



Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy

Member Survey 2019



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Photos: Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy

Front cover: *Gladiolus overbergensis* (source: www.fynbos.co.za)

Foreword

The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy was established in 1999 and has grown from the original eleven landowners to a current membership, at the end of 2019, of 42 landowners who collectively own and manage some 20 000 hectares of high conservation value land in the Walker Bay region near the southern tip of Africa. Over the intervening twenty years since the establishment of the conservancy there have been significant changes in the social, economic and environmental tapestry that makes up the unique landscape we call home. While the major threats and concerns of the landowners may not have changed dramatically, the urgency to react has increased, as has our collective resolve to tackle the many threats posed to our precious natural landscapes.

Over the last twenty years we have explored the biodiversity and developed a far greater and more detailed understanding of the remarkably complex fauna and flora. We have developed partnerships, better learnt to understand each other's similarities and uniqueness. What is clear, is that we are all passionate about conserving and rehabilitating the natural landscapes of which we are custodians and it is our collective desire to leave our properties in a better natural state than when we inherited. We are therefore very grateful to Daniel Basubas and Rachel Fleener of the University of Otago who undertook the questionnaire survey and to Nora Lanari and David Bek of Coventry University who produced this report. What they have provided us with is a fresh and independent perspective on which we can develop our strategies and plans for the next phase in the development of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy.

Sean Privett

Chairman WBFC

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations

ABI	Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative
CFK	Cape Floral Kingdom
EPWP	Extended Public Works Program
FVCT	Flower Valley Conservation Trust
GOFPA	Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association
Ha	Hectares
NA	No Answer
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
WBFC	Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy
WWF SA	World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa

Acknowledgements

Without the tireless commitment of the landowners and partner organisations, we would not be able to implement landscape level conservation projects. We would like to thank the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy landowners for their contribution to conserving the exceptional region in which we live. We would also like to thank the Grootbos Foundation for the ongoing support of the Conservancy, providing the staff and structure to carry out the work of the WBFC, Sean Privett has chaired the Conservancy for the past 20 years, and has championed biodiversity conservation within the Walker Bay and on the Agulhas Plain region. We would also like to thank our partner organisations Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative and Flower Valley Conservation Trust for their ongoing contribution to landscape level conservation and biodiversity stewardship, as well as the support that they provide to the sustainable harvesting sector and removal of alien invasive plant species.

Finally, we would like to thank Farm215 for hosting Daniel and Rachel during their stay, Paula Strauss for coordinating survey and all landowners who have participated in the survey.

Executive Summary

The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy was founded in 1999 when a group of concerned landowners banded together in order to protect the area's unique beauty and biodiversity. Since these early days, the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy has grown to 42 members conserving 20 000 hectares. This report captures information from a survey of 32 of the members and separate interviews with 9 landowners.

The research reveals that properties are very heterogenous but all of them deal with endangered plants, vegetation types, and animals and collectively house a wide variety of threatened, high conservation value natural habitat. Alien invasive plants are a particular threat to the indigenous flora and fauna, and also pose a considerable risk in terms of uncontrolled wildfires. It is therefore unsurprising that the largest threat to member's properties and the Greater Walker Bay Area is considered to be the ongoing encroachment of alien invasive vegetation.

Ecotourism activities are a way for members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy to capitalise on their conservation efforts. Many offer different types of accommodation as well as outdoor activities. These and other economic activities provide important permanent and seasonal/part-time employment opportunities in the Greater Walker Bay Area. However, it remains a challenge to live solely off the land – and to extract value from conservation – with many members of the Conservancy having several income streams besides their properties.

While landowners of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy conduct some conservation activities individually on their farm, they particularly appreciate working collaboratively with neighbours to stem the threat of alien invasive plants. Support and collaboration in terms of initial alien clearing, follow-up alien clearing, and fire management are some the key projects of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy that members value. This has helped to improve biodiversity, regenerate fynbos, and facilitate fire management.

The research underpinning this report demonstrates that members are appreciative of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy and the benefits that it brings. There is, however, scope to improve communication and collaboration which in turn will ensure more consistent outcomes from the Conservancy's projects. Raising awareness about existing programmes, such as those offered by the Grootbos Foundation – one of the partners of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy, is seen as especially important going forward.

1 Introduction

The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy (WBFC) aims to promote the conservation of the natural and cultural diversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom (CFK) in the Walker Bay area through co-operative partnerships. In September 2019, the WBFC celebrated its 20th anniversary. This report reviews the great strides members of the WBFC have made together to conserve the natural heritage of the Cape floristic region. It also outlines the areas that need more work, which will inform the WBFC's strategic plan for the next five years in order to help focus the Conservancy's conservation efforts and demonstrate the value of its model of conservation to external bodies.

The survey was conducted by Daniel Basubas (University of Otago, New Zealand), Rachel Fleener (University of Otago), and Dr. David Bek (Coventry University, UK) in conjunction with the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. The questionnaire has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Otago (Reference Number: 18/119) and was endorsed by the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy committee. A total of 32 landowners completed the survey. The survey was then analysed and evaluated by Dr. Nora Lanari (Coventry University) and Dr. David Bek (Coventry University) to produce this report.

1.1 The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy

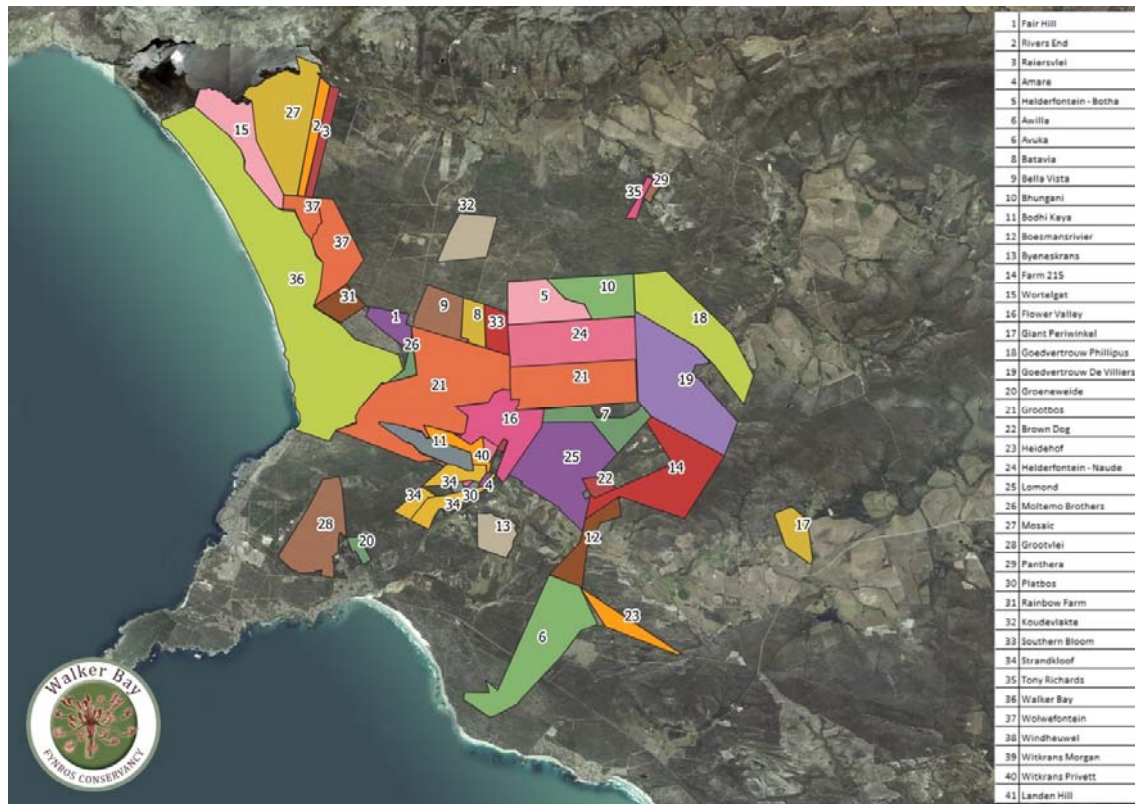
The WBFC's origins can be traced back to the mid-1990s when a group of concerned landowners in the Walker Bay area came together to discuss the threats to the natural beauty and diversity of their properties. The Walker Bay area is located in the CFK – the smallest but richest of the six world Floral Kingdoms. Alien invasive vegetation, repeated uncontrolled wildfires, irresponsible developers, and new agricultural land-use practices were impacting this unique biodiversity. After a series of meetings in 1999, 11 initial landowners formed the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy on 29 September 1999, which was officially registered in December 1999. Today, the WBFC is composed of 42 landowners, jointly managing 20 000 hectares of lowland fynbos and forest, which has high conservation value (see Figure 1.1). The Conservancy has its own constitution and is a registered Trust (IT1443/2004).

1.1.1 Activities of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy

WBFC's activities focus on conservation and preservation of the area's rich biodiversity. They include alien clearing, vegetation survey, fire management, wildlife camera traps, and environmental education. Many activities are conducted in partnership with other organisations, such as the Whitley Awards Foundation, the Department of Environmental Affairs (in partnership with the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI)), the World Wide Fund for

Nature South Africa (WWF SA), the Table Mountain Fund (TMF), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Grootbos Private Nature Reserve, the Grootbos Foundation, the Flower Valley Conservation Trust and the Extended Public Works Program (EPWP). These partners have provided funding and expertise for the WBFC's activities.

Figure 1.1: Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy Members' Map (as of December 2019)



Alien Clearing

Alien invasive vegetation poses the largest threat to conservation efforts in the Walker Bay Region. In the 1950s and 1960s, rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*) was used to stabilise the Walker Bay dunes near the coastline. These trees rapidly covered the dunes and then started to migrate inwards, invading the inland dune fynbos. Other invasive species, such as Port Jackson, Green Wattle, Eucalyptus, Pines, and Hakea have also been observed in the Walker Bay region. Together with the [ABI](#) and the [Flower Valley Conservation Trust](#) (FVCT), the WBFC has invested R2.7 million into alien clearing over the past three years. This followed on earlier clearing efforts by individual landowners and the Working for Water program has resulted in the clearing of approximately 6,000 hectares.

Vegetation Survey

The WBFC has recorded 1,083 species of indigenous plants, eight of which are endemic to the area and six that are completely new to science. The Conservancy is currently mapping endangered indigenous vegetation types, focussing on the critically endangered Elim Ferricrete fynbos, critically endangered Overberg Sandstone fynbos, and the vulnerable Agulhas Limestone fynbos.¹ This work also includes permanent vegetation monitoring plots across the Conservancy. It is the WBFC's medium-term (ten year) vision to link the Conservancy with the Agulhas National Park (located 25 km to the south-east), which would create a much-needed green corridor between the two areas. The Conservancy is also currently focused on establishing a statutorily recognised Protected Environment in terms of the Protected Areas Act (Act 57 of 2003) within the greater WBFC area.

Fire Management

Wildfires are common in the Greater Walker Bay Region. Fynbos is a fire adapted vegetation that requires burning every 12-15 years for, example, seed germination and nutrient cycling. However, sporadic wildfires and too frequent fires pose a threat to this highly flammable biome. Every summer, between November and March, thousands of hectares burn in the Western Cape, some in close proximity to the WBFC which are an ongoing threat due to the rapid rate at which they spread. The Conservancy follows a [fire reaction plan](#) that informs decisions in case of a wildfire, which considers all stakeholders and resources, embracing a regional perspective. All members of the WBFC are also members of the [Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association](#) (GOFPA), together forming a fire management unit. Members have acquired fire-fighting equipment and trained staff, who are led by the WBFC's conservancy manager. The Conservancy also offers support for controlled burns including informing landowners of best fire management practices.

Wildlife Camera Traps

The unique flora of the WBFC, the pollination and seed dispersal of many plant species are closely linked to the region's fauna. The management and conservation of this fauna is important for the future of the WBFC's ecosystem. Many of these animals are elusive, thus difficult to observe, and many are nocturnal. In order to support the integrated conservation efforts in the Conservancy, the WBFC acquired eight camera traps in 2015, which were

¹ N.B. The conservation status of the ecosystems of the region is undergoing review at the time of writing with a new version due for publication at the time of writing. Previous iterations have been published in 2011 and 2018. The status quoted here was checked with SANBI as being appropriate at the time of writing. SANBI provided the following update on each ecosystem type. Elim Ferricrete Fynbos is narrowly distributed with high rates of habitat loss in the past 28 years (1990-2018), and evidence of ongoing biotic disruption from invasive species. Overberg Sandstone Fynbos is narrowly distributed with evidence of ongoing biotic disruption from invasive species. Agulhas Limestone Fynbos is narrowly distributed with evidence of ongoing biotic disruption from invasive species.

funded by the [Grootbos Foundation](#), while individual landowners have also bought cameras privately. They are placed at various strategic sites across the conservancy to elucidate the movement of the animals through estimations and inform conservation decisions. In 2019, the Grootbos Foundation/WBFC began a systematic survey using 5km² grids each with a central camera trap, with a total of 52 cameras currently operational

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important part of the WBFC’s conservation efforts. Different organisations within the Conservancy focus on developing sustainable, nature-based livelihoods and on creating opportunities for unemployed youth to enter related careers. These organisations include the FVCT, the Grootbos Foundation and Wortelgat. Their work focuses on the upliftment and development within local communities, with a strong environmental component.

2 WBFC Member survey findings

Thirty-two members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy were surveyed. This section provides information about the characteristics and features of their properties and associated businesses.

2.1 Property Characteristics

The properties of the 32 members surveyed are very heterogenous. In terms of size, members’ properties range from 11 hectares [ha] (the smallest) to 3,000 ha (the largest). As shown in Table 2.1, most properties are under 500 ha, of which a majority are below 250 ha.

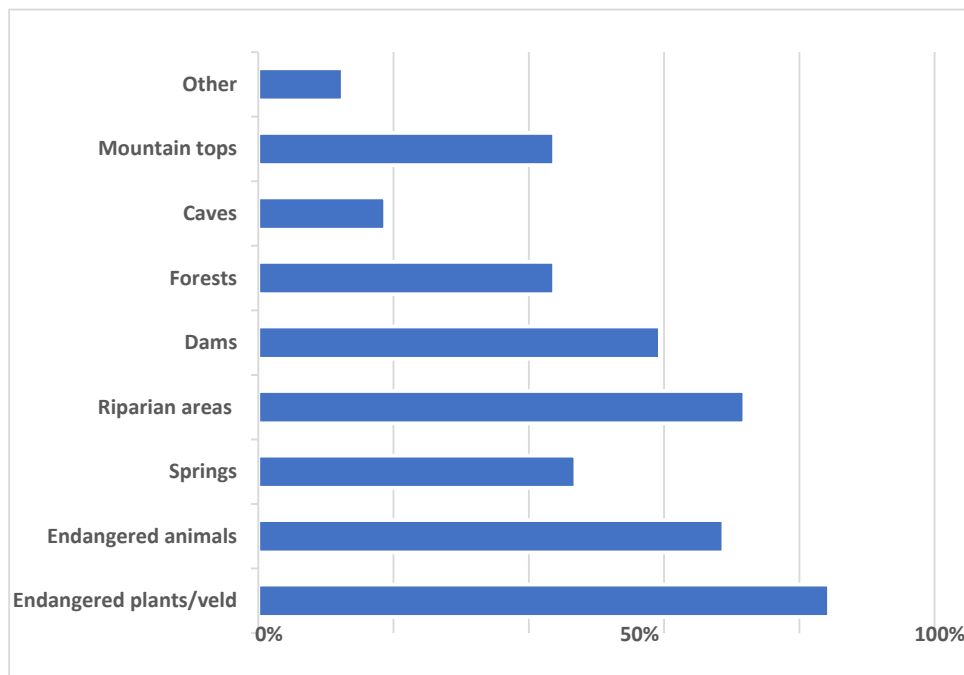
Table 2.1: Sizes of members' properties

Hectares [ha]	1-250	251-500	501-750	751-1000	>1000	NA
No of properties	14	5	3	5	3	2

Despite the variations in size, many members' properties have similar features. **Error! Reference source not found.** illustrates all the main features landowners have indicated to describe their properties. It shows the prevalence of both endangered plants and vegetation

Figure 2.1: Conservation features found on members' properties.

types, as well as, endangered animals, highlighting the importance of conservation efforts. There are also a considerable number of riparian areas (e.g. rivers, streams, wetlands) and springs, which are often negatively affected by alien vegetation – this is important in water scarce South Africa.



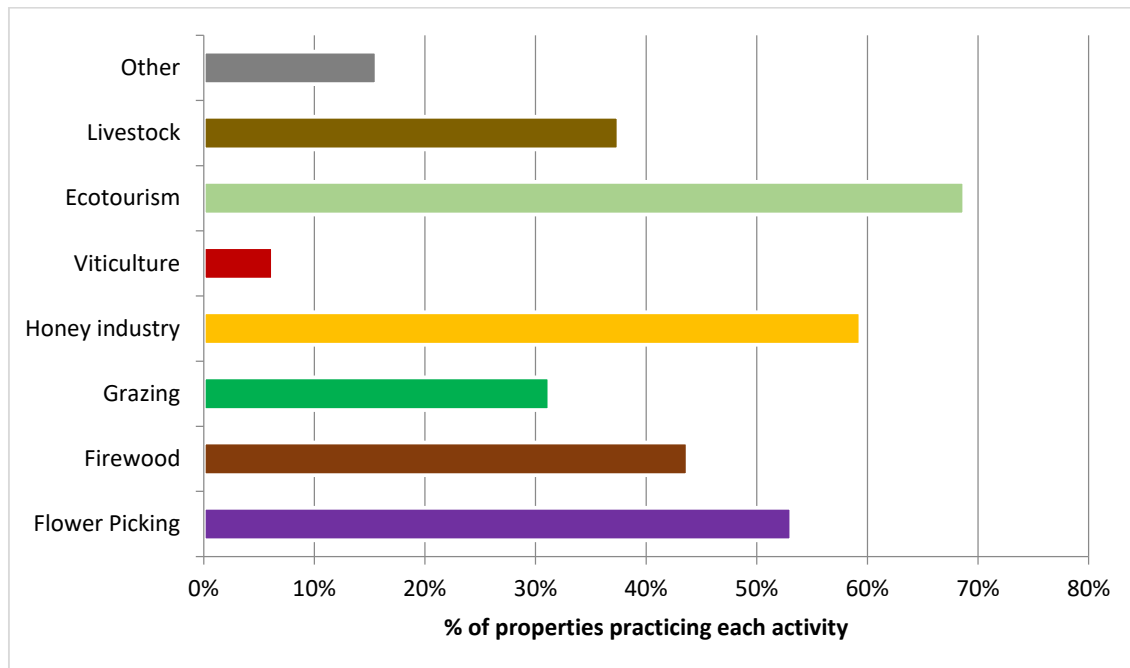
2.2 Economic Activities on Members' Properties

Many landowners in the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy generate income from their properties. Although only 28% of surveyed members derive more than 76% of their income from economic activities on their properties. In most cases, their properties are not their main income source. In fact, 47% of members surveyed derive less than 25% of their income from their properties. This relates to the challenge of extracting economic value from conservation activities and the need to combine these with other types of income generating activities.

Still, most surveyed members of the Walker Bay Conservancy practice multiple economic activities on their properties. In fact, only 16% relied solely on one activity, with 84% of surveyed members having two or more income streams based on their properties. The different activities practiced on members' properties includes the keeping of livestock, ecotourism activities, viticulture, honey production, grazing, firewood, flower picking, and

other activities, as shown in Figure 2.2. Activities such as viticulture, grazing, and flower harvesting provide a relatively small income stream for members, typically accounting to less than 25% of their income. Often these are combined with ecotourism activities. What is important is that land owners practice a diversification strategy of usually complementary activities which spread risk and enables the generation of income.

Figure 2.2: Types of economic activities practiced on members' properties



2.2.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a popular economic activity for members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy, with 69% deriving income from it. Due to the region’s natural beauty, 55% of the members offer outdoor activities on their properties, such a hiking or walking trails, quad biking, horse trails and kayaking. Almost all members (91%) that indicated ecotourism as an income stream offer some type of accommodation on their property, of which 14% also have restaurant facilities.

Most of the accommodation offered is self-catering (95%, total of 234 beds), while some members (also) offer non-self-catering guest houses (35%, total of 185 beds). The rate for self-catering accommodation ranges from R200 to R1,300 per person per night, with an average of R468 per person per night. The rate for non-self-catering accommodation varies between R650 and R7,500 per person per night, with an average of R2,901 per person per night. The variation in prices reflects the diversity of accommodation types offered by members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy, catering to a variety of tourism experiences.

2.2.2 Employment

The different economic activities undertaken by members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy also generate employment opportunities, as summarised in Table 2.2. Twenty five out of 32 members reviewed (78%) employ permanent employees, and 17 members (53%) employ seasonal or part-time employees. In total, 420 people are employed on a permanent and 155 people on a seasonal or part-time basis by members of the WBFC. As the last two rows in Table 2.2 highlight, there is considerable variation in terms of number of jobs created by different members. This largely depends on the number and type of economic activities conducted by each member.

Table 2.2: Summary of employment opportunities created by WBFC members

	Permanent employment	Seasonal / part-time employment
<i>Total</i> number of employees	420	155
% of members providing employment	78%	53%
<i>Mean</i> number of employees per employment-providing-member	6	4
<i>Highest</i> number of employees per employment-providing-member	207	60
<i>Lowest</i> number of employees per employment-providing-member	1	1

In addition to this, 63% of the respondents indicated that they have people living on their properties other than themselves and their families. On average, four other people live on members' properties, but the full range spans one to 14.

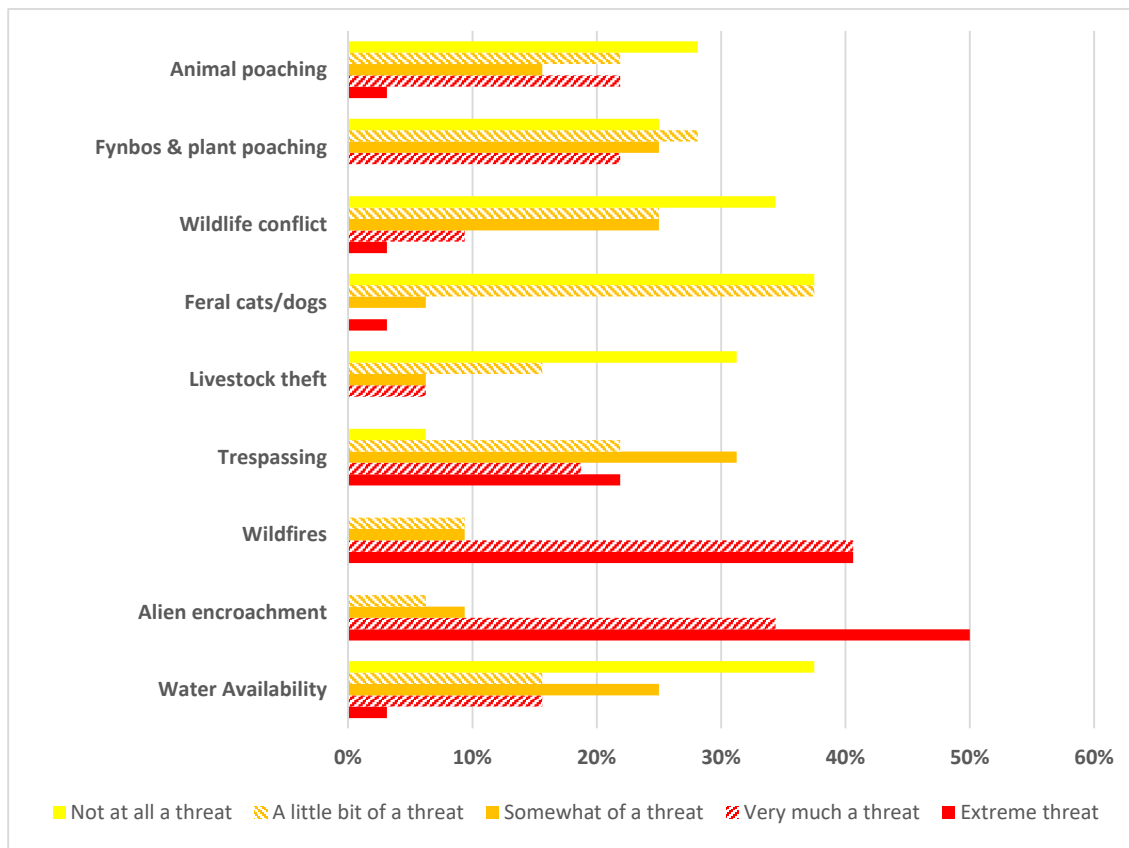
3 Conservation Management

The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy is home to a unique biodiversity, which needs to be managed and protected. This section discusses the finding of the questionnaire in terms of the different threats to member's properties and the Greater Walker Bay Area, as well as the activities and practices members undertake, both individually and collectively, to address these conservation needs.

3.1 Conservation Threats

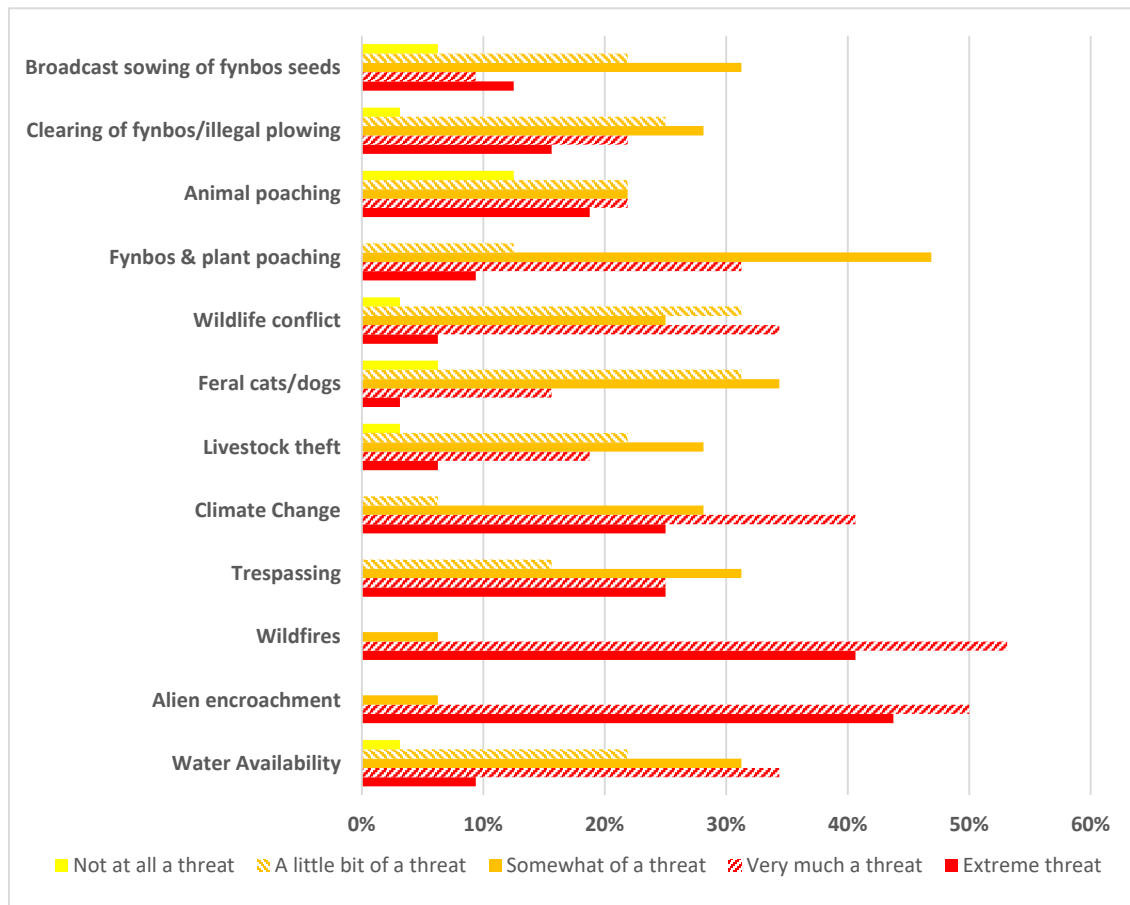
The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy was created because its founding members recognised the different threats to their properties and the region’s unique biodiversity. Figure 3.1 shows the threats to members’ properties. Unsurprisingly, 50% of all respondents consider the encroachment of alien invasive plants an extreme threat to their properties, while 34% consider it very much a threat. This is closely followed by wildfires which are considered by 41% as an extreme threat and by 41% very much of a threat. This shows the close link between the management of wildfires and alien invasive plants. Linked to that, over 20% recognised fynbos and plant poaching as very much of a threat. Another important threat identified by members is trespassing, which 22% identified as an extreme threat, 19% as very much a threat, and 31% as somewhat of a threat.

Figure 3.1: Threats to members' properties



Similarly, respondents identified alien invasive plants and wildfires as the largest threats to the Greater Walker Bay Area (see Figure 3.2). They also highlighted fynbos and plant poaching as well as trespassing. Interestingly, when adopting this broader landscape view, many respondents identified water availability as very much of a threat (34%) and 31% identified it as somewhat of a threat. This underlines the link between water-intensive alien invasive species and the limited water availability in semi-arid South Africa. Linked to that, climate change was also identified as very much of threat (41%), and even as an extreme threat by 25% of members interviewed.

Figure 3.2: Threats to the Greater Walker Bay Area

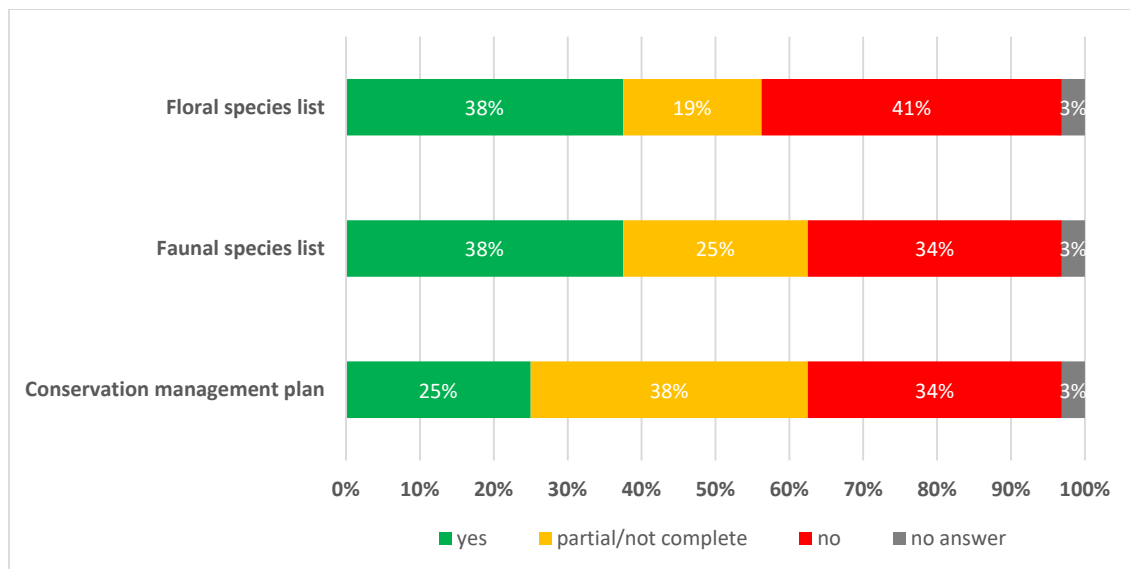


66% of members interviewed have experienced a wildfire, either on their properties or observed it in the Greater Walker Bay Area, knowing the importance of wildfire management. Controlled burns can sometimes help with wildfire management, and 28% of respondents have conducted controlled burns on their properties, while 72% have never done so.

3.2 Members Individual Conservation Practices

In order to manage the different conservation threats to their properties, members of the Conservancy conduct different activities individually, including monitoring activities. Almost half (47%) of the survey participants have had some type of environmental survey conducted on their property. This includes environmental impact assessments, water and biodiversity surveys, etc. In addition to this, many landowners monitor their properties by keeping floral species and faunal species lists, while some also have their custom conservation management plans (see Figure 3.3). Figure 3.3 shows us that more than half of the WBFC members surveyed have a full or partial conservation management plan or floral and faunal lists. This is important monitoring and conservation work being done by individual landowners. There remains scope to increase this percentage and complete existing work.

Figure 3.3: Members' Individual Conservation Practices



3.3 Collective Conservation Practices

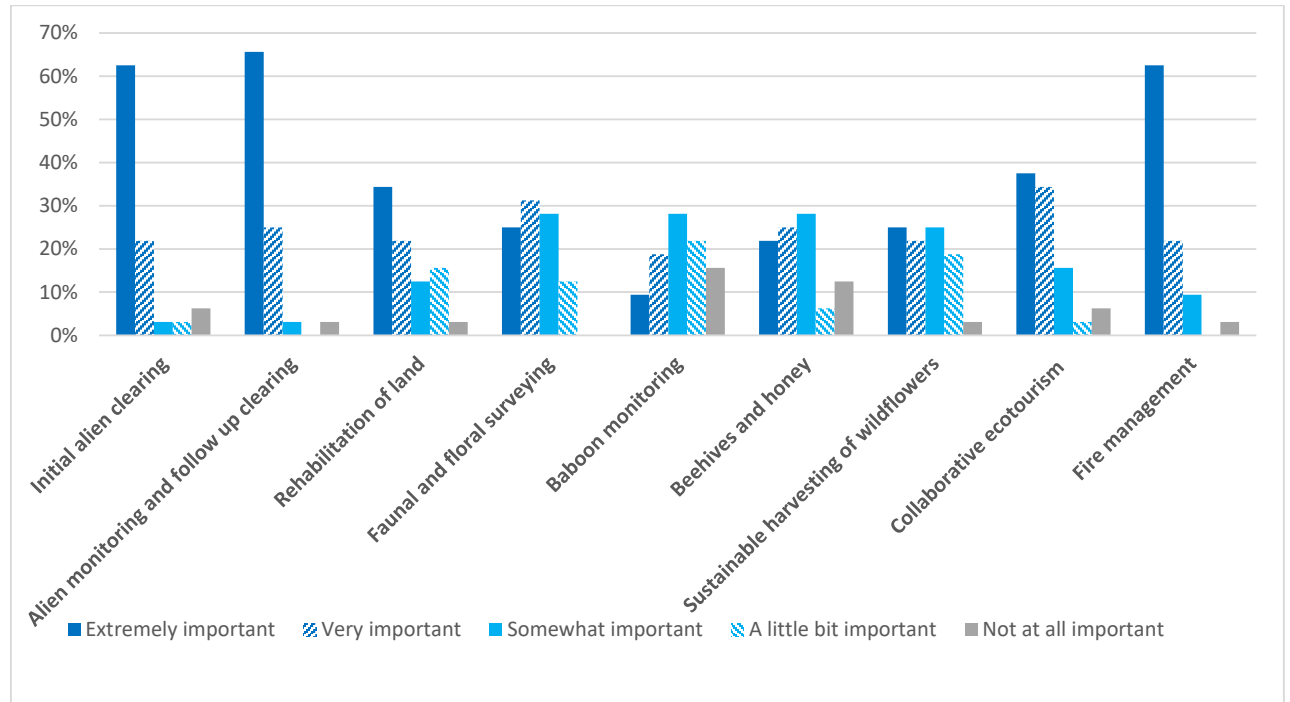
Many landowners joined the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy to better protect their properties and the Greater Walker Bay Area from different biodiversity threats. As Figure 3.4 shows, the three most important conservation projects of the WBFC are (1) alien monitoring and follow up clearing (66%), (2) initial alien clearing (63%), and (3) fire management (63%).

This is followed by a desire to expand collaborative ecotourism activities, such as working together with other landowners to promote tourism to the area. 38% of the members interviewed thought this extremely important while another 34% said it was very important to

them. This speaks to member's desire to share the beauty of their area with others and also to gain an income from their conservation efforts.

A further important project led by the WBFC is the rehabilitation of land, which was mentioned by 34% of respondents as extremely important. Faunal and floral surveying and associated sustainable harvesting of wildflowers was also emphasised by members as important conservation projects led by the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy.

Figure 3.4: Importance of different conservation projects to members



Many landowners in the Greater Walker Bay Area joined the Conservancy because of the organisation's collaborative character and to achieve conservation targets beyond their individual farms, as shown by these quotes:

-
- *[We joined] to be part of like-minded people and landowners whose main objective is to conserve and protect.*
 - *[To] be part of a conservation movement; sharing experiences; support.*
 - *To enable co-operation between landowners and share knowledge and the promotion of nature conservation.*
 - *To be part of conserving the Greater Walker Bay Area, not just our farm.*
 - *Single property conservation management makes no sense.*
-

Consequently, 13% of respondents consider their membership to the WBFC extremely beneficial, 28% think it is very beneficial, 31% reason it is somewhat beneficial, 19% consider it a little bit beneficial, and only 3% think it is not at all beneficial. This shows that most landowners appreciate the value of their membership in the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. What they find particularly useful is the support for alien clearing, working together with other like-minded people, sharing knowledge and expertise, and the ecotourism benefits, as highlighted by these quotes:

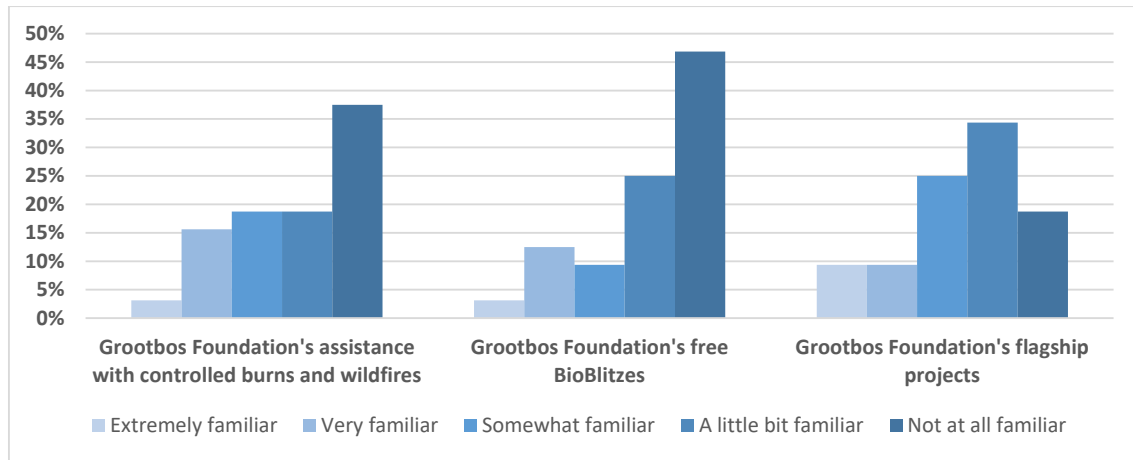
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- *It's a drawing card for ecotourism and we enjoy being part of the conservation effort in the area.*
 - *Working in collaboration with other like-minded landowners has been very beneficial and supportive. We especially appreciate the ongoing efforts of the Grootbos Foundation.*
 - *It is beneficial in that we do not feel alone / isolated in our conservation work; great being part of an organisation that is united in caring for the environment, sharing their expertise and knowledge.*
 - *Approaching conservation on a landscaping basis, cross boundary co-operation for funding, fire-management, knowledge exchange.*
-

There is, of course, also scope for improvements. Many members feel they need more support for alien clearing. Others find that the Conservancy has expanded quite rapidly since 2015, which has spread the organisations capacity relatively thin. As many non-profit organisations, financial and human resources are limited for the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. This makes the effective implementation of projects more difficult.

3.3.1 The Grootbos Foundation

The Grootbos Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation with the vision to protect the Cape Floral Kingdom, and to develop sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism, enterprise development, sports development and education. The Grootbos Foundation provides co-funding for the Conservancy Manager’s salary, providing access to vehicles for field work (alien clearing, monitoring of camera traps, bioblitzes etc) and staff to assist during controlled burns and wildfires. The Grootbos Foundation has different flagship projects, including some that are directly targeted at alien clearing and conservation management and therefore directly align with the priorities of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. Figure 3.5 summarises the WBFC landowners’ familiarity with these programmes.

Figure 3.5: Familiarity of WBFC landowners with Grootbos Foundation programmes



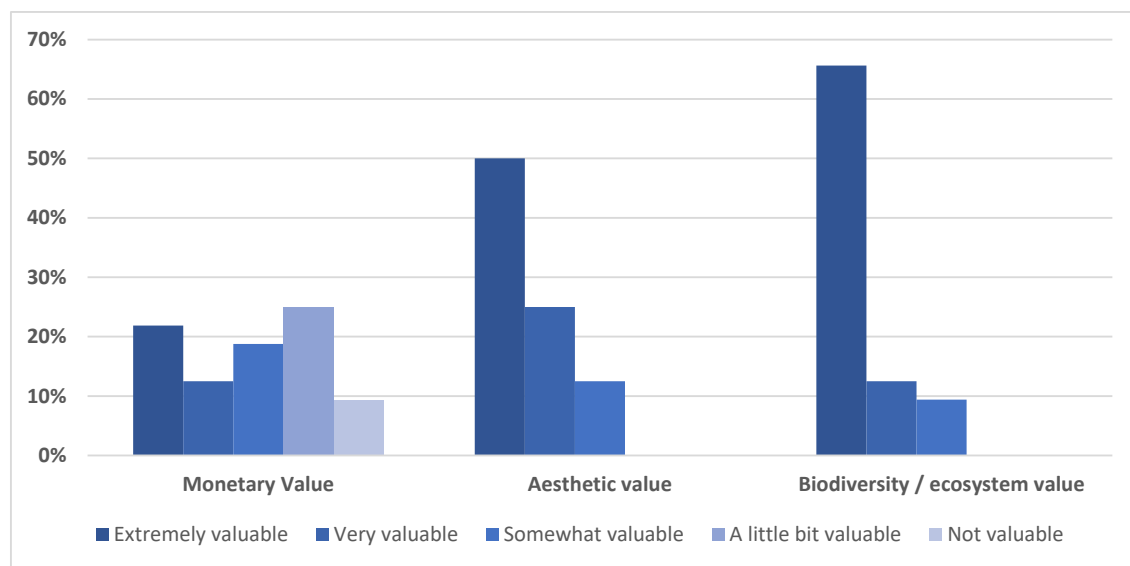
It shows that many landowners are not familiar with these programmes, although they address some of member’s key conservation and alien clearing concerns. For example, only 3% of the interviewed WBFC members are extremely aware that they could get assistance for controlled burns and wildfires from the Grootbos Foundation, with 16% being very familiar, and 19% somewhat familiar. Similarly, only 3% were extremely familiar with the free BioBlitzes, one day of intense fauna and flora surveying which began being offered by the Grootbos Foundation in 2018, with 13% very familiar and 9% somewhat familiar. In both cases, most members are, therefore, relatively unfamiliar with these programmes. This is an area where collaboration and communication among members can be improved.

4 Alien Vegetation Management

As the previous sections have shown, alien invasive plants are considered one of the biggest threats within the Greater Walker Bay Area and therefore to landowners' individual properties. This is because they increase the risks of uncontrollable fires and threaten the native fynbos vegetation.

When asked about the value of the fynbos on their properties, most members emphasised that the fynbos was extremely valuable (66%) in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services, while 50% also recognised the fynbos' aesthetics as extremely valuable.

Figure 4.1: Value of fynbos to members' properties

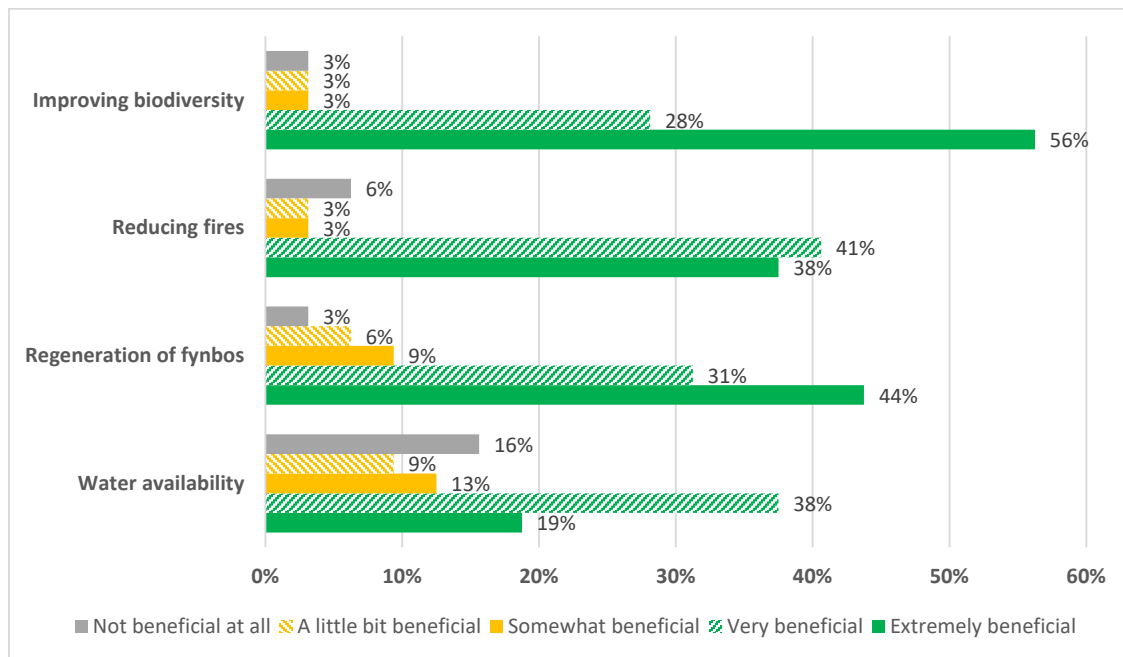


There is therefore a clear understanding among members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy that the indigenous fynbos needs to be protected through clearing of alien invasive species. One of the main obstacles to effective clearing of alien invasive species is the financial burden that comes with it. Alien invasive plants need a first thorough clearing and then a follow-up clearing after six months. After that, the area must be managed over years in order to prevent renewed infestation.

Landowners in the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy have different budgets for alien clearing, depending on the sizes of their properties and the degree of infestation. Of the interviewed members, 6% did not have a budget for alien clearing, 19% had a budget between R1 and R5,000, 28% devoted a budget between R5,000 and R20,000 to alien clearing, 34% had a budget of R20,000 to R100,000, and 6% spent over R100,000 on alien clearing per year.

This does not mean that landowners provided all the money for these clearing activities, but for 50% of members interviewed, more than 76% of the alien clearing budget came from personal contributions. In contrast, 22% of interviewed landowners provided 26-50% of personal money to alien clearing. This shows that external bodies have helped funding alien clearing in the Conservancy, which is a good sign. 38% of landowners surveyed indicated that they had received funding from such external bodies (e.g., Grootbos Foundation, ABI, Working for Water). However, 56% had not received funding from external bodies. This could be because they are relatively new members, or because they did not know about these funding opportunities. Raising such awareness is an area where the WBFC can support its members.

Figure 4.2: Benefits of alien clearing to members' properties



Alien clearing remains the top priority for members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy, with 22% identifying it as an essential priority and 47% naming it a high priority. Nobody indicated it as not a priority. This is because all landowners surveyed see benefits of alien clearing to their properties, as shown in Figure 4.2. The main benefit of alien clearing is improved biodiversity. 56% of all respondents said that alien clearing was extremely beneficial to improve biodiversity on their properties, while 28% indicated that it was very beneficial. Linked to that, 44% said that the clearing of alien invasive plants had been extremely beneficial to regenerate the fynbos on their properties. Another 31% said that it had been very beneficial. The clearing of alien invasive plants also has benefits for fire management. In fact, 38% indicated that the clearing alien invasive plants on their properties had been extremely beneficial to reduce fires, while 41% said it had been very beneficial in

that regard. To a lesser extent, alien clearing also has been beneficial to increase water availability on members' properties – this, however, depends greatly on the presence/absence of water sources on individual properties.

5 Key findings from WBFC Landowner Interviews

The findings in this section come from interviews that were conducted with nine members of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. These members were selected according to their levels of commitment to the conservation of their land as identified by the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy team. Conservancy members were classified as conservation champions, conservation participants and conservation non-participants.

Of the key issues highlighted by Conservancy members, **fire management** and **clearing invasive alien plants** were among the top issues. Both of these issues are strong foci of the Conservancy and is a reason that many current members joined the Conservancy in the first place. Conservancy members specifically mentioned that the recently developed fire management plan was an important asset to the landscape.

When asking Conservancy members about their relationship with the Conservancy, several themes emerged. First, **members were often unaware of the overall mission and vision of the Conservancy**. The lack of a clear and concise vision meant that members failed to see some of the key benefits of the Conservancy and tended to think that the Conservancy only focused on fire management and alien clearing. To better convey the benefits of being a Conservancy member, it is suggested that the Conservancy adopt clear and attainable goals every year in order to display small wins. Examples of these goals include performing more Bio Blitzes, number of hectares cleared of aliens, number of landowners added to the conservancy, number of sites put under servitude, number of hectares being conserved, tonnes of carbon dioxide reduced, litres of water saved, etc. Each year, a review of these goals should be presented to Conservancy members to show what progress has been made. By showing the progress that has been made every year, members will have a better understanding about what the Conservancy is doing and where their membership fees are going.

Another theme was **that of communication between the Conservancy and Conservancy members**. Many members mentioned that one of their favourite things about the Conservancy was when the management team showed a general interest in their land (e.g. put up camera traps on their land, had casual conversations about their land, etc.). Having good communication and showing interest in members' land can enhance the social bonds

between the two parties and also has a positive effect for landowners who gain a sense of pride in their land, and thus may be more inclined to conserve it. As such, improving this line of communication should receive more emphasis in the future. It is suggested that the Conservancy delegate specific duties to the management team that include landowner management and engaging with landowners in a meaningful way. To achieve this, it is recommended that the Conservancy send newsletters to members at least three times a year and also make contact (e.g. phone call, written letter, site visit) with each landowner at least once a year. In terms of the newsletters, members should be kept up to date about what is happening within the Conservancy and should be updated on the status of achieving the goals mentioned in the previous paragraph. Moreover, the Conservancy should consider having social events with its members, invite speakers, etc. These social events could also be open to other landowners and prospective Conservancy members to show the benefits of being a member.

Another key theme that emerged was the debate about the future of the Conservancy and more specifically, **whether or not the Conservancy should focus on expanding to obtain new members and conserve more land or rather focus on providing more and better services to current members.** There was a wide range of perceptions as to where the Conservancy should put its focus, however most of the interviewees noted that the Conservancy's overall mission statement lacked 'teeth' and needed to be more conservation-minded. That said, many of the interviewees were of the opinion that there needs to be a good balance between expanding the Conservancy and providing more and better services to current members. Naturally, the debate about expanding the Conservancy raised the question: who should be part of the Conservancy? Many current members are concerned that other members, and nearby landowners that are prospective members, may not pull their weight when it comes to conservation. For instance, some members might ask 'why is X landowner a member of the Conservancy when they're trying to plough their fynbos and develop their land?' Most members thought that Conservancy members need to be held accountable for their actions around conservation.

A theme that received overwhelmingly positive attention was that of ecotourism. There was a near-universal consensus that Conservancy members wanted to expand ecotourism in the Agulhas Plain, but there were concerns about what that tourism should look like. Conservancy members painted the ideal tourist as a group that comes to visit the area for its inherent beauty, to see the fynbos, go outdoors, etc. There was also a general agreement that they didn't want loads of tourist buses coming to stay in a big resort development. These two forms of tourism are definitely at play within the area. For example, there is the Grootbos/Farm 215 model where people pay a bit more money and get to enjoy

nature, and at the same time there are Conservancy members looking to plough fynbos to build a holiday resort for the masses. The Conservancy should play a role in advertising the Agulhas Plain as a green tourism destination that preserves the ecological integrity of the area.

Another interesting theme, and one that is not surprising, is that **landowners are very distrustful of the South African government**. In this regard, members see that the Conservancy can play a vital role in dealing with different spheres of government for time consuming processes such as applications for herbicides, applications for burning, applications for trapping pests, etc.

Overall, most people are happy with the work that the Conservancy does and are glad to be part of it.