

Nature at Work: The Greater Cape Town Water Fund

Water stewardship

Cape Town, South Africa

Quick Overview

Facing a prolonged water crisis and increasing climate risks, Cape Town made global headlines during its 2018 “Day Zero” emergency. The source water areas supplying Cape Town, other municipalities, agriculture and local communities had been invaded by water hogging invasive trees, such as Pine, Eucalyptus and Australian acacias. As a result, the region was losing over 55 billion litres of water every year—equivalent to 22,000 Olympic swimming pools. If no invasive plants were removed from priority catchments, the annual water losses of 55 billion liters will double in just 20 years, resulting in 100 billion liters annual water loss. In response, a powerful model emerged that integrates nature-based solutions, private-sector leadership, and science-driven restoration—the Greater Cape Town Water Fund (GCTWF).

Learn more about the [Greater Cape Town Water Fund](#).



Established by The Nature Conservancy and partners, the GCTWF is an example of how ecosystem restoration can deliver both climate resilience and socio-economic benefits.

Why This Project Matters

- The GCTWF represents the kind of bold, collaborative action The Climate Pledge champions—action that links corporate aspiration with community empowerment, climate resilience, and nature-positive investment.
- As cities and businesses face growing water risks, the GCTWF offers a proven, scalable model to adapt urban and agricultural water systems in the face of climate change.
- The GCTWF aims to clear 54,300 hectares of invasives by December 2026 and maintain the cleared areas to prevent the trees from regrowing and reinvading, to benefit nature and people.

Results

Climate impact & co-benefits achieved to date (July 2025):

- Water security: Over 40,000 hectares cleared, unlocking over 35 million m³ of water annually—a nature-based contribution to drought resilience for a growing city of 4.5 million people.
- Green economy: More than 1,400 green jobs created, including specialist roles such as high-altitude rope technicians. The program prioritizes women and young adults from underserved communities.

Goal

The fund’s core strategy is to restore high-altitude mountain catchments by removing invasive alien trees that use far more water than native vegetation. This intervention significantly improves water runoff, reduces wildfire risk, and restores biodiversity. Restored catchments buffer against floods, droughts, and fires, building long-term ecosystem and climate resilience.