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TABLE MOUNTAIN WATER SOURCE PARTNERSHIP

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT CAPE TOWN'S INVISIBLE TREASURE

Cape Town, with its iconic Table Mountain, is one of the most beautiful and naturally diverse places on Earth. Home to over four and a half million residents, and one of the world's most popular tourism destinations, fresh water is in growing demand. Yet it is already a water-stressed city and South Africa is considered a water scarce country.

In 2022, Cape Town was also accredited as South Africa's first "Ramsar City" for the active protection and rehabilitation of its unique wetlands, using nature-based solutions, to improve disaster risk management and benefit its remarkable biodiversity.

WHY IS THE REGION AT RISK?

The past few winters have seen healthy seasonal rainfall, but a recent four-year drought (2017–2020) that almost saw the taps run dry across the city and surrounding region – dubbed as "Day Zero" – was a true wake-up call about unpredictable weather events and reduced rainfall.

Cape Town's looming Day Zero was reported internationally, and with

each day in 2018, residents moved one step closer to depleted water sources. Eventually, severe water restrictions and city-wide publicity campaigns saw water consumption being collectively reduced by more than half. While Cape Town's Day Zero was averted in 2018, more severe droughts like this are three times more likely given the climate crisis.

WHAT'S THE ROLE OF GROUNDWATER?

During the drought, the City of Cape Town accelerated the diversification of its bulk water sources. Groundwater – a typical fallback resource – came under the governmental spotlight, but a substantial increase in unregistered private boreholes and well-points also occurred. Unmanaged and unsustainable abstraction of groundwater, especially under a changing climate, poses a risk to water security for the people of Cape Town and water resilience for the region's exceptional biodiversity – including groundwater-dependent ecosystems like wetlands.

A PARTNERSHIP IS BORN

The drought was an acute challenge, but it also highlighted the need for a collective approach to groundwater management. In 2020, a united group of committed stakeholders was formed – The Table Mountain Water Source Partnership.

It brought together local (City of Cape Town), regional (provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning) and national government (Water and Sanitation), the private sector (SAB-AB InBev, GEOSS), local communities (faith groups and schools, the academic fraternity including Universities of Cape Town and the Western Cape, and the Water Resource Commission), donors (Danish Government) and civil society organisations (WWF and GreenCape).

Initial funding was provided by The South African Breweries followed by a further donation by the Danish Government. This financial support has enabled the Table Mountain Water Source Partnership to make significant inroads with local awareness and education, policy work, restoration of recharge areas, and monitoring and the development of groundwater dashboards to inform both public and government action.

More research on this valuable yet invisible resource is still needed, as well as the funds and expertise to manage it. We need your support.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TABLE MOUNTAIN WATER SOURCE PARTNERSHIP

Groundwater dashboard supports public and expert access to local data and informs management.

TABLEMOUNTAIN.GROUNDWATERINFO.AFRICA



Hydrocensus in residential areas provides insights into privately owned boreholes.



Beautiful largescale murals about groundwater were created at Makers Landing at the V&A Waterfront.



Through awareness raising by faith-based groups on the spiritual and practical value of water, 36 000 people were reached.



Teaching materials and a school poster competition inspired 2 000 youth across the Cape Flats to learn about the value of groundwater.



Devolution of groundwater management to local government was recommended by a policy review.



A learning exchange, borehole monitoring and the dashboard strengthened local capacity to take on this responsibility. Groundwater is now better incorporated into decision support processes.

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OUR STRATEGIC WATER SOURCE AREAS

Cape Town falls within two overlapping strategic water source areas (SWSAs). One is the surface-level Table Mountain Water Source Area and the other is the Cape Flats-Cape Peninsula groundwater source area. The wider Table Mountain area is a key recharge area for the underlying aquifers. This groundwater supplies many businesses, farmers and households with water. The protection and management of the aquifers are crucial to local water security and the survival of unique groundwater-dependent fauna and flora.

The strategic water source areas are defined as portions of land that produce disproportionately large volumes of mean annual run-off compared to their size and/or are areas of relatively high groundwater recharge. They are considered to be of national importance. South Africa has 37 groundwater SWSAs that include areas where groundwater is a critical source of water. Several groundwater SWSA account for up to 42% of baseflows which play a critical role in sustaining water flow in the rivers during the dry season.

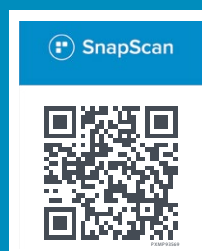
YOU CAN HELP BUILD THIS PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT CAPE TOWN'S HIDDEN RESOURCE FOR ALL

The Table Mountain Water Source Partnership is looking for additional funding and resources to support sustainable groundwater use.

You can contribute by making a donation at:

DONATE.WWF.ORG.ZA

or Snapscan:



If you would like to be kept informed, contribute your expertise or discuss a larger donation please contact the Table Mountain Water Source Partnership secretariat at TMWSPsecretariat@wwf.org.za