

SOUTH AFRICA'S 'STATE OF ENVIRONMENT' RELATED POLICY

*Edited and contextualised extracts from the White Paper on Environmental Management Policy, Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism, July 1997.
Underlined text relates specifically to state of environment monitoring and reporting*

Contents

| | | |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | PREAMBLE..... | 2 |
| 2 | INTRODUCTION..... | 2 |
| 2.1 | Definition of the environment..... | 2 |
| 3 | VISION..... | 3 |
| 3.1.1 | Mission Statement..... | 3 |
| 4 | PRINCIPLES..... | 3 |
| 5 | STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES..... | 4 |
| 5.1 | Overarching Goal..... | 4 |
| 5.2 | Strategic Goals..... | 4 |
| 5.3 | Goal 4: Participation in Environmental Governance..... | 5 |
| 5.3.1 | Supporting Objectives..... | 5 |
| 5.4 | Goal 5: Environmental Education and Empowerment..... | 5 |
| 5.4.1 | Supporting Objectives..... | 5 |
| 5.5 | Goal 6: Information Management for Sustainable Development..... | 6 |
| 5.5.1 | Supporting Objectives..... | 6 |
| 6 | GOVERNANCE..... | 7 |
| 6.1 | Responsibilities of the lead agent..... | 7 |
| 6.2 | Regulatory Mechanisms..... | 9 |
| 6.2.1 | Information management..... | 9 |
| 6.2.2 | Research and development..... | 10 |
| 6.2.3 | Partnerships and participation..... | 11 |
| 6.3 | Programmes to Deliver Functions..... | 11 |
| 7 | Summary of specific state of environment reporting policy..... | 12 |

1 PREAMBLE

This document has been compiled as a reference to the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries' current efforts to co-create a new national state of environment reporting system that takes full advantage of the opportunities presented by the current information age.

In this regard, 'state of environment reporting' is one of two 'supporting objectives' for the sixth of the seven policy goals contained in the 1997 White Paper on Environmental Management Policy and there are specific policy directives in this regard. These specific policy directives are summarised in section 7 (page 12).

However, the importance of the provision of information on the state of South Africa's environment is captured in, at least, two other policy goals and, for this reason, this document has taken a more inclusive and integrated approach. To this end, this document attempts to provide the reader with an insight into the policy relating to state of environment monitoring and reporting and related issues and specifically includes relevant policy direction under the following three goals: Goal 4 - Participation in Environmental Governance; Goal 5 - Environmental Education and Empowerment; and the specific state of environment reporting goal, Goal 6: Information Management for Sustainable Development.

2 INTRODUCTION

This is the government's national policy relating to state of environment monitoring and reporting and related issues. It sets out the vision, principles, strategic goals, objectives, and regulatory approaches that government will use in this regard in South Africa.

The purpose of the policy is twofold:

- to inform the public about government's objectives and how it intends to achieve its objectives; and
- to inform government agencies and state organs about their objectives and what they must do to achieve those objectives.

2.1 Definition of the environment

In this policy, the word environment refers to the conditions and influences under which any individual or thing exists, lives or develops. These conditions and influences include: the natural environment including renewable and non-renewable natural resources such as air, water, land and all forms of life the social, political, cultural, economic, working and other factors that determine people's place in and influence on the environment natural and constructed spatial surroundings, including urban and rural landscapes and places of cultural significance, ecosystems and the qualities that contribute to their value.

White Paper on Environmental Management Policy

Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism
July 1997

FOREWORD

When the Rio Earth Summit convened in 1992 the world came of age. The decision to adopt and promote Sustainable Development was a defining moment in the history of social progress, peace and development. The seminal agreements reached at that August summit and the strategies adopted to achieve them in the 21st century and beyond, could not have come at a more opportune moment for the billions of people on the planet. They represented an idea whose time had come.

The Rio agreements moved us, the world's people, closer to the objective of living in harmony with our environment. At Rio we affirmed the reality and truth that development and environmental issues and goals are one. Indeed, we demonstrated that the first principle of conservation is development; that sustainable development depends on good environmental management just as good environmental management depends on sustainable development.

At the time Rio was convened the world was crying out for good governance, for democracy, for human rights and for an improved quality of life for our generation and those to come. At Rio the world woke up to the reality that unless we incorporate environmental considerations into our development planning, implementation and evaluation, the future of our species, and of all the other species that constitute the bio-diversity and natural balance of our planet, cannot be assured.

World trends since Rio have shown that present and future prosperity, and the peaceful co-existence of peoples and their nation states, not only revolves around issues of exclusion from, and access to markets but also around issues of exclusion from, access to, and control of natural resources. While global resource availability is likely to keep pace with increased general consumption, frequent local and regional shortages will continue to threaten our existence and challenge present governance and management systems.

Indications are that the world's population will increase more than 20 percent between now and the year 2010. Future prospects become bleaker when we add to this a series of ominous facts. The fact that developing countries, which can least afford it, will contribute 95 percent of this population growth; that over the same period more than 45 percent of the world's people will be concentrated in the cities through relatively unplanned urbanisation processes; and that the largest sector of the population in the developing countries will be youths between the years of 15 and 25 years, of an age that is historically restive and a key source of instability. Unless action is taken now to ensure good governance and effective resource management and conservation many developing countries will not manage the threatening crisis.

Many situations point to the potential agents of crisis. Cholera has returned to Europe after 60 years. To clean the hot spots in and around the Black Sea alone will cost more than US\$18bn. Uncontrolled nuclear tests and the introduction of related technology in mining and other industries have left vast areas of land and thousands of kilometres of rivers heavily polluted. In some instances four to five times more radioactive than Chernobyl ever was.

Closer to home what began as a naturally occurring drought has resolved itself into a major conflict in Sudan. Similarly, competition over access to, and control of, environmental resources has more than

Culture, economic considerations, social systems, politics and value systems determine the interaction between people and the environment, the use of natural resources, and the values and meanings that people attach to life forms, ecological systems, physical and cultural landscapes and places. People are part of the environment and are at the centre of concerns for its sustainability.

3 VISION

State of environment monitoring, reporting and related activities must contribute to the overall vision for environmental management, which is a society in harmony with its environment. This vision seeks to unite the people of South Africa in working towards a society where all people have sufficient food, clean air and water, decent homes and green spaces in their neighbourhoods that will enable them to live in spiritual, cultural and physical harmony with their natural surroundings.

3.1.1 Mission Statement

Government's goal is to lay the foundations for sustainable development based on integrated and holistic environmental management practices and processes. To this end, government commits itself to: use government resources in the most effective way to implement policy; and integrate and coordinate its approach to environmental management in all government agencies in all spheres.

Government has appointed the national Department for environmental management as the lead agent responsible for ensuring the integrated and coordinated implementation of its policy on environmental management. In accepting this appointment, the Department undertakes to act as custodian of the nation's environment and accepts the obligation of ensuring that people's environmental rights are enforced.

In developing and implementing government's national policy on environmental management, the Department for environmental management must take up the challenge of achieving environmental sustainability in the context of South Africa's current situation. This includes a commitment to: ensure the development and implementation of integrated environmental management systems in both public and private sectors. These systems will, among others:

- develop and implement effective education and information strategies to increase public awareness and understanding of environmental issues; and
- develop structures, processes and procedures and implement programmes to ensure effective and appropriate participation in environmental governance.

In addition, the Department undertakes to:

- promote better understanding of sustainable development in all spheres of our society and of what is required to achieve it; and
- pursue constant improvement in government's understanding of sustainable development. To this end, it undertakes to, among others, monitor and report on the state of our environment.

4 PRINCIPLES

This section sets out the principles for environmental management applicable to state of environment related matters. Principles are the fundamental premises government will use to apply, develop and test policy and subsequent actions including, decision making, legislation, regulation and enforcement.

- **Accountability** – Government is accountable for policy formulation, monitoring and enforcement.

- **Capacity Building and Education** – All people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and capacity for effective participation in achieving sustainable development and sustainable resource use.
- **Inclusivity** – Environmental management processes must consider the interests, needs and values of all interested and affected parties in decision making to secure sustainable development. This includes recognising all forms of knowledge including traditional and ordinary knowledge.
- **Integration** – All elements of the environment are linked and management must therefore take account of the connections between them.
- **Open Information** – Everyone must have access to information to enable them to: protect their health and well-being; protect the environment; participate effectively in environmental governance; and comply with environmental policy, legislation and regulation.
- **Participation** – Government must encourage the inclusion of all interested and affected parties in environmental governance with the aim of achieving equitable and effective participation.

5 STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section sets out the priorities for achieving the vision and focusing government action in the form of broad strategic goals and supporting objectives. These goals chart the direction government will follow in ensuring that state of environment-related activities contribute to meeting government's commitment to sustainable development and an integrated and holistic system of environmental management.

5.1 *Overarching Goal*

The overarching goal of environmental management is sustainable development. The intention is to move from a state of unrestrained and environmentally insensitive development to sustainable development with the aim of achieving a stable state economy in balance with ecological processes.

Hence, the overarching goal for state of environment-related activities is to contribute to the realisation of sustainable development.

5.2 *Strategic Goals*

Within the framework of the overarching goal of sustainable development, government has identified seven strategic goals of which three are specifically relevant to state of environment-related activities and their contribution to achieving environmental sustainability and integrated environmental management. These goals are interdependent and implementation must address all of them to be effective. It is vital to recognise that environmental concerns and issues cut across various sectors and functions. Therefore, sustainable and integrated management of the environment depends on cooperation and initiatives from all sectors of society. Many supporting objectives address functions of other government departments that impact on the environment and will require their cooperation and commitment for effective implementation.

These strategic goals and their supporting objectives address some of the major issues government faces in its drive to achieve sustainable development and ensuring an integrated system of environmental management. The vision and policy principles have guided the choice of goals and objectives and will guide policy implementation.

- **Goal 4: Participation and Partnerships in Environmental Governance** - Establish mechanisms and processes to ensure effective public participation in environmental governance.

- **Goal 5: Empowerment and Environmental Education** - Promote the education and empowerment of South Africa's people. Increase their awareness of, and concern for, environmental issues, and assist in developing the knowledge, skills, values, and commitment necessary to achieve sustainable development.
- **Goal 6: Information Management** - Develop and maintain mechanisms to increase access to information and ensure effective management of environmental information.

5.3 Goal 4: Participation in Environmental Governance

In respect of Goal 4, government must establish mechanisms and processes to ensure effective public participation in environmental governance.

5.3.1 Supporting Objectives

- Participation structures, mechanisms and processes –
 - To establish multi-sectoral advisory structures in all spheres of government to enable all interested and affected parties to participate in environmental governance;
 - To develop public participation mechanisms and processes that are fair, transparent and effective, and will promote the participation of marginalised sectors of society; and
 - To allocate government resources (financial and human) to build institutional capacity in national, provincial and local government spheres for effective management of participation in environmental governance.
- *Communication and participation* –
 - To ensure that communication strategies in all spheres of government address public participation needs.
- Strategic alliances –
 - To encourage alliances between government and interested and affected parties in implementing this policy to ensure environmental sustainability in achieving sustainable development.

5.4 Goal 5: Environmental Education and Empowerment

In respect of Goal 5, government must promote the education and empowerment of South Africa's people. Increase their awareness of, and concern for, environmental issues, and assist in developing the knowledge, skills, values and commitment necessary to achieve sustainable development.

5.4.1 Supporting Objectives

- Education and training –
 - To integrate environmental education in all programmes, levels, curricula and disciplines of formal and non-formal education and in the National Qualification Framework;
 - To integrate environmental education into all training and unemployment relief programmes; to enhance environmental literacy through the use of all forms of media;
 - To ensure that environmental education programmes and projects foster a clear understanding of the inter-relationship between economic, social, cultural, environmental and political issues in local, national and global spheres.

- Empowerment of citizens through capacity building –
 - To promote capacity building programmes and projects that assist people, particularly those from disadvantaged sectors of society, in developing social and organisational skills to employ local and other knowledge in assessing and addressing their environmental concerns.
 - To assist small, medium and micro enterprises in developing appropriate environmental management procedures.
- Marginalised and special interest groups
 - To encourage and support the involvement of special interest groups such as women, workers, the unemployed, the disabled, traditional healers, the elderly and others in the design, planning and implementation of environmental education and capacity building programmes and projects.

5.5 Goal 6: Information Management for Sustainable Development

In respect of Goal 6, government must develop and maintain information management systems to provide accessible information to interested and affected parties that will support effective environmental management.

5.5.1 Supporting Objectives

- Information management systems –
 - To conduct an information audit with the aim of developing an effective information management system directed at meeting user needs.
 - To establish effective and efficient information systems, including the development of appropriate environmental indicators, to ensure informed decision-making, measure progress in policy implementation and enable public participation in environmental governance.
 - To strengthen and optimise the capacity of government to collect, analyse and use relevant information and knowledge for environmental management from all sources including formal, non-formal and traditional sources.
 - To disseminate information through formal and informal channels including mass media in an accessible format.
- State of the environment report –
 - To report periodically on the state of the South African environment;
 - To provide accurate, timely and accessible information about the condition and prospects of the South African environment;
 - To increase public understanding of these issues; and
 - To report on the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to respond to environmental change, including progress towards achieving environmental standards and targets.

6 GOVERNANCE

The national environment department is the Lead Agent. National legislation must empower the lead agent to play its role in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Legislation must give the lead agent the necessary coercive powers to ensure compliance with national policy on environmental management, environmental legislation, norms and standards. The lead agent will ensure that policy, legislation, norms and standards address current problems and provide proactive solutions.

To ensure effective integrated environmental management, the lead agent will provide leadership and guidance. This will enable other national departments, provincial environment departments and local authorities to meet their executive obligations in respect of environmental management. In performing these functions, the lead agent will act in accordance with the requirements of cooperative government.

6.1 Responsibilities of the lead agent

As lead agent for environmental management, the national department for environmental management is custodian of the nation's environment and must ensure that people's environmental rights are enforced. It will fulfil its Constitutional, executive and legislative obligations by taking the lead in integrating and coordinating environmental functions. In terms of state of environment related functions, these include –

- Coordination –
 - Ensure the integration and coordination of environmental management functions within and between government departments and other organs of state in all spheres.
- Information and reporting –
 - Develop information management systems to collect and process information, disseminate it and make it accessible to interested and affected parties;
 - Report regularly and transparently on the state of the environment;
 - Take the lead in setting up mechanisms and processes for information exchange and consultation between all government agencies with environmental functions.
- Participation and appeals –
 - Establish mechanisms and processes that facilitate public participation in environmental governance.
- Monitoring and review –
 - Monitor and review the environmental performance and activities of other national departments to determine whether they are complying with government's national policy on environmental management, legislation, norms and standards.
 - Supervise and review the environmental performance of provincial and local government institutions.
 - Ensure that provincial and local government set up mechanisms for effectively monitoring all environmental management activities.
- Capacity –
 - Assist provincial and local government environment departments to develop environmental management capacity.

SOUTH AFRICA'S 'STATE OF ENVIRONMENT' RELATED POLICY

| Location of Powers and Responsibilities for Direct Measures | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Powers and responsibilities | Lead Agent | Implementing government institutions | | | |
| | | National Environment Department | Environmental Departments | | National Sectoral Departments |
| | | | Provincial | Local | |
| Norms and standards for participation | National environment department | X | X | X | X |
| Monitoring | National environment department, provincial environment departments, and sectoral lead agents, (e.g. national water department for water resource management) | X | X | | |
| | | Plus civil society | | | |

| Location of Powers and Responsibilities for Indirect Measures | | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Powers and responsibilities | Lead Agent | Implementing government institutions | | | |
| | | National Environment Department | Environmental Departments | | National Sectoral Departments |
| | | | Provincial | Local | |
| Formal environmental education | Intergovernmental cooperation between departments of Environment and Education at National and provincial level. | X | X | | X |
| Non-formal education | Intergovernmental cooperation between sectoral departments and National and Provincial departments of the Environment | X | X | X | X |
| | | Plus civil society | | | |
| Informal education | National environment department and provincial environment departments | Intergovernmental and civil society cooperation | | | |
| Auditing | National environment department. National water department for water resource management. | X | | | X |
| Capacity for participation - national programmes | National environment department | X | | | X |
| | | Plus civil society | | | |
| Capacity for participation - provincial programmes | Provincial departments of the environment | | X | X | |
| | | Plus civil society | | | |

| Location of Powers and Responsibilities for Supportive Measures | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Powers and responsibilities | Lead Agent | Implementing government institutions | | | |
| | | National Environment Department | Environmental Departments | | National Sectoral Departments |
| | | | Provincial | Local | |
| Information | National, sectoral, provincial and local spheres | X | X | X | X |
| | | All civil society sectors | | | |

| Location of Powers and Responsibilities for Supportive Measures | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------|
| Powers and responsibilities | Lead Agent | Implementing government institutions | | | |
| | | National Environment Department | Environmental Departments | | National Sectoral Departments |
| | | | Provincial | Local | |
| | Potential target groups include: civil society; managers; planners; inspectors; researchers; policy developers; teachers. | | | | |
| <u>State of the Environment Report</u> | <u>National environment department</u> | X | | | |
| Guidelines | Intergovernmental cooperation between sectoral departments and national and provincial departments of the environment | X | X | X | X in national and provincial spheres |
| Participation | National environment department | X | | | |
| | | All interested and affected parties | | | |
| Research and development | National environment department through agreements with sectoral departments, parastatals, research institutions, business and industry, NGOs, governments and institutions in other countries | X | | | X |
| | | Plus parastatals, research institutions, business and industry and NGOs | | | |

6.2 Regulatory Mechanisms

6.2.1 Information management

Until the new legislation envisaged under Section 32 (2) of the Constitution is developed, Section 23 (2) (a) of Schedule 6 governs the right of access to information. This states:

Every person has the right of access to all information held by the state or any of its organs in any sphere of government in so far as that information is required for the exercise or protection of any of their rights.

Once the new legislation is developed, it will govern the right of access to information.

Information on the state of the environment and activities with an adverse or damaging effect on it is essential for effective environmental management, protection and coordination. This information is necessary for developing and implementing environmental standards and legislation. The availability and accessibility of such information allows for prevention and mitigation. It also facilitates compliance monitoring and successful participation by interested and affected parties. Information may influence consumer behaviour and raise public and business awareness, encouraging compliance and the prioritisation of environmental issues.

Ways to promote the accessibility of information include the following:

- environmental audits and reviews
- eco-labelling
- eco-accounting
- institutional and community monitoring

- public education, awareness and debate
- industry education and awareness
- reporting and publication of information
- information exchange
- consultation
- notification of emergency situations.

Achieving effective environmental management and improving decision-making requires good information. Government will commit itself to collecting, analysing and disseminating information.

Information is transmitted in a variety of forms including written, electronic and oral. Information collection strategies should aim to harvest information from a variety of sources including:

- scientific
- traditional
- local
- non-formal.

The format and process for disseminating information must be accessible to the particular user group concerned. In this respect, attention must be given to both the content and the form or media used for transmitting information.

To meet user information needs the national Department for environmental management will establish an information clearing house. It will also develop information management products to support decision-making that will promote sustainable development.

6.2.2 *Research and development*

Policy development and decision making for environmental management need to be supported by research. This should be directed to the development of appropriate technologies and methodologies to ensure sustainable resource use, manage impacts and achieve cleaner production. Research and development must make use of all sources of information, forms of knowledge and research methodologies, including participatory research.

Government will support both applied and basic research in searching for solutions to identify and prioritise issues confronting policy development and environmental management. It will give particular attention to addressing environmental justice concerns, environmental sustainability and administrative efficiency.

Areas needing research include:

- state of the environment
- cleaner production
- best practice
- monitoring environmental quality
- determining carrying capacity and sustainability indicators

- risk assessment
- sustainable resource use.

6.2.3 *Partnerships and participation*

The effectiveness of governance structures is influenced by the capacity of civil society to work with government. In keeping with international trends and Agenda 21, the government will affirm, strengthen and establish partnerships with interested and affected parties including:

- non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and/or NGO associations
- affected communities and community based organisations (CBOs)
- organised labour
- business and industry, and/or industrial associations with special attention to the needs of small, medium and micro enterprises
- other departments and levels of government
- other interest groups.

Government must therefore establish national, provincial and local advisory structures, mechanisms and processes to foster public participation in defining environmental problems and seeking solutions. These structures will:

- provide for good governance
- ensure that there are platforms for interested and affected parties to contribute to the development of policy, legislation, standards and decision making processes by expressing their views and voicing their concerns
- advise and inform government
- seek to achieve co-ownership for policy development.

The mechanisms and processes must ensure:

- timely communication of data and information
- effective and efficient participation
- fair notice and practice
- balanced representation of interested and affected parties
- transparency.

6.3 ***Programmes to Deliver Functions***

The National Department for environmental management must identify and implement programmes for the delivery of all functions needed to develop and implement environmental management. Programmes give government the space to identify specific initiatives that will focus delivery and improve practice within set time frames. State of environment-related programmes must address the following priority areas:

- development and implementation of reporting and review mechanisms

- greater and improved information dissemination and management
- enhancing the involvement of marginalised groups in environmental management
- develop indicators for state of the environment reporting and to measure success or failure in achieving policy goals
- community access to environmental information
- community monitoring of local health and environmental impacts of pollution and other activities that impact on the sustainable development of communities
- developing and implementing a policy framework for participation in environmental governance.

7 SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC STATE OF ENVIRONMENT REPORTING POLICY

Information on the state of the environment and activities with an adverse or damaging effect on it is essential for effective environmental management, protection and coordination.

This information is necessary for developing and implementing environmental standards and legislation. The availability and accessibility of such information allows for prevention and mitigation. It also facilitates compliance monitoring and successful participation by interested and affected parties. Information may influence consumer behaviour and raise public and business awareness, encouraging compliance and the prioritisation of environmental issues.

As the lead agent for environmental management, the national environmental management department must, among others, report regularly and transparently on the state of the environment.

The State of the Environment Report must –

- report periodically on the state of the South African environment;
- provide accurate, timely and accessible information about the condition and prospects of the South African environment;
- increase public understanding of these issues; and
- report on the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to respond to environmental change, including progress towards achieving environmental standards and targets.

To this end, the national environmental management department must, among others, identify and implement programmes for:

- greatly improving information dissemination and management
- developing indicators for state of the environment reporting and to measure success or failure in achieving policy goals
- facilitating community access to environmental information

Government will support both applied and basic research in searching for solutions to identify and prioritise issues confronting policy development and environmental management. Specific research areas include: state of the environment; monitoring environmental quality; and sustainability indicators.

The format and process for disseminating information must be accessible to the particular user group concerned. In this respect, attention must be given to both the content and the form or media used for transmitting information.

To meet user information needs the national environmental management department will establish an information clearing house.

Government commits itself to collecting, analysing and disseminating information.

Information will be transmitted in a variety of forms including written, electronic and oral.

Information collection strategies will harvest information from a variety of sources including scientific, traditional, local, and non-formal.