

The Thicket Ecosystems Guideline workshop

The South African National Botanical Institute (SANBI) is in the process of developing Ecosystem Guidelines for the seven biomes in South Africa. As the Thicket and Savanna Biomes dominate the Eastern Cape, this was the focus of a workshop held to discuss the draft delineation of biogeographic units or ecosystem groups within the biomes, and to develop description of these. Roy de Kock and Greer Hawley from the East London office of EOH CES attended, as they are ecological specialists with expertise in the Thicket Biome, and we believe programmes such as this are important. Other attendees included environmental practitioners, academics, NGOs' and the public sector, including SANBI .

The most salient points made at the workshop include the following:

- There is still a large body of unknown information on Thicket and its ecological drivers;
- The various Thicket types need to be grouped into ecologically distinct units for management purposes.
- The biome guidelines are not a mapping exercise, but rather a guideline that will assist user groups. They need to speak to impact management rather than biodiversity planning and will be used by assessment practitioners, authorities and developers during the EIA process.
- The key drivers and threats of each of the ecological units will inform the management requirements of each vegetation type.

A draft Guideline will be presented to stakeholder and the public for further comment in the next few months.

At EOH CES we are passionate about environmental management, and believe that to be good practitioners we must become involved in efforts such as these, which seek to balance sustainable development with the protection of biodiversity.