

The Jobs for Carbon Project

Developing Carbon Farming in the Little Karoo

Spekboom is the iconic plant of Subtropical Thicket and - perhaps - of the Klein Karoo. Subtropical Thicket (or spekboomveld) is a global biodiversity hotspot comprising of more than 8 000 species, of which at least 23% are endemic (only found in the region).

Unfortunately, 80% of spekboomveld is moderately to severely degraded, with resultant soil erosion, reduced veld productivity, increased run off and water loss. These factors undermine ecosystem services such as erosion and flood control, water infiltration, biodiversity, nature-based tourism, carbon capture & storage. These in turn cause rising costs, lower farming returns, chronic unemployment, and a depressed rural economy.

Cognisant of the above, the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve partnership has developed a project called "Jobs for Carbon" which is being implemented in the Vanwyksdorp area of Kannaland municipality through a collaboration between the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR), the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), and the Rhodes Research Restoration Group (RRRG).

The overall goal of the project is to improve the rural economy and ecosystem health and resilience of the Klein Karoo by exploring carbon farming as a sustainable use of spekboomveld. Spekboomveld does not recover naturally, but can be very effectively restored by dry-planting of cuttings; this triggers the return of other indigenous plants and animals...and the thicket slowly recovers. As veld recovers, Spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*) shrubs accumulate significant stores of CO₂ in underlying litter and soil, and in above-ground biomass. The benefits of restoration work include: restored natural capital, improved ecosystem services, job creation, and potential new income streams.



Image credits:

Top - Jan and Anne Lise Vlok

Middle - Mike Powell

Bottom - Steve du Toit

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Posbus / PO Box 92, Stilbaai, 6674

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The project comprises of five activities:

1. The spatial Mapping of potential restoration areas will:
 - a. Determine where Spekboom-rich vegetation types still occur within the planning domain;
 - b. Determine the past extent of spekboomveld; and
 - c. Provide a restoration guideline protocol for the domain.
2. The Landowner Outreach and Engagement activity will:
 - a. Raise awareness and interest of local landowners in land restoration; and
 - b. Secure land for restoration and carbon farming.
3. The Carbon Baseline Assessment will accurately and scientifically determine the net gain in carbon sequestered across the landscape at various time intervals.
4. The Spekboom Harvesting and Planting activity will train and employ of 3 veld restoration teams, comprising 60 people from local communities to undertake spekboom harvesting and planting.
5. The Environmental Skills and Awareness activity will:
 - a. Build capacity of 3 community-based restoration entrepreneurs
 - b. Train 60 people in Environmental Skills & Practices
 - c. Raise public awareness about the project, and the value of spekboom for ecosystem restoration.

In conclusion, the project aims to:

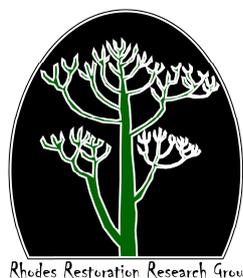
- Restore 300 hectares of degraded Subtropical Thicket in the Klein Karoo
- Create employment for more than 60 people in the local communities
- Build entrepreneurial capacity to run restoration teams
- Provide valuable scientific work needed to test and develop the business case for carbon credits to be sold on the carbon market
- Be a catalyst for the expansion of restoration work in the region

Funder: European Union (EU)

Partners: Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR), Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), Rhodes Restoration Research Group (RRRG)

Associate: Assegaay Bosch Ranch (Pty) Ltd

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