

Formalising protections for a unique & highly endangered piece of coastal biodiversity



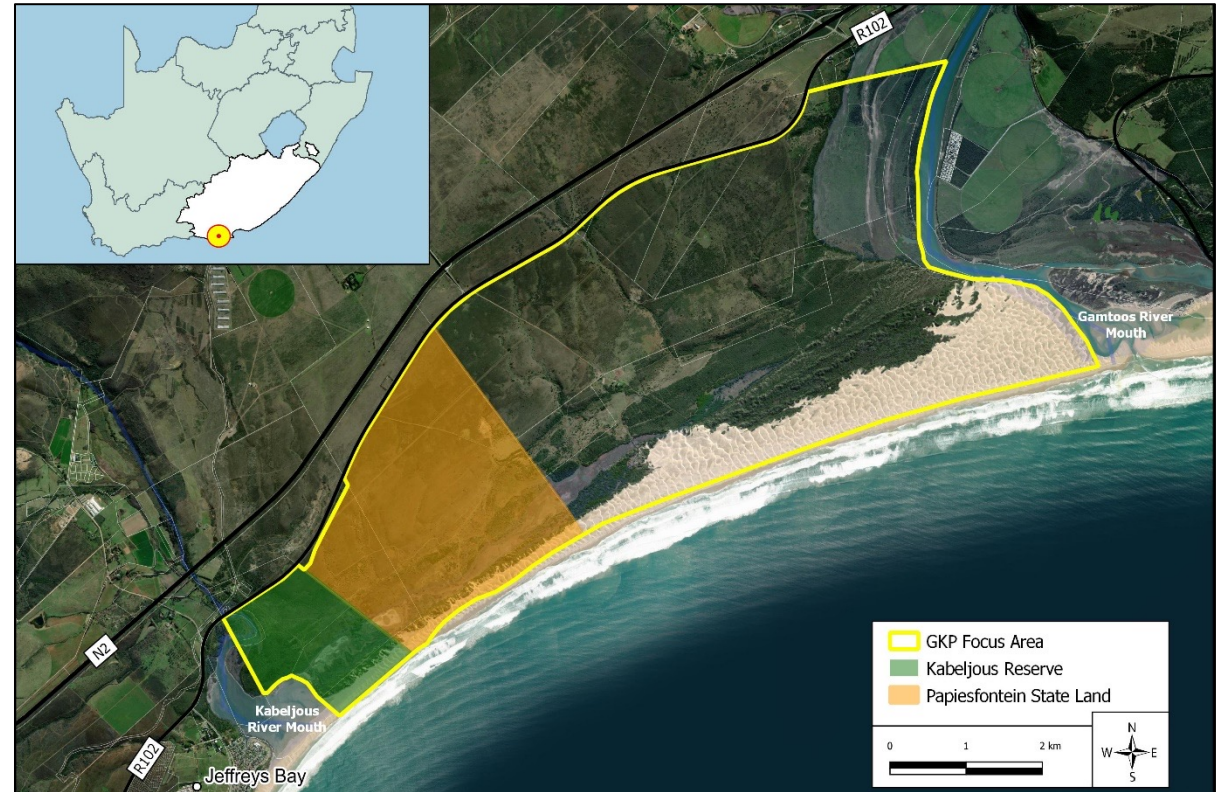
Greater Kabeljous Partnership -

Briefing for the Portfolio Committee on Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

12 March 2024

Partnership seeks formal protection for Greater Kabeljous area

- Greater Kabeljous area comprises:
 - **Kabeljous land** – under custodianship of the Eastern Cape Dept of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism ('DEDEAT') for many years.
 - **Papiesfontein land** – owned by Eastern Cape Department of Human Settlements ('DHS').
 - **Privately owned** land stretching up to Gamtoos River.
- The **Greater Kabeljous Partnership** was formed by a group of long-standing environmental activists, conservation practitioners and concerned Jeffreys Bay citizens to advocate for the **formal protection** of the Greater Kabeljous land.



Protection is aligned with government's strategic conservation priorities

- Widely recognized for its exceptional biodiversity and immense conservation value.
- Aligned with government's strategic conservation priorities
 - Recognised as a **high conservation priority** by **Eastern Cape Protected Areas Expansion Strategy** and the **National Protected Area Expansion Strategy**.
 - **Eastern Cape Biodiversity Conservation Plan** – Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) with a high degree of irreplaceability.
- Conservation significance:
 - **5 ecosystems**, including one of the last viable units of **endangered** Humansdorp Shale Renosterveld.
 - **16 plant species & 5 bird species of special concern**, including **critically endangered** and **endangered**.



Government support for statutory protection of the land

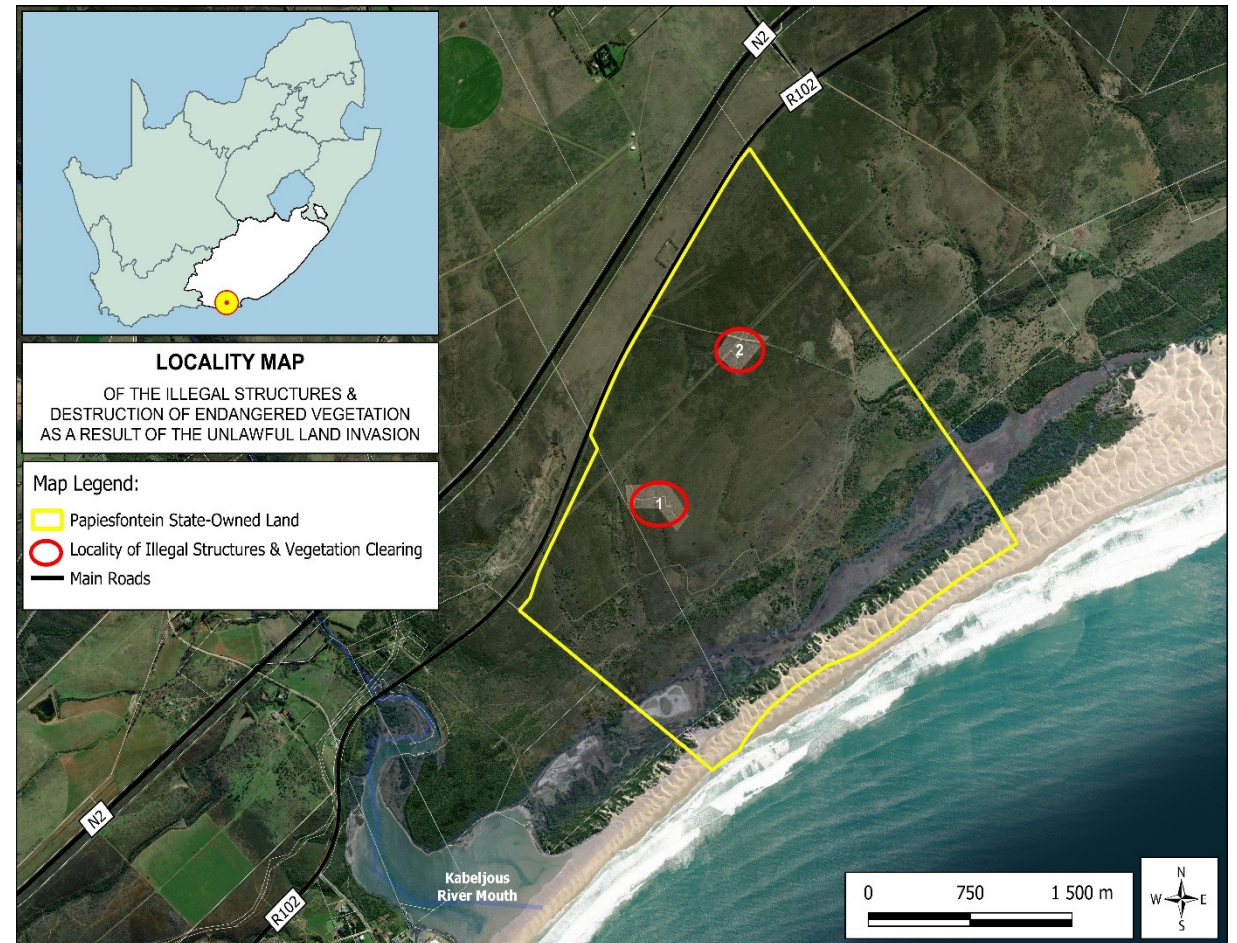
- **1999** – First attempts at securing nature reserve status.
- **2017** – DEDEAT writes to DHS expressing support for Papiesfontein to be declared a Nature Reserve.
- **2017** – ECPTA letter confirms Papiesfontein qualifies for nature reservation status.
- **2019** – DEDEAT memorandum recommends formal declaration of the Kabeljous Reserve as a provincial nature reserve & ownership of Papiesfontein state land, be transferred to DEDEAT & declared a nature reserve.

Since 2019: there has been almost **no tangible progress** to transfer the Papiesfontein land from DHS to DEDEAT.



Recent unlawful land occupation threatens important biodiversity

- On **5 December 2022**, the Papiessfontein state land was unlawfully occupied by a small group, who have built **unlawful structures**, **blocked public access** to the land, and created **unlawful connections to the bulk metro municipality water line**.
- The unlawful occupiers have:
 - **Cleared almost 2,400 m² of endangered vegetation cleared in 2 sites – in direct contravention of NEMA.**
 - Caused fragmentation and degradation of the **endangered Humansdorp Shale Renosterveld** – an ecosystem type that is already at risk of ecological collapse.
 - **Pose a serious threat to the continued presence and future breeding of the endangered Black Harrier and other threatened species** in the area.



No progress on steps taken by government against unlawful occupiers

- **Provincial Department of Human Settlements (as the landowner): eviction application** to have the unlawful occupiers evicted from the Papiesfontein land.
- **Kouga Local Municipality: application** to compel the provincial Department of Human Settlements to take action against unlawful occupiers and to prevent environmental damage.
- **Provincial Environmental Law Enforcement – no action** has been taken to date by responsible DEDEAT officials, despite serious violations of the NEMA.



Our requests to the Portfolio Committee

1. GKP is calling on the Portfolio Committee to ensure that DFFE expedites the process to **transfer the Papiessfontein state land to an appropriate organ of state with a conservation mandate**, namely DEDEAT.
2. GKP is also calling on this Portfolio Committee to **help expedite the formal declaration of the area as a provincial Nature Reserve** in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act.



Not just Environmentally significant, also Culturally significant for many Khoisan people

- The land in question has **deep cultural significance for numerous Khoisan people** and groupings who trace their heritage back to the area. – 85 documented archeological sites on the land.
- **Gaob Edmund Stuurman** who traces his family's original Gamtoos Valley Kraal to the land between the Gamtoos, Loerie and Kabeljous rivers: *"The Stuurman family is pleased that this partnership has been formed to protect the cultural and environmental value of this land. We will work closely with the Greater Kabeljous Partnership to advance a common vision for this area, and to protect and celebrate our Khoikhoi and San heritage."* – Gaob Stuurman



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