Subtropical Thicket Restoration — Carbon-Finance-Backed Spekboom Recovery in South Africa's Karoo

PES & Nature-Based Solutions · Good practice · South Africa

Quality score: 47/100

Evidence strength: Moderate

Summary

Since 2004, South Africa has replanted spekboom across ~800,000 hectares of degraded Karoo rangeland; a 2024 World Bank outcome bond and 2026 UN flagship status drew $75m+ in carbon finance, but researchers warn of overplanting and opaque accounting.

Key dimensions

Dimension	Score
Carbon — sequestration / storage, evidenced	2/3
Biodiversity — conservation / improvement, evidenced	2/3
Water & soil — retention, infiltration, erosion control	1/3
Fire resilience — risk reduction, evidenced	0/3
Governance, certification & transferability	2/3

Evaluated by C-NAPSE

Data sources

C-NAPSE web research — accessed 2026-09-07

Subtropical Thicket Restoration Programme, with Nat Carbon, EcoPlanet Bamboo and World Bank-structured outcome bond investors — accessed 2026-09-07

UNEP: How 'miracle plant' spekboom is helping revive South Africa's Eastern Cape — accessed 2026-09-07

Mongabay: UN recognition is latest boost to restoring spekboom across South Africa's semidesert Karoo — accessed 2026-09-07

World Bank: Restoring Land, Building Livelihoods — Supporting Spekboom Restoration in South Africa — accessed 2026-09-07

Mongabay: South Africa's new gold rush — big promises, closed books in new carbon frontier — accessed 2026-09-07

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