Environmental Policy Summary

Federal Policy Unit

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A PARTY OF *National Government.*
RESCUING SOUTH AFRICA.

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List of Acronyms

AMD	Acid Mine Drainage
BDRR	Blue Drop Risk Rating
CAT	Climate Action Tracker
CBC	Community-based Conservation
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment
DMR	Department of Mineral Resources
DPF	Diesel Particulate Filters
DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
EBM	Effect-based Method
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ESG	Equitable Share Grant
EV	Electric Vehicles
GHG	Greenhouse Gases
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
IPID	Independent Police Investigation Directorate
IPP	Independent Power Producers
JET	Just Energy Transition
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement
MIG	Municipal Infrastructure Grant
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NBA	National Biodiversity Assessment
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NERSA	National Electricity Regulator of South Africa
NRW	Non-revenue Water
NWS	National Waste Strategy
PCB	Polychlorinated Biphenyls

PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PPPFA	Preferential Public Procurement Framework Act
PPR	Public-Place Recycling
PV	Photovoltaic
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SAPS	South African Police Service
SAWIS	South African Waste Information Service
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMNR	Small Modular Nuclear Reactor
SSA	State Security Agency
SSEG	Small-scale Embedded Generation
SWSA	Strategic Water Source Areas
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
USP	User Services Platform
WfW	Working for Water
WHO	World Health Organisation
WWA	World Weather Attribution

Vision

An environmental policy which builds a robust green economy and a sustainable future.

[Disclaimer: This summary must be read and understood in conjunction with the Environment Policy, as the policy unpacks the rationale behind the proposed recommendations].

The DA's Plan for Building a Sustainable and Green South Africa

Environmental policy provides the foundation upon which a country protects its natural resources, ensures the health and well-being of its people, and builds the conditions for long-term socio-economic development. In an era of accelerating climate change, ecological degradation, and resource scarcity, a clear, coherent and forward-looking environmental policy is a necessity.

South Africa has fallen behind both in meeting its global carbon commitments and in capitalising on the economic opportunities of the green transition. Yet with the right reforms, the country can chart a new course – one which sustainably uses natural resources, supports livelihoods, and protects the environment for future generations.

Against this backdrop, this policy sets out the Democratic Alliance's approach to environmental governance. Grounded in evidence-based scientific consensus, proactive and accountable governance, and taking climate change seriously, the DA's Environmental Policy is built on the belief that an environmentally sustainable future will enhance, not sacrifice, economic growth.

The successful implementation of this policy will reposition South Africa as a leader in sustainable development. It will unlock new economic opportunities in renewable energy, green technology, sustainable agriculture, and eco-tourism. It will ensure a more resilient nation, better prepared to withstand the shocks of climate change and resource scarcity.

Most importantly, it will protect our constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment and fulfil our moral obligation to bequeath a liveable, prosperous, and sustainable South Africa for generations to come.

Background to the Policy

The Challenge of Climate Change

The primary aim of an environmental policy in South Africa is to reduce our contributions to climate change while preparing for its harmful effects. South Africa is among the world's highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases due to its reliance on coal-based energy.

However, South Africa struggles to keep pace with its counterparts in meeting international environmental obligations. Two key challenges are: 1) South Africa failing to meet its Paris Agreement obligations; 2) South Africa possessing high-emissions sectors, including high carbon production in our energy, transport, and construction sectors.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report describes how climate change is projected to have dramatic and widespread impacts on Africa's ecology, human societies, and peoples' interactions with their natural environment. These impacts are already experienced in terms of overall increasing temperatures, lowered crop yields, freshwater availability, and the increasing frequency of extreme weather events.

This requires climate adaptation policies which promote resilience to the effects of climate change, the establishment of sustainable livelihoods, and the restoration of ecosystems. The harmful effects of climate change include the following: 1) Rising Temperatures and Associated Ecological Changes; 2) Extreme Weather Events; 3) Water Scarcity; 4) Negative Health Impacts; 5) Food Insecurity; 6) Climate-Induced Migration; and 7) Economic Impacts.

Environment for people: water, waste, and air

Many aspects of our environment that directly affect people suffer from poor management, a slow green transition, and a lack of infrastructure investment and maintenance. The three key ones are water, air quality, and waste management.

South Africa's water crisis is driven by poor infrastructure, high demand, pollution, and climate-induced droughts. South Africa is a water-scarce country, receiving just half of the global average annual rainfall, at around 460mm/yr., This results in our nation being unable to always provide sustainable access to clean water to all its people.

Therefore, if we are to grow a sustainable economy that meets the needs and aspirations of all South Africans, we must acknowledge the limitations of our water resources and take measures to protect and conserve them. This includes: 1) Lack of Water Supply; 2) High Consumption; 3) Poor Water Quality, caused by poor governance and lack of investment into infrastructure.

Many municipalities have experienced a collapse of basic waste services, leading to overfull landfills, hazardous dumping, and environmental contamination; air pollution, particularly in coal-heavy regions and urban centres, poses severe health risks and violates the constitutional right to a healthy environment. Waste generation in South Africa is extremely high. South Africans generate approximately 122 million tonnes of domestic waste per year and an average of 41 kg of plastic waste per citizen, a figure significantly above the global average of 29 kg per citizen., This significantly burdens South Africa's waste management systems, necessitating innovative solutions to address this pressing issue.

In South Africa, waste management has become a major environmental concern due to inadequate waste services, which have resulted in deteriorating living conditions and a polluted environment. As of 2022, only about 60 percent of households benefitted from weekly household waste collection, a figure which has been steadily declining from 65 percent in 2016. Unfortunately, the decline in household waste collection services illustrates a deterioration of municipal waste services management. Considering the country's high levels of waste production, existing waste services are increasingly unable to meet demand.

The challenges that negatively impact a municipality's ability to deliver quality waste management services can be divided into two categories: 1) High levels of consumption and waste creation and 2) Operational inefficiencies and financial constraints; 3) A Lack of Effective Disposal of Hazardous Waste and Mining Waste; 4) Littering; and 5) Overuse of Landfills.

Like many other countries, South Africa faces significant air quality challenges. South Africa ranks 47th in the global air quality index out of 134 countries listed (with 134th being the cleanest). The main pollutant is PM2.5[i], and South Africa's PM2.5 range is four times the recommended World Health Organisation (WHO) limit. Pollution is concentrated in big cities and industrial areas such as Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, and various smaller mining and industrial towns in Gauteng and Mpumalanga. Johannesburg is the most polluted major city in the country: its PM2.5 range is around three times the WHO-recommended air quality limit. The pollution average is pushed up by coal power stations, leading to South Africa's high pollution levels. This is particularly so in the Vaal Triangle (Sasolburg, Vanderbijlpark, and Vereeniging), which lacks strong pollution mitigation and management.

A 2022 study by the *Global Air Initiative* reported that, in 2019, roughly 30 000 deaths occurred prematurely in South Africa because of poor air quality. The health impacts are worsened in South Africa, a country with a high rate of HIV/AIDs infections and tuberculosis (TB). These two diseases weaken the immune system and lungs. Therefore, respiratory illnesses contracted by HIV or TB patients are exacerbated by air pollution due to their already weakened immune systems.

There are three leading causes of pollution in South Africa, with some factors contributing more than others: 1) High reliance on coal; 2) Car-dependence; 3) Wood-burning and lack of electricity supply.

Environment for nature: biodiversity and natural resources.

The broader environment is also in need of proactive sustainability. The country's rich ecosystems are under threat from invasive species, poaching, overfishing, deforestation, and habitat loss.

South Africa's rich biodiversity faces several major threats, with human-induced loss of natural habitat standing out as the leading cause of global biodiversity decline. Developing effective biodiversity conservation and restoration measures is critical for nature, the economy, and society. In South Africa, loss rates have increased across all biomes, indicating that the drivers of change are intensifying.

The degradation and loss of South Africa's biodiversity have severe implications for people and the economy. Biodiversity provides many benefits to people, notably jobs, water and food security, and increased resilience to climate change. Natural systems provide a source of direct income to poor households, generate economic value, and provide significant non-market benefits.[ii]

i This stands for 'particulate matter': small pieces of dust which are 2.5mm in size on average. It is the most common pollutant that damages lungs.
ii Non-market benefits of the environment are those that cannot be traded in markets. For example, clean air and water, and recreational space are all non-market benefits of the environment.

The challenges that negatively impact South Africa's ability to maintain and increase its biodiversity can be divided into four categories: 1) Failure to meet biodiversity conservation targets; 2) a lack of sustainable practices in various sectors; 3) inadequate information resources; and 4) insufficient funding.

Invasive species are responsible for 25 percent of all biodiversity loss in South Africa, making them the third most significant impact on South Africa's biodiversity loss after cultivation and habitat degradation. Invasive trees and shrubs reduce surface water resources by 3 to 5 percent, while invasive animals can act as predators. They outcompete native species for resources.

The primary challenges South Africa faces regarding invasive species are 1) control methods that have proven to be ineffective on a national scale and 2) inadequate resources.

South Africa suffers from the poaching of several species, with detrimental impacts on biodiversity and the economy. Africa is one of the world's leading suppliers in the illegal wildlife trade, and South Africa acts as both a source and transit country for the trafficking of illegal wildlife products. Popular illegal products from South Africa include rhino horn, abalone, pangolin, succulents, and elephant ivory, which is funnelled through South Africa from other countries to East Asia. Poverty, joblessness and organised crime have all been identified as causes of poaching.

To effectively address poaching, two key causes must be addressed: 1) poverty and economic factors underlying the recruitment of poaching ''foot soldiers'' and 2) corruption within law enforcement agencies.

South Africa has abundant natural forests, extending over 4.3 percent of the country's land area. However, these are being wiped out at an alarming rate; 13 percent of forest-loss was recorded in 2021. Between 2015 and 2023, South Africa lost 6877 hectares of humid primary forest, while total tree cover loss from 2015 to 2023 amounted to 562 000 hectares.

Dealing with deforestation is made difficult by several challenges: 1) Unsustainable agriculture and forestry practices; 2) economic factors driving wood use in households; and 3) lost forestland.

Wildfires are large, destructive fires that burn out of control over a large wild or rural area. They occur regularly in South Africa and often cause significant social, economic, and environmental harm. Effective prevention and suppression of wildfires is crucial to protect the most vulnerable South Africans and the areas in which they live. Rural populations, as well as rural economic assets like plantation forests, grazing pasture, crops, and ecotourism areas, are at the greatest risk. Fire-dependent ecosystems occupy approximately 62 percent of South Africa and generally coincide with the greatest rural population densities; 84 percent of settlements are in fire-dependent ecosystems.

In fire-dependent ecosystems, reducing the fuel load (the amount of material that can burn) is critical to reducing fire risk in the boundary between developed land and natural vegetation (the 'wildland-urban' interface (WUI)). Fire-sensitive ecosystems seldom experience fires, but fuel load may need to be reduced occasionally.

Several wildfire problems need to be addressed: 1) longer wildfire season; 2) more densely populated areas; 3) alien species which contribute to fire; 4) climate change; and 5) focusing on suppression, not prevention.

South Africa's fisheries sector holds immense potential for sustainable and economically viable growth. Despite the importance of the fishing sectors, they have been neglected and beset with corruption for the last two decades. Several management, legislative, and biodiversity challenges must be addressed to restore our fisheries.

Fishing represents a crucial intersection of several key issues for South Africans. It involves environmental concerns, policy considerations around the informal economic sector, government oversight, and private enterprise. Its GDP contribution is the lowest among South Africa's key industries, contributing about 2.5 percent of the national GDP since 2000. However, the sector is still incredibly valuable to society beyond pure GDP. This is especially true in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

The value of our fisheries lies in their contribution to food, their potential role in developing small businesses and creating jobs, and in providing an opportunity for South Africa to adhere to its environmental principles in responsibly marshalling our resources.

However, our fishing industry suffers from several problems, which include 1) overfishing; 2) illegal fishing; 3) fishing co-op management and integration; and 4) fishing permit regulations.

The protection of our environment depends not only on policy but also on public understanding and participation. In South Africa, environmental literacy remains low, particularly in under-resourced areas. This needs to be addressed to increase the number of people who prioritise the environment in their political considerations.

Environmental awareness

Environmental degradation disproportionately affects low-income communities. Low-income neighbourhoods tend to experience higher pollution levels, inadequate waste management, and a lack of access to basic utilities such as water and electricity. A decline in air quality, water scarcity, or poorly managed waste will affect low-income areas first, due to limited access to basic infrastructure and services. High-income areas have alternative provisions such as Jojo tanks if water is scarce (e.g. during the drought in Cape Town in 2017/18) or USP devices for Wi-Fi, private solar installation, or generators if there are rolling blackouts.

Environmental issues are typically a low priority among South Africans. There is often a perception that environmental matters are secondary to immediate needs such as housing and employment, even though the impacts of climate change on immediate needs are documented. The DA is committed to focusing on key environmental concerns with the necessary policy trade-offs to ensure a growing and stable economy.

A well-informed public is essential for driving environmentally responsible behavioural change and ensuring that vulnerable communities are equipped to adapt to climate risks. However, entrenched educational inequalities, digital access, and geographic location have created uneven environmental awareness levels, leaving many South Africans underprepared for increasing environmental risks. South Africa's entrenched economic inequalities are reflected in climate awareness gaps.

Three key areas contribute to low environmental awareness: 1) Lack of access to knowledge; 2) Climate change denialism; 3) Short-term economic priorities; 4) Language barriers.

Objectives of this Policy

In pursuit of the DA's vision to build a robust green economy and a sustainable future for all, the environmental policy has the following six objectives:

1. **Climate change mitigation and adaptation:** to reduce South Africa's contributions to climate change while preparing for its harmful effects.
2. **Water:** to ensure clean water for all through effective and efficient water resource management.
3. **Waste:** to establish functional and sustainable waste management systems.
4. **Air:** to ensure clean air for all South Africans.
5. **Biodiversity:** to preserve South Africa's natural resources and biodiversity.
6. **Awareness:** to raise environmental awareness across our society.

Addressing South Africa's Contributions to Climate Change

The DA recognises the profound threat climate change poses to South Africa and the world. The transition to greater utilisation of green energy and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions must be pursued responsibly.

The DA will address South Africa's contribution to climate change by:

- **Ensure that energy and electricity are provided sustainably** at least cost to the consumer and with the least emissions, to mitigate climate change.
- **Reaffirming South Africa's commitment to the Paris Agreement** on Climate Change and to bring down South Africa's nationally determined contribution to climate change in line with South Africa's fair share contribution. This will **factor in our status as a developing country** when determining our fair share contribution and implementing mitigating interventions.
- **Ensuring a 'Clean Jobs Transition'** by committing to a gradual transition towards a low-carbon future. This addresses the potential economic fallout from establishing a low-carbon economy.
- **Ensuring the implementation of the 'Three Interconnected Transitions'** – these being decarbonisation, investing in adaptation and resilience against the harms of climate change, and establishing a 'clean jobs transition'

The DA will address the environmental impacts of corporate activities by:

- **Introducing comprehensive legislation to create a standard methodology** by developing a Green Claims Code / Checklist with the intention of protecting South African consumers. Companies will measure their impact on the natural environment and regulate the practice of corporate greenwashing.

The DA will address the negative effects of climate change by:

- **Developing Climate Change Strategies** for all DA governments, to provide high-level strategic guidance. These strategies will be modelled on the DA-led City of Cape Town's Climate Change Strategy.
- **Ensuring sufficient budgetary allocation for future disaster** relief is incorporated into the budgets of all spheres of government. These funds must be used to improve, maintain and protect existing infrastructure, which is vulnerable to the effects of climate disasters.
- **Establishing awareness campaigns** to inform the public about the likely future effects of climate change.
- **Establishing a Civil Protection Mechanism (The Thunderbirds)** to mitigate the impact of Disasters, to provide assurance, and to protect municipalities from catastrophic scenarios.
- **Developing localised and context-specific regional plans** tailored towards the climatic conditions of each area.

Ensuring Effective and Efficient Management of Water Resources

The DA will address the various challenges related to the supply of and access to water by:

- **Increasing the nation's water resilience by expanding the 'portfolio of water supply'**. A broader supply can be achieved by establishing multiple sources of water[iii], so that when one supply of water becomes unavailable, other sources of water can be utilised.
- **Improving infrastructure by** fixing ageing pipes, valves and pumps, stopping leakages, and implementing leak detection technologies such as acoustic sensors and remote sensing. The DA will use a variety of cost-effective methods to achieve this[iv].
- **Prioritising water demand management and conservation measures in policies and planning at national, provincial and local levels.** Due to rising population levels and recent droughts in South Africa, it has become necessary to conserve water more effectively.
- **Providing accessible methods to report water leakages** and ensuring an efficient and effective government response to limit leaks and wastage of water once reports are received.

The DA will ensure water is of a high-quality standard by:

- **Including water and hydraulics engineers in decision-making and increasing skill levels within waterworks facilities**. We must establish an organisational culture that places engineers at the centre of decision-making to manage water effectively. Greater hiring of qualified individuals within water facilities must be prioritised, vacancies must be filled, and regular training programmes must be implemented for new and existing staff.
- **Implementing stricter consequences for non-performance**. The right engineers are only one component of the solution; municipal officials must be held accountable for non-performance through fines or even criminal charges when neglect of water infrastructure is established.

iii Such as surface water reservoirs, aquifers, desalination, wastewater reuse, rainwater harvesting and stormwater harvesting.
iv This includes trenchless methods such as cure-in-pipe replacement, where a liner is placed inside a pipe, thereby preserving the flow rate of the original pipe, and pipe bursting, where new pipes are pushed inside of old pipes, thereby replacing pipes that are too damaged to be repaired while removing the need for costly excavations.

- **Improving long-term planning of maintenance and expansion of water supply facilities**. A long-term plan aimed at improving or maintaining high-quality water standards needs to be developed by engineers in conjunction with municipal managers.
- **Making reporting of water quality management more readily and publicly accessible**. A well-established annual review of municipal water management practices is conducted as part of the Green and Blue Drop assessments. However, these reports have not always been regularly released, and the information in them can be complex to understand. These reports must be published at regular intervals and in an accessible format for the public.
- **Addressing acid mine drainage (AMD), which affects both surface and groundwater in the areas where it occurs.**

The DA will improve and protect these infrastructure networks by:

- **Ringfencing budget allocations towards water infrastructure maintenance and renewal**. Revenue from water will be used only for infrastructure investment in water and sanitation – bills paid on water will not go into a general municipal fund. In many municipalities, the main obstacle to improved service delivery is not only technical failure, but a shortage of dedicated funds to replace broken infrastructure or expand supply.
- **Improving asset management expertise in municipalities**. DA-led governments will recruit skilled engineers and competent personnel within municipalities to improve asset management expertise. In addition, regular workshops will be conducted and booklets disseminated on asset management and newly developed asset management software.
- **Contracting experts temporarily through public-private partnerships**. The need for skilled technical expertise is essential for ensuring that infrastructure meets or exceeds its expected useful life. However, employing this expertise could be costly to government budgets, especially local governments. This is of particular concern given the fiscal constraints South Africa's budget currently faces. Therefore, one way to attract these skills in the short term is to establish public-private partnerships through the temporary contracting of experts.
- **Increasing private sector investment** in water infrastructure by amending regulations to allow local authorities to expedite market-based mechanisms for financing of water infrastructure; improving relations between municipalities and private sector financiers; and improving the capacity and financial stability of municipalities through prudent financial governance.

Establishing Effective Waste Management and Recycling Systems

The DA will address high levels of consumption and waste creation by:

- **Ensuring effective enforcement of legislation and regulations**, alongside fines, to establish ethical industry standards concerning the waste management of e-waste products. This will include raising awareness and promoting extended producer responsibility (EPR) to ensure that manufacturers are responsible for the complete lifecycle of their products.

- **Updating and enforcing mandatory recycling targets for municipalities, businesses and households through legislation**. The existing targets[v] were set out in the National Waste Management Strategy of 2020 and were to be met by 2025. The DA will update and enforce these targets for different types and percentages of waste. These targets should also require businesses and municipalities to report on their progress towards achievement.
- **Increasing public awareness about the importance of recycling and proper e-waste disposal.** If citizens know what happens to waste sent for recycling and the benefits associated with this process, they are more likely to participate in waste sorting and recycling activities.
- **Increasing the number and accessibility of drop-off centres and public place recycling (PPR) facilities.** Easy access to clean public drop-off recycling centre facilities is essential for effective separation at source.

The DA will address municipal operational inefficiencies and financial constraints by:

- **Ensuring that municipalities conduct full cost accounting, as municipal tariff services do not always include the full costs of service delivery**. Municipalities should conduct a comprehensive cost accounting exercise, which will assist in developing cost-reflective charges, enabling municipalities to maintain, renew, and expand their waste management infrastructure effectively.
- **Incorporating the required skills and expertise for various waste management functions** when drafting job descriptions and specifications for employee recruitment. Vacancies must be filled and with appropriately skilled staff to ensure that staff shortages do not affect service delivery levels. Finally, municipalities must invest appropriate resources into attracting qualified graduates.
- **Launching a national clean-up campaign**. Clean-up campaigns are an effective way to demonstrate to communities the importance of waste management. This will promote community ownership for the cleanliness of their environment. All levels of government can partake in this initiative.

The DA will ensure that hazardous waste is disposed of responsibly by:

- **Expanding EPR to more Hazardous Waste Products, as opposed to their current limited scope**. Producers of hazardous products must ensure that their used products are returned to collection sites for proper disposal to prevent their release into the environment.
- **Establishing widespread, dedicated household hazardous waste drop-off facilities**. Full-service sites could be established near high-density residential areas, with more limited-service sites being placed in surrounding areas. Funding for these sites could come from reallocations of municipal budgets and levies imposed on producers of hazardous waste products.
- **Developing awareness of the harmful effects of hazardous waste on health and the environment**, as well as how households may safely dispose of hazardous household waste in an environmentally sustainable manner. Due to improved disposal practices by households, waste collection and recycling may be more effective, and less hazardous waste is likely to end up in landfills or be illegally dumped.

The DA will address the environmental harms of mining waste and ensure effective rehabilitation and remediation processes are followed upon mine closure by:

- **Ensuring that existing mines that are to be closed are properly rehabilitated and remediated**, and funding for rehabilitation and remediation processes is secured before mine closure is permitted.
- **Using stricter enforcement protocols**, including criminal charges, against mines which do not adequately manage their tailings facilities and discharge untreated mine water into watercourses.

v These were 70 percent of paper, 60 percent of plastic, 90 percent of glass and metals, and 40 percent of fly-ash to be recycled by 2025.

- **Utilising mining water treatment** through a series of processes that remove and reduce contaminants from wastewater.

The DA will reduce littering to create a clean environment by:

- **Ensuring sufficient and accessible waste disposal infrastructure is available**. Public garbage bins must be installed throughout busy public areas to allow for accessible disposal of small amounts of waste. Their regular emptying and maintenance by municipalities to ensure that they are not overfilled. In addition, drop-off facilities that accept bulky items and garden waste must be strategically located near residential neighbourhoods as a complement to public garbage bins.
- **Enforcing strict littering laws and penalties to deter littering in public spaces**. The existence of garbage bins does not guarantee that they will be used. It is also important that there is a strong perception of the likelihood of receiving a fine or penalty, as this significantly increases the deterrence effect of fines for littering.

The DA will improve the operation of landfills by:

- **Improving the quality of waste data** by upgrading the SAWIS to improve ease of use and establish consistent data formats. Reporting to SAWIS must be made mandatory and municipalities must receive sufficient training and resources to improve their reporting capacity. Incentivisation of reporting to SAWIS can also be achieved through conditional landfill infrastructure grants.
- **Ensuring that all waste management facilities and landfills are licenced** to guarantee that significant environmental impacts are identified and mitigation actions are prescribed and implemented. Permit compliance must be facilitated through the widespread implementation of a compliance checklist to assist landfill operators in meeting the requirements of their permit conditions. Punitive measures such as non-compliance fees and penalties must also be pursued to ensure compliance with licencing conditions.
- **Ensuring that the landfill tariffs fully reflect all costs through environmental full cost accounting, which considers all direct and indirect costs imposed on society and the environment.** This will prevent the perverse incentive to utilise landfills over alternative disposal mechanisms.
- **Encouraging and implementing legislative reforms** to ease the establishment of public-private partnerships in the involvement and operation of landfills. This must include expanding the number of waste types permitted for beneficial use by the private sector and updating municipal by-laws to remove municipal ownership of waste.
- **Providing waste pickers at landfill sites with adequate personal protective equipment**, hand sanitisers, hand-washing stations and premises to separate and store recyclables – which would prevent waste pickers from taking collected waste materials back to areas where they live.

The DA will seek to reduce industry tyre waste and improve its recycling by:

- **Coordinating with industry to increase the number of recycling depots in rural areas and incorporate small businesses into the recycling supply chain**. Tyre recycling is handled primarily by manufacturers at present. Expanding their recycling capacity in less urban areas and incorporating SMMEs into their recycling supply chain will reduce tyre waste.

The DA will seek to reduce the organic waste-to-landfill pipeline by:

- **Improving the ability of residents to manage their organic waste collection at home**. In South Africa, there are beginnings of such projects with the free composting programme launched in Cape Town, which provides free compost containers and education on the process and aims to encourage residents to compost their own organic waste.

- **Establishing widespread organic composting sites**. Composting organic waste reduces the amount of waste requiring landfill and the generation of landfill gas. This further supports our water management objectives, which is to reduce high water usage, as composting is a highly water-efficient waste treatment method.
- **Incentivising private sector investment in the development and maintenance of organic composting sites** through two primary means: public-private partnerships and increased green reporting. The DA believes a green, just transition can be economically viable and will ensure that private sector involvement is both sustainable and grows South Africa's economy.

Ensuring Clean Air for All

The policy recommendations on decarbonising our energy sector are outlined in more detail in our Electricity and Energy Policy and in the 'Addressing South Africa's Contributions to Climate Change' section of this Policy Summary.

To ensure communities can live in clean air environments and lead healthy, prosperous lives, the DA will reduce South Africa's vehicle emissions by:

- **Removing tariff barriers on electric vehicles** and components for local manufacturing. This will improve competition in the sector, make EVs more affordable, and increase EV usage. This includes implementing a zero VAT rating for EVs. EVs are both an economic and environmental benefit for a developing nation like South Africa.
- **Facilitating the local manufacture, assembly, and installation of electric vehicle charging and green refuelling facilities** throughout South Africa to support the uptake of electric vehicles.
- **Developing and expanding the public transport network, in particular passenger rail**. A functional, safe, and greener public transport system will lower the number of vehicles on the road. A mixed-use transport system (trains, electric vehicles, buses) will significantly reduce air pollution.

The DA will work to promote cleaner, greener spaces by:

- **Investing more in the development of parks and public gardens**. Greenery can help absorb pollutants, improve air quality, and provide recreational areas for communities, enhancing overall well-being.
- **Enable the sustainable building of housing in low-income communities** through retrofitting projects (for example, solar heating in ceilings to increase thermal insulation during winter).

Preserving Our Natural Resources

The DA will work to improve the maintenance of existing and new protected biodiversity areas by:

- **Improving the functioning of existing protected areas to improve their conservation and tourism potential**. This will be achieved by implementing and updating new and adaptive management plans; repairing the infrastructure surrounding protected areas; repairing the infrastructure surrounding protected areas; establishing strategic collaborations between NGOs, the private sector or research institutions, and protected areas/provincial reserves.
- **Establishing new protected areas and expanding the existing network of protected areas**. This will be achieved by accelerating the establishment of new formally protected areas with a focus on creating connections and ecological corridors[vi] between nationally protected areas and privately owned land, urban areas and/or agricultural areas; encouraging conservation through promoting private wildlife ranches over traditional livestock farming.

The DA will ensure that local communities benefit socio-economically and are actively involved in reserves by:

- **Increasing the number of biodiversity stewardship programmes through training and the development of communication networks**.[vii] The DA will create accredited training programs to develop technical and non-technical skills useful in running stewardships and create and maintain social networks for biodiversity stewards to strengthen the community of practice.
- **Tackling understaffing in protected areas** by encouraging localised recruitment processes, creating internships for residents within proximal protected areas, and training existing staff members for career advancement opportunities.

The DA will ensure sustainable development by:

- **Creating and maintaining more green/blue corridors and green spaces in urban areas.**
- **Reviewing existing regulations** to take into consideration the environmental impacts of development.
- **Encouraging responsible, sustainable hunting**. Sustainable hunting is the selective use of renewable resources and is an effective form of conserving wilderness habitats. For people who are living within the surrounding wildlife areas, to conserve wildlife, they need a financial incentive to do so. If wildlife does not contribute to local communities, people will resort to other forms of land use, such as agriculture, which harms wild animals.
- **Improving the norms and standards for biodiversity reporting within extractive industries**. Companies will be expected to provide detailed accounts of their biodiversity impact and the issues surrounding biodiversity in their sectors. They will also need to report on future biodiversity targets that they set.
- **Supporting sustainable intensification of agriculture** that will not negatively impact soil health, native pollinators, and water resources. The DA will encourage biodiversity protection measures such as the use of buffer habitat between agriculture and vital water resources and the retention of a portion of natural habitat on newly established farms.

vi Ecological corridors are parts of the landscape that allow species to move between areas of intact, protected habitat.
vii Biodiversity stewardship is an approach to securing land for biodiversity conservation by entering into agreements with private landowners, and/or communities in biodiversity-rich areas.

The DA will aim to expand scientific research into biodiversity monitoring and include local communities by:

- **Working with local communities to implement community-based conservation** (CBC). This will provide socio-economic benefits to and address the conservation-related challenges faced by communities living adjacent to or in reserves or areas of conservation concern. The DA will establish co-management partnerships between communities and protected areas, and the inclusion of community members.
- **Improving the capacity of communities to lead and manage** themselves and their projects through education on biodiversity conservation and training in protected area management. An analysis of 136 projects suggests that capacity building in local communities is critical to the success of CBC projects and may help to combat elite capture, ensuring that project funds are not funnelled to a handful of local leaders.

The DA will improve planning coverage and the effectiveness of plans by:

- **Reducing illegal introductions and subsequent spread of alien species** by identifying and managing pathways facilitating the spread of aliens within the country; increasing search efforts for alien species on pathways designated as "major prominence"; and supporting the detection and improvement of biosecurity gaps on South Africa's offshore islands.
- **Ensuring that all organs of state and conservation agencies prepare and adopt management plans**. At a municipal level, biological invasive plans should focus on priority control areas that fall within municipalities.
- **Facilitating public collaboration**. Community engagement is key for both the successful prevention and monitoring of invasiveness and for helping locals reap the socio-economic benefits of improved biodiversity. This can be achieved through greater education programmes, supporting volunteer groups with tools and training, and encouraging private landowners to become biodiversity stewards through education, training and financial benefits.

The DA will improve control measures by:

- **Supporting the continued use of, and further investigation into, biological control agents** for large-scale control of alien species. Biological control has proven to be a safe, sustainable, and cost-effective solution to alien invasions. The increased use of biological control will allow manual control efforts to focus on species without biological control agents.

The DA will tackle the insufficient resources for invasive alien control by:

- **Reallocating funding** from projects in low-priority areas to projects in high-priority areas. About 72 percent of funding is directed towards priority areas (including Strategic Water Source Areas, protected areas, and biodiversity hotspots). However, this figure can further be improved as projects are concentrated in low-priority areas.
- **Using alien species to generate funds, which can be redistributed into efforts to increase removal rates**. For example, rooikrans are an aggressive alien species which outcompetes native vegetation and is highly flammable. Removed rooikrans can be used for firewood, and their removal for that purpose can also result in economic benefits.

The DA will improve public compliance with anti-poaching laws by:

- **Educating the public about poached species and the illegal wildlife trade** to foster an understanding of the need for conservation and encourage individuals to report poaching. This will involve using interactive activities and media broadcasts to educate people on the environmental, legal, and personal consequences of poaching.
- **Working to integrate more community-based conservation measures into protected area management** to encourage community involvement in anti-poaching measures. Community-based interventions in South Africa, such as the all-women Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit, work to strengthen community action against the illegal wildlife trade by removing snares.

The DA will reduce the effect of agriculture and forestry on deforestation by:

- **Working to improve the number of commercial forestry plantations with certification** through tax and government procurement incentives. Currently, forest certification schemes are voluntary, and the DA will incentivise commercial forestry companies which have not yet adopted the certification process to do so by showing procurement preference to certified companies.
- **Introducing a standard methodology by which agricultural and mining companies can measure their impact** on forest environments, regulate greenwashing practices, and improve environmental reporting. This will be achieved by providing clear guidelines to commercial agricultural and mining businesses on how to minimise and offset deforestation during their operations.
- **Certifying small-scale timber growers and family-forestry participants (small-scale farmers)** to ensure they are not left behind in certification. Small-scale timber growers often struggle to cope with the costs of certification and to comply with the management standards set by certification. As such, the DA will work to subsidise the financial cost of certification for small forestry businesses and promote PEFC certification for small-scale timber growers.

The DA will reduce the need to use wood for burning by:

- **Promoting and subsidising the use of more efficient woodfire stoves** in areas that rely heavily on wood for energy. Efficient woodfire stoves can significantly reduce the amount of wood used for cooking (slowing deforestation), the time spent collecting wood, and the adverse health effects associated with open fires.

Although prevention needs improvement, wildfire suppression in South Africa is effective and mitigates the damage caused by fires. The DA plans to further improve the efficacy of fire suppression by:

- **Coordinating efforts between various firefighting bodies** and encouraging collaboration between them on a provincial and municipal level.
- **Improving both satellite and terrestrial monitoring and early warning systems to detect fire ignitions before wildfires grow**. The DA will incorporate new technologies and frameworks into selecting monitoring sites as they become available.

The DA will, in combination with suppression efforts, work to improve fire **prevention** measures by:

- **Encouraging local governments to reinstate or improve their implementation of prevention and mitigation measures ahead of fire seasons** rather than focusing solely on fire suppression measures to tackle wildfires. Preventative measures include prescribed burning,[viii] manual or mechanical fuel treatment,[ix] as well as community-based fire management initiatives such as wildfire education, fire patrols, defensible space planning, and preparedness planning.
- **Mandating that cities maintain firebreaks** at the edges of urban areas to reduce the wildfire risk associated with fuel build-up and create a defensible space for firefighting operations.
- **Creating enforceable provisions that require properties at urban-wildlife interfaces to be fire safe**. At present, there is no mechanism to enforce such measures through building plans or municipal regulations. Municipalities must be empowered to implement planning regulations along urban-wildland interfaces.

viii Prescribed burning (otherwise known as controlled burning) is the practice of setting planned and controlled fires to maintain the health of an ecosystem, clear land, or reduce available fuel.
ix Fuel treatment includes burning fuel, and manual or mechanical thinning or removal of fuels (e.g., chopping, pruning, chipping, or mowing).

The DA will improve the fishing permit and allocation process by:

- **Strengthening regulation of the fishing sector through revised allocation of fishing rights.** This requires increasing TACs for overfished species such as abalone and lobster to enable stock recovery. The DA believes in crime displacement: as more legal fisheries are allowed to access a quota of species, there will be enhanced community monitoring of illegal activities.
- **Reviewing the allocations assigned to commercial and small-scale vessels.** This will ensure that the allocated TACs can be utilised most effectively by fisheries and that different sectors do not receive competing species allocations. As scientific knowledge improves, the TACs will be increasingly tailored to each community.
- **Allowing online applications for all permit types,** not just recreational, as well as simplified application forms.

The DA will grow both the commercial and small-scale fishing sectors by:

- **Prioritising private investment in commercial fisheries** and allocating rights to new commercial ones.
- **Initiating public-private partnerships** between the expanding commercial sector and small-scale fishery co-ops: Most co-ops do not get off the ground without sufficient economic support. Public-private partnerships would allow co-ops to get the support they need while the commercial sector grows. The relationship between co-ops and the commercial sector can be reviewed once the small-scale sector is sufficiently independent. Fund tracking and auditing success will be incorporated into this process, so that the public can determine the relevant company's performance.

Raising Environmental Awareness

The DA will improve climate literacy in low-income areas by:

- **Establishing local workshops and training sessions to educate residents** on climate change, its impacts, and sustainable practices. Emphasis should be placed on the relevance of climate to daily life. Rural areas will be prioritised due to the existing gap in knowledge and accessibility, as well as the large tracts of natural land under private management in rural areas.
- **Leveraging digital and media platforms to improve environmental awareness**. As internet access increases, mobile apps and online radio programs will be an increasingly common source to provide climate information in an engaging format. This will also allow information to be disseminated in different languages.
- **Producing environmental awareness resources in multiple languages** and providing these materials (posters, videos, comics) at clinics, municipal offices, and grant disbursement sites. This will help translate climate information into accessible languages where relevant.

The DA will counter climate change denialism by:

- **Launching public myth-busting campaigns**. Create visually engaging campaigns that clearly correct common myths. Countering misinformation will require a consistent, long-term commitment to a messaging position. These campaigns will focus on constructive engagement and education, rather than using guilt as a means of persuasion.
- **Training community, traditional leaders, and local influencers as climate messengers**. Respected community and traditional leaders, equipped with basic training in foundational climate science, can act as powerful messengers. Securing trusted persons to convey a message can sometimes be as important as the message itself.
- **Using local testimonies to counter climate denialism**. Collect and distribute stories from farmers, elders, and youth documenting noticeable climate shifts. These can include changes in rainfall, crop yields and flood intensity. Collected testimonies can be packaged into radio features, social media clips, and local exhibitions.