



ECOSYSTEMS UNDER PRESSURE

Contribute to the problem or be part of the solution?



Challenges in our Local Environment

Land Clearing and Degradation

Residential and agricultural expansion which results in land clearing often causes erosion and sediment runoff into river systems.

Responsible land management is vital as upstream actions affect downstream ecosystems.

Habitat Loss

A major cause of biodiversity decline, occurs as forests are cleared for other purposes.

Questioning extensive land clearing and fencing, which disrupt wildlife movement, is crucial.

Pollution

Pollution from human settlements and pesticide runoff, alongside microplastic contamination, harms water quality and wildlife habitats.

Collective action is increasingly recognized as necessary to address this issue.

Invasive Species

A growing number of alien species absorb water and degrade riverbanks, contributing to erosion and sediment buildup downstream.

Managing invasive species is the responsibility of both public entities and private landowners.

How the Touw River System is Impacted

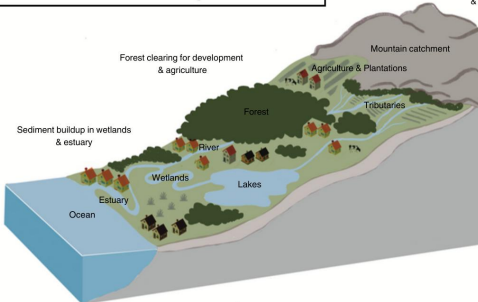
The Touw River Ecosystem, part of the Wilderness Lakes and Wetlands system, is vital to the Garden Route's ecology. Fed by the **Outeniqua Mountains**, the river provides water to Wilderness, Touwsrante and surrounding community. Wetlands and the Touw River Estuary are crucial for filtering pollutants and supporting biodiversity, while Afromontane Forests play a key role in erosion prevention and water quality enhancement. Yet, climate change, invasive species, land clearing, and pollution pose significant threats to the ecosystem's well-being, highlighting the need for conservation efforts.

Why are our forests important?

- Help prevent erosion and enrich and conserve soil, protecting our community from landslides and floods.
- Filter out pollution and chemicals, improving the quality of water available for human use.
- Play an important role in the global water cycle, moving water across the earth by releasing water vapor and capturing rainfall.
- Provides habitat for wildlife and increases biodiversity.

Water demands from indigenous vegetation, plantation & agriculture

Pollution from human settlement & pesticide runoff



Why are our estuaries important?

Provides a safe breeding ground for millions of small fish species awaiting their journey into the Indian Ocean to stock fish resources

Why are our wetlands important?

- Protect and improve water quality by naturally filtering out pollutants.
- Serve as reservoirs for floodwaters, ensuring regulated surface water flow during dry spells.
- Vital habitats for fish and wildlife, thus increasing biodiversity.

Climate Change a Collective Responsibility

Droughts, floods, and alterations in rainfall patterns due to human made climate change impact the river system, its tributaries and wetlands.

Addressing climate change is a collective responsibility. Governments must spearhead policy development to promote sustainability and environmental protection, while businesses and organizations need to minimize carbon emissions and adopt sustainable practices. Individual actions also play a crucial role, collectively contributing to meaningful change. Collaboration between governments, organizations, and local communities is essential to successfully slow down, and adapt to climate change.

Marine Pollution

Marine pollution, stemming from both chemicals and trash, originates mostly from land-based sources and poses significant environmental, health, and economic risks globally.

Chemical contamination, mainly from agricultural runoff, leads to harmful algal blooms, affecting wildlife and industries reliant on marine resources.

Marine debris, primarily plastic, poses threats to marine life, with animals ingesting or becoming entangled in the waste.

Efforts to address marine pollution include prevention, cleanup, and regulations to limit disposable plastic use, although challenges persist due to the longevity of plastics and inadequate solutions.

