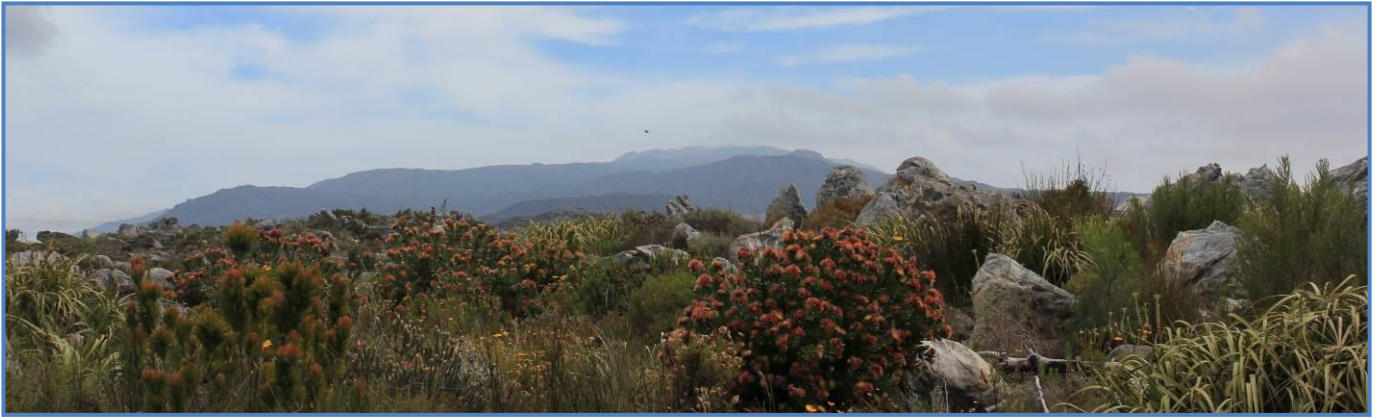
All zones are interdependent and are managed and protected according to the above definitions.

A biosphere reserve is managed by a team of stakeholders representing local communities, agriculture, business, conservation, local authorities and other relevant parties.

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve lies in the Western Cape Province, approximately 60km south east of Cape Town. It encompasses the entire coastal area from Gordon's Bay to the Bot River vlei and inland to Grabouw and the Groenland Mountain.

The Kogelberg Nature Reserve forms the largest part of the core area of the Biosphere Reserve and is known as the “heart of the Fynbos Kingdom”. It is home to 1 600 different plant species, making it one of the world's richest sites of plant diversity. In addition, numerous animals including leopard, antelope, many birds, freshwater fish and smaller creatures occur in this region.



The Cape Floral Kingdom

The plants of the world are divided into six different areas or Floral Kingdoms. Although the Cape Floral Kingdom is the smallest, it has the largest number of different kinds of plants and consists mainly of Fynbos.

Fynbos is the name given to the plants that grow naturally on the mountains and plains of the southern and southwestern parts of the Western Cape. There are approximately 8 700 different kinds. Nowhere else in the world are so many different kinds of plants found in such a small area.

Fynbos

The name Fynbos originates from the Dutch description (fijn bosch) meaning “fine-leaved bushes”. The three plant families always found in Fynbos are:

Proteas: recognised as the national flower of South Africa
Erica: fine leaved plants with bunches of tiny, colourful flowers
Restio: reeds and grasses.

Why Should Fynbos be protected and conserved?

- It regulates the flow of rainwater into the rivers and increases the efficiency of water catchment.
- It attracts tourists which creates jobs and businesses.
- It provides an income from sale of flowers and plants.
- It offers recreation and educational opportunities.
- It provides materials for thatching and brooms and ingredients for medicines.
- It is home for bees and insects that pollinate the apple orchards which are the economic backbone of the region.

In the Western Cape, the RDP “Fynbos Working for Water” project implemented by the Department of Water Affairs, focused on the eradication of alien vegetation. Re-instatement of fynbos in water catchment areas greatly improves the quality and capacity of their water catchment.

Acknowledgements: Cape Nature Conservation: Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

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See also: GI 0003 Palmiet Blue Planet Prize

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