

**The Western Cape Climate Change Response Strategy and Action Plan:
An Introduction**
September 2006

A report on the *Status Quo, Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment of the Physical and Socio-Economic Effects of Climate Change in the Western Cape* (2005) confirms that climate change is a reality and that its impacts are being increasingly felt in many parts of the province. This scenario carries significant consequences for the social, economic and sustainable development of the Western Cape (see box below).

As a result, the Western Cape's Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) has commissioned a **Climate Change Response Strategy and Action Plan** to identify key risk areas and make recommendations of priority in terms of adaptation and mitigation measures that can be enacted. The strategy will assist the province in its decision and policy-making processes to both minimise the negative effects, and to secure potentially beneficial opportunities that might arise from climate change.

OneWorld Sustainable Investments along with key consortium experts, has been awarded the contract to develop the strategy, which in turn will be informed by specialists in, amongst others, climate modelling, development planning, economics, environmental and resource economics, agriculture, energy, natural resource management, poverty alleviation and communications, and will be underpinned by a thorough stakeholder engagement process carried out over a five month period.

While the strategy is Western Cape specific, it will be aligned with regional and national climate change initiatives and, also, South Africa's international sustainable development commitments.

The project will run over a 5-month period with anticipated finalisation at the end of February 2007. The key questions underpinning this work are:

- How is the province going to prioritise its responses to climate change? ,
- What is the related impact of both adaptation and mitigation responses?
- How do we maximise the opportunities that climate change presents the province?

Important points raised by the *Status Quo, Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment of the Physical and Socio-Economic Effects of Climate Change in the Western Cape (2005)*:

- The Western Cape is likely to become warmer and drier over time, affecting the economy, livelihoods and the ecological integrity of the province;
- Available water is already fully committed in most parts of the province, with little scope of further supply-side development. Adaptation measures and a balance between economic and social needs is required;
- Reduced water in the rivers will impact on the province's wetlands and estuaries;
- A warmer and drier climate is likely to increasingly impoverish the species diversity of the Fynbos and Succulent Karoo biomes;
- Coastal development will need to plan for sea-level rise, especially near sandy beaches;
- High-fire risk conditions are likely to increase 40% in the west, and up to 300% in the east of the province;
- Human health is expected to be impacted by:
 - Increased air pollution
 - Heat stress
 - Increased flooding
- Ecosystem-dependent economic sectors, e.g. fishing, forestry and agriculture, will be regularly affected by the changing climate, as will the insurance, banking, infrastructure and construction sectors;
- Rural and marginal communities are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.