

CONSERVATION AREAS (Ch.4)

PROTECTION OF NATURAL FORESTS (p50)

National Forests Act 84 of 1998

The purpose of this Act is, *inter alia*, to promote the sustainable management of forests to benefit all.

No person may cut, disturb, damage or destroy any indigenous living tree, remove or receive any such tree from a natural forest except in terms of a licence [Section 7 (1)].

The Act [Section 3 (a)] requires that all natural forests must not be destroyed, except in the opinion of the Minister, where a proposed new land use is preferable in terms of its economic, social or environmental benefit.

Protection of indigenous forests

Natural forests within commercial plantations can be protected through the following management measures:

- Preventing damage to the forest and forest margins during harvesting operations through directional harvesting stipulated on harvesting plans.
- Establish buffer zones during re-establishment for protection from plantation activities. The width of the buffer-zone can be anything between 3 and 5 metres depending on other environmental factors.
- Ensure that multiple resource activities are controlled and monitored to minimise impacts on the forests biodiversity, structure and physiognomy.

Managing indigenous forests on plantations

Forests not only need protection, they require intervention to ensure they are managed and forest health is maintained. Indigenous forests are managed through:

- Removal of Alien and Invasive species. This can be done through ring barking of standing trees or basal frill and herbicide application for larger invasive tree or shrubs and spot spray operation for invasive perennials.
- Forest margins should be maintained through fire management of adjoining vegetation such as grasslands and fynbos.

Forest margins next to grasslands should not be left unburnt for more than 2 years as the fuel load will build up to such an extent as to cause physiognomic and structural damage and negatively affect the species composition of the forest margin. Under hot, dry and windy conditions damage to the interior of the forest is possible.

Forest margins next to fynbos and thickets should be protected from fire.

- Protect the forest margins from fire. When burning fire-breaks/grassland and the fire is adjacent to a natural forest, burning must be done in a direction away from the forest.
- Ensure buffer zones are maintained to prevent invasive spread into the forest, but also to ensure the original forest boundaries are protected from encroachment.

NB: Activities including bark and plant gathering from indigenous forests need to be controlled.