

Western Cape Provincial Guideline on Biodiversity Offsets



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Threatened Biodiversity

- We have 3 of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots
- 68% of SA's threatened species, 2/3 veg types endemic - *high risk of irreplaceable loss at genetic level, if not at spp or ecosystem level*
- 5 out of 9 biomes & 66% of veg types not adequately protected
- 80% of priority areas for expansion of protected areas in private ownership
- Restoration? ...very difficult

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High Socio-Economic Need

STATE OF SA ECONOMY

- 2004-2008: real per capita income rising by 4%/yr
- Gini coefficient (the “wealth gap”) increased from 0.64 to 0.69 from 1995 to 2005
- 2008: low absorption of unskilled labour = leading to high unemployment

STATE OF WC ECONOMY

- 2.1% Population growth rate (1995 - 2005)
- 5.4 million Estimated population by 2014
- 26% Broad unemployment
- 49.1% Unemployed ages 15 – 24 (2004-05)

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Need for Balance

Biodiversity Offsets are “Developmental”

“developmental” ≠ pro development
or “development at all/any cost”

“developmental” = “solutions driven”
balancing socio-economic needs with
conservation targets

*...secure ecologically sustainable development and
use of natural resources while promoting justifiable
economic and social development (Constitution)*

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Unavoidable impacts to be remedied by those responsible...

"Sustainable development requires the consideration of all relevant factors including the following:

...That the disturbance of ecosystems and loss of biological diversity are avoided, or, where they cannot be altogether avoided, are minimised and remedied.

...The costs of remedying of...environmental degradation...must be paid for by those responsible for harming the environment."

(NEMA)

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What are "biodiversity offsets"?

In certain instances the need exists to during the EIA process explore mechanisms to offset/compensate for unavoidable, residual loss of biodiversity.

"...conservation actions intended to compensate for the residual, unavoidable harm to biodiversity caused by development projects, so as to aspire to no net loss in biodiversity" (Ten Kate et al 2004)
OR ...so as to achieve ecosystem conservation targets and maintain ecological integrity.

Offsets not actions already required by law (duty of care, alien clearing, protecting wetland, etc)

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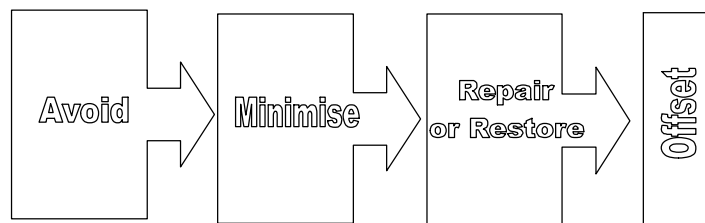
What are “biodiversity offsets”? (continue)



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Offsets – a “Last Resort”

- Take a positive ‘planning with nature’ approach
- Consider all reasonable & feasible alternatives
- Consider mitigation hierarchy



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Objective of biodiversity offsets?

...through the development authorization and associated EIA process...

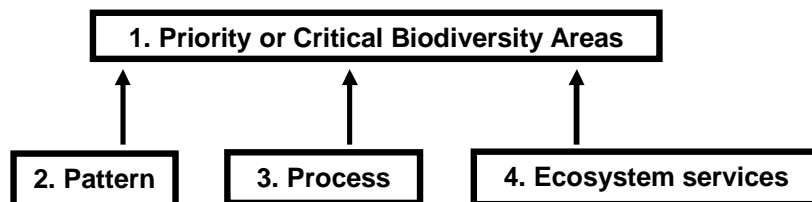
ensure that residual impacts on biodiversity & ecosystem services that are of moderate to high significance – & might otherwise result in the refusal of environmental authorisation – are compensated for by developers in such a way that:

- (1) ecological integrity is maintained (& conservation targets achieved);
- (2) ecologically sustainable development secured; &
- (3) impacts caused by illegal development compensated for (Section 24G rectification process)

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Point of departure/triggers – impacts

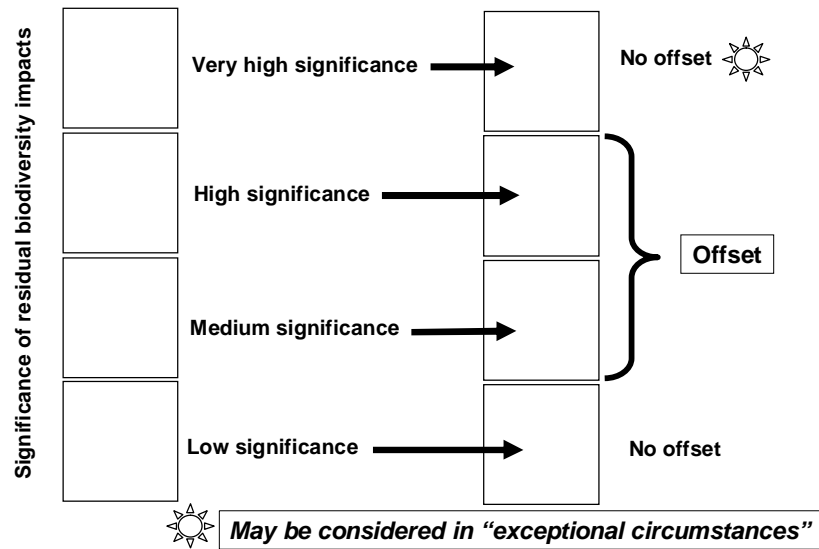
Residual negative impacts on:



All four of these elements must be considered when determining 'significance' of impacts on biodiversity

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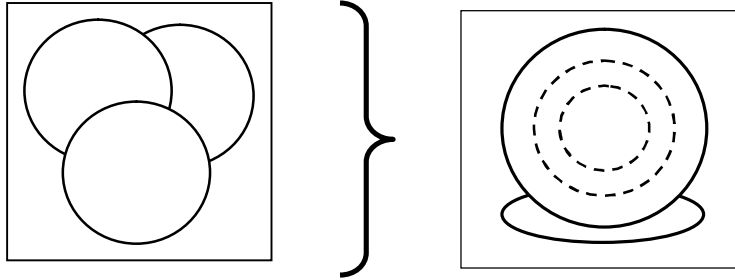
Offset Triggers



Types of Offsets

- Like for like habitat or better
- 'Trading up' – *to secure habitat of higher conservation priority*
- Monetary compensation... ONLY if to be used to secure priority habitat

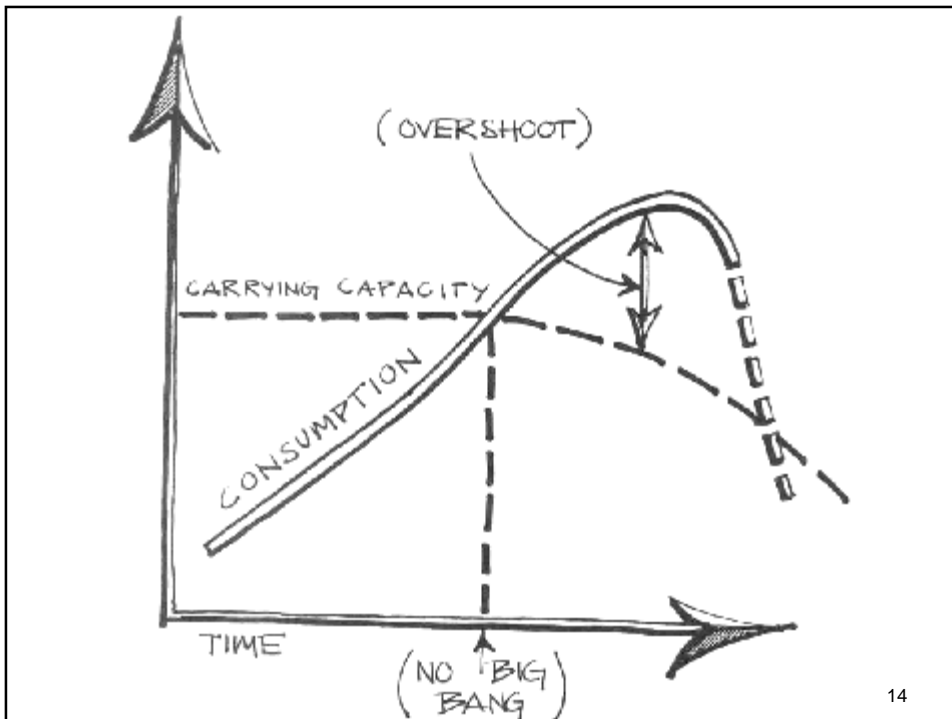
Embedded Systems, Strong Sustainability, Thresholds & Environmental Integrity



Economic system is dependent on, & a product of, the social system, which in turn is dependent on, & a product of, the (finite) ecological system

⇒ do not believe in the interchangeability of capital

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The basic offset ratio – linked to 'ecosystem status'

- **Critically endangered – in 'exceptional circumstances' only [30:1]**
- **Endangered – [20:1]**
- **Vulnerable – [5:1]**
- **Least threatened – no offset required**

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Key (unresolved as yet...) challenges

- **Institutional arrangements: who receives land, how to manage offsets fund, who manages financial guarantees...etc**
- **Monitoring and updating ecosystem status**
- **Capacity issues - support?**

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Urgent Need for Guideline

- **“Offsets” being proposed on a daily basis**
 - inappropriate use of “offsets” (“polluter pays” not “polluter pays his way out”)
 - fragmented parcels of land in non-priority areas being “conserved”
 - refusing development that could have been offset
- **Situations where Offsets should be considered “lost”**
 - slowing eroding our biodiversity
 - refusing development that could have been offset

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WAY FORWARD?

- **Policy Framework**
 - residual impact significance the trigger
 - habitat based offsets based on ratio’s linked to ecosystem status
 - possibility of offsetting impact significance of medium to high to be consider by a biodiversity specialist as part of the EIA process or as compensation as part of S24G process
 - “receiving areas” where offsets would achieve the maximum benefit for biodiversity conservation
- **Ongoing Learning from “Pilot Projects”**
 - Monitor impact (on EIA practice & on biodiversity)
 - refinement of policy/guideline

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Thank you!

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