



**INSTITUTE OF NATURAL
RESOURCES NPC**



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Turning science into solutions for people and the environment since 1979

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This annual report covers who the Institute of Natural Resources NPC (INR) is and how we are structured and managed. The report highlights key outcomes and achievements and provides an overview of the work of the INR during 2025.

It summarises the financial performance and organisational sustainability of the INR and highlights activities and projects that reflect the nature of our organisation, in particular the ongoing programme of work in the uMkhomazi Catchment, which has continued to grow.

It also highlights the efforts made during 2025 to reflect on our strategy in terms of how the INR needs to respond and innovate in the face of emerging global challenges.

This annual report covers the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. The Board approved this report on 25 August 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Layout: Tracy Freese (Purple Boa Creations)

Auditors: Moore Midlands

Bankers: Nedbank, Investec

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FROM THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON

Dear stakeholders and partners

It is my privilege to present the Institute of Natural Resources' 2025 Annual Report. This has been a year of purposeful progress: a year in which the INR strengthened its foundations, deepened its partnerships, and continued turning science into practical actions for people, ecosystems, and sustainable development.

The INR's work remained grounded in a clear purpose: to connect healthy ecosystems with the wellbeing of communities. From wetland restoration and sustainable agriculture to catchment work and the launch of the EnviroLab mobile water-quality testing unit, our teams advanced evidence-based, locally relevant solutions capable of creating lasting impact.

Equally important has been the strength of our relationships, both internally and with our stakeholders. Our progress reflects the trust and commitment of communities, traditional leaders, farmers, fishers, young scientists, government, civil society, funders, and international partners. These relationships give life to INR's mission and remind us that meaningful transformation is achieved through collaboration, shared learning, and mutual accountability.

The Board's approval of the INR's 2026–2030 organisational strategy is an important milestone. The strategy gives the INR a clear path for the years ahead, with four priority areas: Climate Action, Healthy Ecosystems, Integrated Land Use, and Sustainable Food Systems and Livelihoods. It is supported by a strong focus on water security, circular economy solutions, resilience, good governance, capable people, and strategic partnerships. Together, these priorities will help the INR respond effectively to today's environmental and development challenges.

On behalf of the Board, I thank the Executive Director, management, staff, partners, clients, supporters, and the communities we serve for their dedication and trust. I also extend my appreciation to my fellow Board members for their guidance and stewardship.

As you read this report, I invite you to see not only what the INR achieved in 2025, but also the promise of what we can achieve together. With science as our foundation, communities as our partners, and sustainability as our shared purpose, we move forward with confidence, turning science into practical actions for people, ecosystems, and sustainable development.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Dlamini



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear partners,

I am happy to share the Institute of Natural Resources' annual report for 2025. We do so with hearts full of gratitude and a deep sense of shared purpose. Amid the turbulence in global geopolitics and the climate crises, this year has been one of quiet triumphs and bold steps forward — a testament to what becomes possible when science, community, and compassion walk hand in hand.



Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi

In 2025, the INR continued to grow not just as an organisation, but as a community of practice — rooted in place, yet connected to a wider movement for change.

From the uMkhomazi Catchment to communities across KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and southern Africa, our work has been guided by a simple belief: that the health of our ecosystems and the wellbeing of our people are inseparable. Whether by restoring wetlands, supporting sustainable agriculture, or launching innovations such as the EnviroLab mobile water-quality testing unit, we have sought to turn knowledge into action — and action into hope.

But our greatest achievement this year has been the deepening of our relationships. With traditional leaders and local communities. With farmers and fishers. With young scientists and seasoned mentors. With government, civil society, and international partners. These connections are the lifeblood of our work. They remind us that transformation is not a solo journey, but a shared one — built on trust, reciprocity, and a common vision for a more just, equitable and sustainable future.

This year also marked a turning point in our institutional journey: the approval of a new organisational strategy for 2026–2030 by our Board. This strategy is more than a plan — it is a promise. A promise to remain agile, courageous, and deeply human in how we respond to the challenges of our time. It charts a course across four thematic priorities — Climate Action, Healthy Ecosystems, Integrated Land Use, and Sustainable Food Systems and Livelihoods — all underpinned by cross-cutting commitments to water security, circular economy solutions, and resilience. And it is underpinned by strategic enablers that strengthen our partnerships, our people, our governance, and our ability to turn vision into reality.

At the heart of this strategy lies a conviction that has guided the INR for over four decades: that local knowledge matters, that community-led action drives change, and that science must serve people and planet in equal measure. It is a strategy that invites us to think boldly, act locally, scale solutions and collaborate widely — to be both grounded and visionary, both practical and hopeful.

As we look ahead, we do so with humility and with hope. The challenges before us are real — climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, inequality, and injustice. But so too is our capacity to respond. With every tree planted, every wetland restored, every young scientist mentored, and every partnership strengthened, we are building a future where people and nature thrive together.

To our stakeholders — our partners, supporters, friends — thank you. Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your trust, your wisdom, and your commitment drive our work and inspire our vision. Together, we are not just imagining a better future — we are creating it, one step at a time.

Sincerely,

Professor Tafadzwanashe Mabhaudhi



ABOUT THE INR

WHO ARE WE?

The INR was established 45 years ago as an associate institute of the, then, University of Natal in 1980. We became an independent non-profit company in 1996, and our work continues to be strongly aligned with our objective embodied in our Memorandum of Incorporation, namely:

The Institute of Natural Resources NPC works towards the wise use of natural resources in pursuit of sustainability for the good of the environment and society through multidisciplinary research and the application of knowledge.

We are a recognised public benefit organisation and use independent funding from diverse sources to build an equitable future in which both people and nature thrive. We work with our partners in the private, public and non-profit sectors to raise awareness of, and taking actions to address, the social-ecological challenges faced by our community partners on the sustainable use and management of our shared natural resources.

The INR team carries out applied research - integrating data techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and theories from multiple disciplines to develop practical solutions for real-world environmental problems. We have done this by partnering with government, civil society, the private sector and other leading research organisations. We are a leading knowledge provider, strategic and operational supporter, capacity developer, and advocate for natural resource and environmental management in southern Africa.

GOVERNANCE

The INR is governed by a Board of Directors that comprises executive (Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi and Belinda Murray) and non-executive members (Norman Dlamini, Chris James, Preeya Daya, Cecile Proches and Nomalungelo Kunene). Nomalungelo joined the INR Board in August 2025. The Board is chaired by Norman Dlamini, the Director of Business Development at Forestry South Africa. The Board meets quarterly to reflect on the performance of the organisation and provide guidance to senior management.

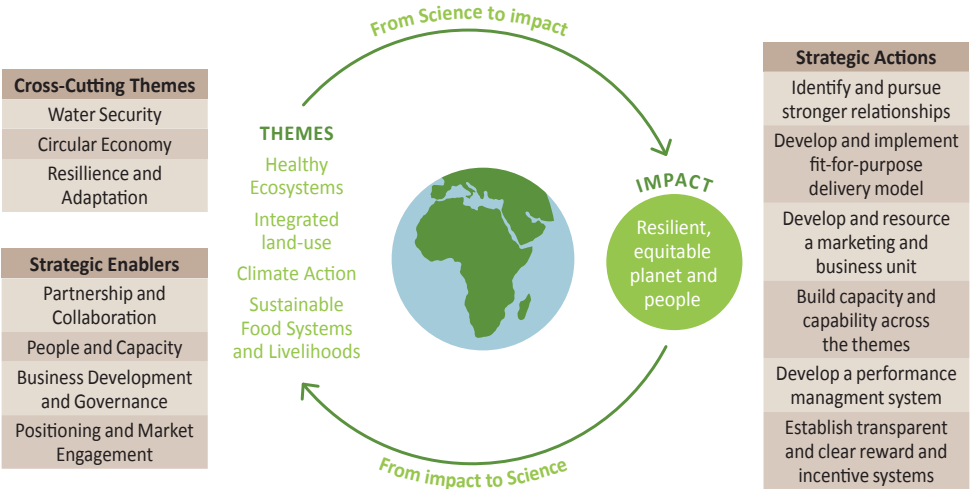
Within the organisation, we have an Executive Committee (EXCO) comprising the Executive Director (Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi), Financial Director (Belinda Murray), Projects Officer (Nisha Rabiduth), Chief Scientists (Jon McCosh and Brigid Letty) and staff representative (Zinhle Ntombela). EXCO is responsible for implementing the strategic direction and overseeing the financial performance and the projects and programmes being implemented.

STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

The INR has technical staff that are organised across three themes (Climate Action and Sustainability, Ecosystems, and Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods). While housed within a particular theme, staff and interns work across multiple themes, reflecting our interdisciplinary approach. An efficient and professional administration team supports the technical staff. There are plans underway to restructure around four themes, which will be finalised in 2026.

INR’S STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO EMERGING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The INR staff continued to refine the organisations strategic direction and intent, building on the activities undertaken in 2024. This process, which was facilitated by Dr Shamim Bodhanya (Leadership Dialogue), included positioning the INR’s work in the market.



PARTNERSHIPS AT THE SCIENCE, PRACTICE AND POLICY INTERFACE

Overview of the INR’s strategic direction.

INR HIGHLIGHTS

During 2025, the INR team was engaged in a range of activities at local, regional and international scales, which allowed for the sharing and building of expertise and knowledge. A number of staff also invested in their career development, with the support of the INR.

Team building activities also took place during 2025. A group of INR interns took part in the Pietermaritzburg Capital City Marathon in February, while most of the INR staff took part in the Spar Women's Race in Pietermaritzburg in August 2025.



Sharing skills & knowledge/enhancing transdisciplinary experiences

EXPERIENCES BEYOND SOUTH AFRICA

Brigid Letty attended a number of workshops during 2025. With the initiation of the Centres for Exchange (CfE) project, funded by Wellcome Trust, she attended a workshop in Mombasa in May. Later she travelled to India to attend the Prolinnova International Partners Workshop in Kerala, which also allowed her to meet her CfE partners who are based in Bangalore, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), and travelled to some of the tribal communities where they are undertaking their research. Brigid also participated



Members of the CfE team discussing sustainable farming practices in India during a visit.

in the Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation, which was held at Headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome from 29 September to 1 October 2025. She represented the INR and the global Prolinnova network in a panel discussion titled 'Successful institutional and Social Innovations'.

Jon McCosh attended a two-day workshop on landscape restoration at Lake Hawassa in Ethiopia. This was through the GIZ-funded Natural Resources Stewardship (NATURES) programme. Delegates from the South African Government, the National Business Initiative and uMngeni-uThukela Water were also represented, and we had an opportunity to share knowledge and insights on different restoration approaches in lived-in landscapes.



Gully rehabilitation near Lake Hawassa.

The partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) provided an opportunity for a group of five INR staff members (Thabo Makhubedu, Zinhle Ntombela, Jon McCosh, Nisha Rabiduth and Matthew Burnett) to travel to London to attend the JNCC annual conference from 20-22 May 2025.



The INR team seeing the sights in London.

EVENTS WITHIN SOUTH AFRICA

SA Mountains Conference

The INR was represented at the SA Mountains Conference in February, which also offered opportunities not only to showcase our restoration work in the upper uThukela, but also to showcase the Northern Drakensberg Collaborative (NDC) and introduce stakeholders to the Cross-Catchment Collective (CCC).



NDC / INR stand at the SA Mountains Conference.

SASaQs conference

Closer to home, the INR co-hosted the Southern Africa Society of Aquatic Scientists (SASaQs) annual conference at Hilton, with Matthew Burnett playing an active role in arranging and holding the event, drew in researchers from a wide range of disciplines around the theme of aquatic science and practice. Matthew chaired the Local Organising Committee and welcomed more than 120 delegates to the event. The conference emphasised Early Career Researchers (ECR) with more than 56 ECRs in attendance. The conference hosted a blend of disciplines, experience and projects within SASaQs, producing collaboration that inspires action to understand and conserve aquatic ecosystems. Topics and sessions at the event focused on micro-plastics, microbiology, ecotoxicology, fisheries, and water resource management of aquatic systems, featuring interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary aquatic sciences research and included a workshop by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) that explored partnership practices from source to tap. The INR hosted a field trip to our uMkhomazi sites to demonstrate how science can be applied in practice. While at the award ceremony on the final night of the conference, Matthew received an Early Career Researcher's Award for his work on aquatic ecosystems.



Matthew Burnett receiving the Early Career Researcher's award at the SASaQs conference in Hilton.



Knowledge sharing on the application of MiniSASS during the SASaQs field trip to the uMkhomazi Catchment.



INR co-hosts the SASaQs annual conference at Hilton.

Launch of the EnviroLab

After many years of discussions and fine tuning, we celebrated and launched the innovation of a field-based environmental laboratory unit: the EnviroLab. With several of our local and international stakeholders in attendance, we demonstrated the EnviroLab's testing abilities at Camps Drift, showing off the many features it has to make field-based chemical sampling more efficient. The EnviroLab is a fully kitted mobile laboratory that can assess a comprehensive range of water quality parameters, ensuring accurate, fast and reliable results. In promoting sustainable resource management and environmental conservation, the EnviroLab Mobile Water Testing Unit brings advanced water testing capabilities directly to your site. Check out the promo video here and visit our website for more details.



The launch of the EnviroLab.



[Click to watch video](#)



World Food Day event at Inchanga.

World Food Day at Inchanga

The CfE initiative, which focuses on understanding how knowledge is co-created and shared, has also brought farmers from different project sites and projects together to share experiences. In partnership with eThekweni Municipality, SA FoodLab and Seriti Institute, the INR team celebrated World Food Day at the Agro-Ecology Hub at Inchanga on 16 October 2025 under the theme “Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future”.

Mandela Day celebrated at iMpendle

In celebration of Mandela Day 2025, the INR team along with local Traditional Authorities, and the Amanzi Champions team visited the eNguga village located in Impendle. They visited two wetlands to learn about their importance and services they provide. The team also discussed threats and possible interventions to protect the local wetlands. The Traditional Authorities shared their understanding of the environment, how they value and respect their surroundings. Bab’Zwane shared words of wisdom to the youth that “respecting yourself should start by respecting your surrounding environment”.

The team spent their 67 Minutes of Mandela Day at Enguka Primary School and planted six indigenous trees which were two *Celtis africana* (uSinga lwesalukazi), two *Podocarpus latifolius* (umKhoba) and two *Halleria lucida* (umbinza). These trees have numerous benefits, which include medicinal use, habitat for birds and insects, a source of birds’ food, shade, and can withstand frost and moderate droughts, making them adaptable. The trees were planted as a way of giving back to the school, community, and the environment and contributing to biodiversity within the school and the surrounding environment.

The event strengthened community ownership of wetland conservation — surfacing local knowledge, agreeing on practical next steps such as fencing, signage and school outreach, and planting indigenous trees — while building the kind of citizen-science partnership that supports both wetland health and community livelihoods in the Impendle-Nguga area.



Induna Zwane from KwaNovuka explaining the cultural importance of wetlands and traditional systems used for their protection.

A drove of directors

(Yes, that's genuinely now the official INR term for a gathering of directors!)

The INR hosted a special lunch bringing together directors old and new — a reunion forty-five years in the making. Professor Emeritus Charles Breen, Professor Rob Fincham and Duncan Hay joined current Director Professor Tafadzwa Mabhaudhi and Board Chairman Norman Dlamini, along with the INR team and colleagues from University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), to share stories and memories spanning INR's history. It was quietly moving for some of the senior staff, seeing old mentors, colleagues and friends gathered around the same table again — a reminder of just how many hands have shaped the INR over the decades.

A journey of learning

In April 2025, through the SANBI Living Catchments Programme, environmental practitioners, traditional leaders and community members from KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape took part in a learning exchange on land, water and community-based restoration. The journey began in uMkhomazi at Nguga and Mapanekeni, where visitors saw local teams removing invasive plants, building brushpacks against soil erosion, and turning invasive wattle into biochar — ideas the Eastern Cape visitors were keen to adapt for their own communities.

The group then travelled to the Eastern Cape to see a livestock auction run by Conservation South Africa and Meat Naturally, which links small-scale farmers practising sustainable grazing to commercial buyers through community conservation agreements. In Matatiele, they visited a youth-run charcoal facility — supported by Avocado Vision, the Lewis Foundation and Lima Rural Development Foundation — turning invasive wattle into eco-friendly charcoal and creating local jobs, showing how caring for nature can also support communities economically.



Delegates from the exchange learning about biochar production.



Delegates at the Nguga restoration site in the uMkhomazi Catchment.

Pathways and progression

INR TEAM CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A number of important career development opportunities were realised within the INR team during 2025. In terms of practical skills development, Buster Mogonong attended Drone Remote Pilot Certificate training at Virginia Airport in Durban North, administered by Starlite Aviation. The training and licensing took place between 17 November and 5 December 2025. The training provided him with in-depth knowledge of airspace regulations and safe drone operations under aviation law in South Africa. He is now licensed for two years and qualified to operate drones at the Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) level. This has contributed to several of our projects looking at the use of drones to monitor freshwater environments. In addition, the EnviroLab has been instrumental in providing an affordable means to collect water quality variables needed to validate drone imagery data. Another case of skills development within the team was Athabile Dlamini attending the SASS 5 training at Groundtruth and planning to get accredited during 2026. Zinhle Ntombela and Helga Chauke both attended the 2025 Water Energy Food Nexus In-Person Advanced School (18–22 August 2025) at North-West University. The course focused on capacity building on Water-Energy-Food nexus thinking, enabling them to engage strongly in nexus frameworks and sustainable resource management.

In terms of formal qualifications, Mfundo Myende achieved his Postgraduate Diploma in Agriculture through University of South Africa (UNISA), which had a research component that explored the adoption of conservation agriculture (CA) in the uMkhomazi Catchment, while Buster graduated with his PhD. Other INR staff are continuing with their studies, with Athabile Dlamini continuing with her BSc Hons in Environmental Management and Modelling through UNISA and Hlengiwe Zuma finalising her M Tech at Durban University of Technology (DUT).

INR INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The INR continues to provide an impactful internship programme, which plays a critical role in developing emerging researchers and strengthening the national research capacity. The programme provides early-career graduates with meaningful exposure to applied research and fosters growth through mentorship and hands-on experience. During 2025, the internship programme was successfully implemented in partnership with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The INR was approached by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) to host an intern in 2025, which is a new partnership. Interns are embedded within the INR's thematic areas, where they are integrated into ongoing research activities. While each intern is housed within a specific Theme, they are encouraged to work across projects and teams, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration and a well-rounded research experience.

The INR was pleased to welcome three new interns in 2025, who joined the five interns already in the programme from the 2024 intake. In line with the programme structure, most interns participate in a two-year placement, with two new interns recruited annually. This rolling model ensures continuity, peer learning, and sustained capacity development within the organisation.

INR WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMME

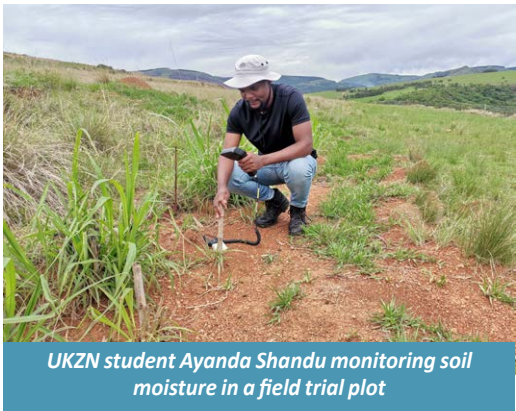
The INR also offers placements for students requiring work-integrated learning (WIL) as part of the studies. During 2025, the INR hosted 6 WIL students, Nompilo Sishi, Hazel Mukangazo and Nonkuthalo Ngcobo from Mangosutho University of Technology (MUT), Lusindiso Nicholas Mkutshwa from DUT, and Amanda Khanyile and Asanda Mavundla from UKZN. They all worked across multiple projects and made a valuable contribution while also benefiting from the experience gained.



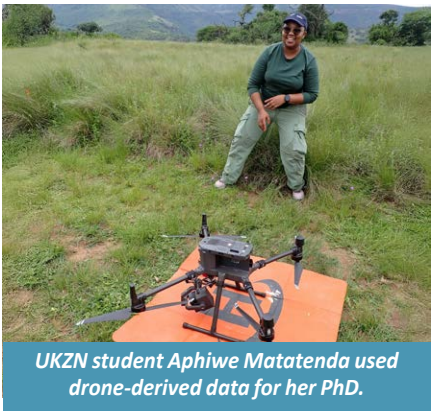
WIL students learning about pruning trees.

STUDENTS WORKING WITH THE INR

Two UKZN students, Aphiwe Matatenda and Lindiwe Manqa, undertook the research for their postgraduate studies through the WRC drones project being led by the INR. A UKZN student that was part of the JNCC project exploring the impacts of different interventions on soil characteristics and crop performance, Ayanda Shandu, graduated with his MSc in 2025.



UKZN student Ayanda Shandu monitoring soil moisture in a field trial plot



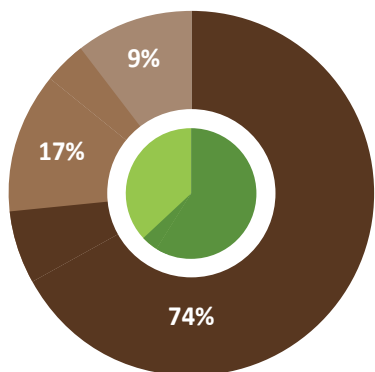
UKZN student Aphiwe Matatenda used drone-derived data for her PhD.



OUR PEOPLE

For 2025, our staff complement comprised 23 full-time staff (technical and admin), and we hosted a total of eight interns (7 through DSI:HSRC and 1 through the ESRI programme). See Appendix 2 for full staff details.

The INR’s staff complement clearly reflects our intention to contribute to the transformation of the sector, as well as to recruit and capacitate young scientists.



TOTAL STAFF COMPLEMENT

61% Female | 39% Male

- Black African
- Indian/Asian
- White



8 INTERNS HOSTED

7 Black African females

1 Black African male



THEME ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES



ECOSYSTEMS

The increasing pressure to exploit intact ecosystems undermines the important and valuable services they provide for people. Ecosystems that are healthy underpin and often support the social-ecological systems that are vulnerable to local and globally driven challenges. Theme members were involved in various projects in 2025, testing out the capabilities of the EnviroLab at the same time.

We continue to grow the GIS, Remote Sensing and Drone focal areas expanding the use of these technologies to assess and evaluate water quality. We are working with the Water Research Commission and the National Earth Observations and Space Secretariat (NEOSS) on the use of drones to assist in water quality determination and setting up remote sensing-based user platforms. We also partner with ESRI to host one of their interns to develop the use of the ESRI packages and the integration of these into our projects and thematic areas as the INR.

River connectivity and migratory fish contribute to much of the work the Ecosystem theme is focused on. The Lower uMkhomazi Bulk Water Supply Scheme (LUBWSS) completed the fishway and started putting water through as construction on the rest of the facility continued. The theme continues to work closely with the Environmental Fluid Mechanics Lab at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the construction of the Good Enough Weir to test the efficacy of the fishway at the LUBWSS. This includes looking at modelling flows for

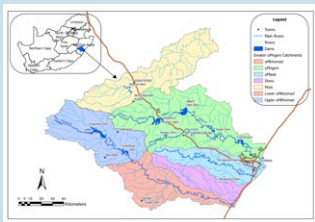
the entire uMkhomazi River and testing the design of the fishway in the Fluids Mechanics Laboratory with international partners.

The theme continues to grow the Inland fisheries works through the Sustainable Healthy Food Systems – Southern Africa (SHEFS-SA) program. The research undertaken by SHEFS-SA aims to contribute to how climate change is impacting fisheries and how policy can improve to create sustainable and healthy food systems. We have had engagement with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment to assist them in prioritising South Africa's Inland Fisheries, drawing on partners from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and other Universities in Zimbabwe, Malawi and the UK.

Summary of projects being implemented and their effect on people and the environment

Our long-term programme of monitoring water quality in the Ingula and Thukela pump storage schemes on behalf of Eskom continues. It has provided a great learning opportunity for young scientists at the INR.

The ongoing monitoring ensures that the storage schemes do not have significant negative environmental impacts on important wetlands and riparian areas.



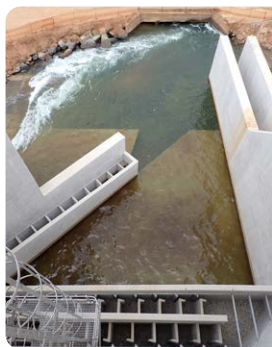
The Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security (EI4WS) project, which is a GEF/SANBI funded initiative, developed an Ecological Infrastructure Management Plan (EIMP) for the Greater uMngeni Catchment. It identified and prioritised sub-catchments for ecological infrastructure investment.

The EIMP gives catchment managers, policymakers and investors an evidence-based tool to direct limited resources toward interventions that benefit both ecosystems and the people who depend on them for water supply.

INR hosted an ESRI intern, Minenhle Ncgobo to help grow our capacity in using spatial analysis tools. She successfully completed all the course work ESRI offered and has greatly contributed to other INR projects. She has grown as a young scientist, combining her BSc. (Honours) with spatial analysis tools expanding her skill base and growing the INR capacity to use ESRI-based product.

The INR's internship programme makes a substantial contribution to transforming and capacitating the sector.





We continue collaborate with the Fluid Mechanics lab at UKZN to test the boundaries of fishway development and look to improve the way these are designed and implemented. Water started moving through the fishway this year and we plan to set up monitoring devices next year to track fish through the fish ladder.

Improving the ability for instream barriers to pass fish through or over them is a environmental requirement, but importantly maintains healthy fish stock that subsistence fishers rely on. Maintaining reach scale movement of fish ensures healthy fish stock for people to use.

A WRC project exploring the use of drones to monitor water quality and biota, got underway. The INR's mobile lab has been assisting with data collection to validate imagery capture by the drone.

Using technology to capture water quality can enhance the way we monitor aquatic ecosystems and assist small-holder farmers dependent of good water quality to grow crops.



We continue to grow the KZN yellowfish project to support recreational anglers at Zingela Safari Lodge and Hilton College Nature Reserve. We tagged five yellowfish with radio telemetry tags in Zingela to track their movements

Recreational fisheries make a substantial contribution to local economies. This projects looks to support the management of KZN yellowfish recreational anglers at targetted water bodies and links to better water quality that supports people and fisheries.

The SHEFS-SA fish theme continued to grow, the INR was able to participate in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) stakeholder engagement meetings. In addition, the project continued to build relationships in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

The fish theme aims to improve the way inland fisheries are managed, strengthening regional policy for better fisheries and enhance fish as part of food systems.





CLIMATE ACTION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change increasingly puts pressure on the environment and natural resources. The Climate Action and Sustainability (CaS) theme addresses climate change and environmental vulnerability in Southern Africa through participatory, community-based and systems-thinking approaches. We aim to support practical adaptation, mitigation, and sustainability actions that contribute to long-term socio-ecological resilience and more inclusive climate responses. Our work focuses on addressing the intersecting challenges of climate change and environmental degradation through participatory and gender-inclusive approaches by prioritising local knowledge, and by fostering partnerships with communities and international partners. In 2025, the theme mainly offered advisory services to the government in the implementation of the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024.

Summary of projects being implemented and their effect on people and the environment

INR has been providing technical support via SHEFS-SA to a collaborative effort between DFFE and the South African Weather Services. Helga Chauke, INR’s climate scientist, gave a Climate 101 presentation during a stakeholder workshop in Giyani, that introduced key climate change concepts for community and municipal participants.

The INR’s role in supporting operationalisation of the Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 has ensured that adaptation strategies are informed by a combination of climate science and lived experience, which builds climate resilience.

The CaS theme collaborated with Marondera University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, and Queen Margaret University, on a World Health Organisation (WHO) funded project titled “Advancing Ethical and Responsible Climate and Health Research in Africa (EthiCARE)”.

The project developed a practical framework to address community consent and fair data governance that strengthens to better protect vulnerable communities. The project, which focused on Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, supported more responsible climate-health research that is better able to inform interventions for climate-related health risks.



AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIVELIHOODS

Finding better ways of growing food and managing our natural landscapes is critical for our future on this planet. We acknowledge that agriculture in rural areas is one element of a range of interlinked strategies to sustain rural livelihoods. Recognising these interlinked strategies, the Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods (A&RL) theme adopts an holistic view in supporting rural livelihoods, considering the full range of livelihood options that can support people. The clustering of projects in the uMkhomazi Catchment and in Ozwathini near Wartburg are two examples of how we are building strong geographic footprints. While we have substantial skills associated with on-the-ground implementation related to research and restoration, we also play an important role in convening stakeholders within and across catchments. Another element that we are giving more direct attention to is that of participatory land use planning processes, which is being done in collaboration with Rebecka Henriksson from Lingon Sustainability. A fundamental aspect of our work is ‘joint experimentation’, where we work with farmers and other community members to develop better farming practices. We also actively involve youth in our programmes in different ways, especially as citizen scientists. Agriculture is a sector dominated by older people and we see it being essential to find ways to draw young people into the programmes we implement.

Summary of projects being implemented and their effect on people and the environment



INR partnered with KZN DARD through the LandCare Conservation Agriculture (CA) programme to support the Regenerative Agriculture (RA) cropping component of the uMkhomazi Phase 3 project. Farmers from Ntwasahlobo (17), iMpindle (62) and eMangwaneni (29) received planting tools and equipment to support RA practices.

Regenerative agriculture as practiced by INR involves a number of key principles that reduce negative environmental impacts, namely minimal tillage, mulching and crop rotation.

The work in the uMkhomazi Catchment has expanded to include experimentation with farmers to test wattle-based livestock feed, as an affordable feed options for livestock owners.

Value addition opportunities that create a demand for wattle biomass is seen as a sustainable way of controlling the spread of wattle while also improving livestock condition and market opportunities.



The A&RL team has been providing technical support at the eThekweni Municipality's Agro-Ecology Hub at Inchanga, via the Southern African FoodLab.

Agroforestry systems, indigenous crops and the use of cover crops offer opportunities to enhance agro-biodiversity and enhance the resilience of farming systems.

ELIFaNS – a project aimed at 'the Promotion of Local Innovation for Food Security and Healthy Nutrition' has been implemented in five countries including South Africa.

The external evaluation took place in July 2025.

External evaluations allow team members to critically reflect on their project activities and the impacts that they are having on local livelihoods.



The Wellcome Trust has funded a project called Centres for Exchange (CfE) aimed at building capacity in implementing truly participatory research — experimenting with farmers to produce locally sourced feed for cattle using crop residues and fodder.

The CfE project activities have been implemented across three sites that use joint experimentation processes and the project has highlighted differences in how different approaches strengthen the agency of farmers.

The Lewis Foundation supported the establishment of the Cross-Catchment Collective (CCC) and a workshop near KwaDukuza in July 2025 brought together representatives from the seven catchments together to collectively plan a way forward.



Multi-stakeholder partnerships at a catchment scale allow for exchange of information and collaboration. By bringing different partnerships together, this sharing and learning is greatly enhanced towards improving catchment management.

Through the WWF Water Stewardship initiative, the INR and its teams cleared 60 ha of wattle at Nzinga to free up the rangeland.

Clearing of invasive alien plants such as wattle has benefits for water security, biodiversity and livelihoods.



In collaboration with its partners, the INR team planted 400 indigenous trees in communities in the Wild Coast as a source of food, fuel, and windbreaks. This was through the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Green Wall initiative and also included capacity building in propagation techniques.

The local communities took ownership of the project by planning and designing the planting complementing local knowledge with technical support from the project team, allocating and planting plants with labour, additional soil and manure contributed by the communities, and monitoring the plants' health.

Twelve local change makers were trained to do biomonitoring and to be local environmental champions through the WWF Sanlam citizen science initiative and have been absorbed into the Amanzi Champions programme in the uMkhomazi Catchment.

Building awareness amongst youth in rural communities also allows them to play an active role in monitoring water quality and generating income.



The GIZ/EU Innovation in Young Businesses in Africa (IYBA) initiative funded workshops and training on entrepreneurial ecosystems to advance green enterprises in the uMkhomazi Catchment. This has contributed to innovative thinking around enterprise support in the uMkhomazi and uMhlathuze Catchments.

Growing entrepreneurial ecosystems creates local economic opportunities that support catchment restoration and reduce reliance on natural resource extraction.



FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Institute of Natural Resources NPC (INR) continued to demonstrate sound financial management during the year ended 31 December 2025, maintaining a strong financial position while expanding project implementation activities. The financial statements were independently audited, and a summary of the key figures is included in Appendix 1.

Revenue increased during the year, reflecting continued growth in project activity. This growth was accompanied by a corresponding rise in operating expenses, primarily due to increased project-related expenditure associated with implementation activities. Despite the higher operational demands, the INR maintained prudent financial controls and achieved an overall surplus for the year.

The organisation's financial position remained stable, with total assets increasing during the reporting period. Cash and cash equivalents remained strong, demonstrating the INR's continued liquidity and ability to meet its operational commitments. Trade and other receivables, together with work in progress, increased in line with the growth in project activity and the timing of project claims and recoveries.

Property, plant and equipment decreased slightly during the year due to normal depreciation, with no significant capital acquisitions made during the reporting period. Current liabilities remained well managed, while funds received in advance continued to reflect project funding secured for implementation in future periods.

Investment income remained an important contributor to overall financial sustainability through careful cash flow management and the strategic investment of surplus funds. Overall expenditure remained within acceptable levels, and the INR continues to maintain adequate reserves to support organisational sustainability and ongoing operations.

APPENDIX 1:

INR ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR 2024

Extract of the 2025 Audited Annual Financial Statements

Institute of Natural Resources NPC

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 31 December 2025

Figures in Rand	2025	2024
Revenue	30,770,811	23,329,533
Other operating income	369,661	327,920
Other operating expenses	(31,060,207)	(23,907,123)
Operating (deficit) surplus	80,265	(249,670)
Investment revenue	670,941	812,893
Finance costs	(633)	(603)
(Deficit) surplus for the year	750,573	562,620
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	750,573	562,620

Extract of the 2025 Audited Annual Financial Statements
Institute of Natural Resources NPC
Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2025

Figures in Rand	2025	2024
Assets		
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	3,624,859	3,943,969
	3,624,859	3,943,969
Current Assets		
Work in progress	1,703,303	1,451,685
Trade and other receivables	2,296,858	1,725,491
Cash and cash equivalents	10,534,037	10,389,607
	14,534,198	13,566,783
Total Assets	18,159,057	17,510,752
Equity and Liabilities		
Equity		
Reserves	1,200,000	1,200,000
Retained income	10,222,472	9,471,899
	11,422,472	10,671,899
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	1,597,411	1,223,240
Funds in advance	5,139,174	5,615,613
	6,736,585	6,838,853
Total Equity and Liabilities	18,159,057	17,510,752

APPENDIX 2:

STAFF AND DIRECTORS (31 DECEMBER 2025)

SCIENTISTS		
NAME	POSITION	QUALIFICATIONS
Prof Mabhaudhi, Tafadzwanashe	Executive Director	PhD, Crop Science
Dr Letty, Brigid	Chief Scientist	PhD, Crop Science
McCosh, Jon	Chief Scientist	MEnvDev
Dr Burnett, Matthew	Principal Scientist	PhD, Ecological Sciences
Dr Makhubedu, Thabo	Senior Scientist	PhD, Crop Science
Ntombela, Zinhle	Senior Scientist	MSc, Agriculture
Dr Chauke, Helga (Commenced 01/01/2025)	Scientist	PhD Earth Sciences
Dr Mogonong, Buster (Commenced 01/01/2025)	Scientist	PhD GIS, Remote sensing, socio-ecological systems
Makhaya, Zanele	Scientist	MSc, Geography
Mtshali, Sizakele	Scientist	MSc, Development Studies
Myende, Mfundo	Field Officer	ND, Agricultural Management
Dlamini, Athabile	Field Officer	BSc, Hydrology and Water Management
Zuma, Hlengiwe	Field Officer	BTech Tourism Management, Pursuing MSc
Mncwabe, Sambulo	Field Assistant	Dip, Farming Management
Mkhize, Sipiwe	Junior Field Officer	Matric

ADMINISTRATORS	
NAME	POSITION
Murray, Belinda (BCom (Hons), CA (SA))	Financial Director
Rabiduth, Nisha	Project Management Officer
Sukraj, Sunitha	Office Manager/Bookkeeper
Ndaba, Mandisa	Administration Assistant
Vilakazi, Mbali	Administration Support

ADMINISTRATORS

NAME	POSITION
Majola, Gcinile	Administration Support
Hlatshwayo, Muzi	Grounds Maintenance
Sikhakhane, Delisile	Office Cleaning

INTERNS

NAME	QUALIFICATION
Mthembu, Anele (Concluded 25/07/2025)	BSc Geography and Environmental Management; Dip, Food Security
Zuma, Cebisile	BSc Agriculture, Animal and Poultry Science
Magagula, Thokozani	BSc Genetics and Zoology
Mahala, Lungelwa Pakama	Dip, Animal and Plant Production; BTech, Plant Production
Zondi, Sinethemba (Concluded 08/08/2025)	BSc Geography and Environmental Management
Mkhize, Fanelesibonge (Commenced 01/02/2025)	BSc Geography and Environmental Management
Maphumulo, Thobile (Commenced 01/06/2025)	BSc Hons Geography
Ngcobo, Minenhle (Commenced 01/06/2025)	BSc Hons plant ecology and conservation

DIRECTORS

NAME	POSITION
Dlamini, Norman	Chairman, Non-executive Director
Prof Mabhaudhi, Tafadzwanashe	Executive Director
Murray, Belinda	Financial Director
James, Christopher	Non-executive Director
Dr Daya, Preeya	Non-executive Director
Dr Proches, Cecile	Non-executive Director
Kunene, Nomalungelo	Non-executive Director



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