

## Using Collaborative Planning to Develop a Guideline for Integrating Biodiversity into Land Use Schemes

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**Abstract :** The South African National Biodiversity Institute is in the process of developing a guideline which sets out how biodiversity can be incorporated into land use (zoning) schemes. South Africa promulgated its Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act in 2015 and the act seeks, amongst other things, to bridge the gap between spatial planning and land use management within the country. In addition, the act requires local governments to develop wall-to-wall land use schemes for their entire jurisdictions as they had previously only developed them for their urban areas. At the same time, South Africa has a rich history of systematic conservation planning whereby Critical Biodiversity Areas and Ecological Support Areas have been spatially delineated at a scale appropriate for spatial planning and land use management at the scale of local government. South Africa is also in the process of spatially delineating ecological infrastructure which is defined as naturally occurring ecosystems which provide valuable services to people such as water and climate regulation, soil formation, disaster risk reduction, etc. The Biodiversity and Land Use Project, which is funded by the Global Environmental Facility through the United Nations Development Programme is seeking to explore ways in which biodiversity information and ecological infrastructure can be incorporated into the spatial planning and land use management systems of local governments. Towards this end, the Biodiversity and Land Use Project have developed a guideline which sets out how local governments can integrate biodiversity into their land-use schemes as a way of not only ensuring sustainable development but also as a way helping them prepare for climate change. In addition, by incorporating biodiversity into land-use schemes, the project is exploring new ways of protecting biodiversity through land use schemes. The Guideline for Incorporating Biodiversity into Land Use Schemes was developed as a response to the fact that the National Land Use Scheme Guidelines only indicates that local governments needed to incorporate biodiversity without explaining how this could be achieved. The National Guideline also failed to specify which biodiversity-related layers are compatible with which land uses or what the benefits of incorporating biodiversity into the schemes will be for that local government. The guideline, therefore, sets out an argument for why biodiversity is important in land management processes and proceeds to provide a step by step guideline for how schemes can integrate priority biodiversity layers. This guideline will further be added as an addendum to the National Land Use Guidelines. Although the planning act calls for local government to have wall to wall schemes within 5 years of its enactment, many municipalities will not meet this deadline and so this guideline will support them in the development of their new schemes.

**Keywords :** biodiversity, climate change, land use schemes, local government

**Conference Title :** ICULUPM 2020 : International Conference on Urban Land Use Planning and Management

**Conference Location :** London, United Kingdom

**Conference Dates :** May 21-22, 2020