



A Warm Welcome to 2026

As we commence 2026, we extend a sincere welcome to our valued members, partners, and stakeholders. We encourage you to continue following, supporting, and participating in Custodians' initiatives throughout the year.

While our bi-weekly newsletter is tailored to our members, its content is also relevant to the broader South African professional hunting sector. Since its launch last year, the newsletter has served as an excellent channel to provide timely updates, information, and developments that affect us all.

It also serves as a platform to reaffirm the core values that define our association, with a primary focus on protecting and experiencing our habitat through ethical, responsible, sustainable utilisation. This guiding principle is central to all our activities and underscores our commitment to excellence within the professional hunting community.

For further details on our Vision, Mission, and Governance, please visit

www.thecustodians.co.za/about-custodians.

The Custodians EXCO and staff remain available to support and assist our members whenever required, ensuring that you have the necessary resources and guidance for a successful year. We are deeply grateful to our members for their dedication, engagement, and valuable insights, which not only strengthen our organisation, but assist us in contributing to the advancement of the broader professional hunting sector.

Warm regards,
Adri & Nonkie (editorial team)

January Birthdays

Custodians would like to wish a very happy birthday to our members celebrating in January: Werner Smulder (1st), Simphiwe Valiso (2nd), Francois van Rooyen (4th), Jaco Strauss (5th), Mlungisi Tobani (5th), Magor Fatyi (8th), Patches Madonsela (10th), Edwin Pierce (11th), our CEO Adri Kitshoff-Botha (19th), Howard Knott (21st), Robert Jaba (22nd), Mac Mc Seveney (23rd), Clayton Fletcher (25th), Charles Vauquelin (25th), Jacques Senekal (28th), and Conrad van der Merwe (30th).



We wish you all a year filled with good health, success, and continued achievement, and thank you for being valued members of the Custodians family.

Membership Fees for 2026

Important Membership & Invoicing Reminder

The office has commenced issuing 2026 membership invoices. A HUGE THANK YOU! to all members who have already submitted their payments and appreciate your timely response. We kindly request that all members complete their payments at their earliest convenience, which will also ensure uninterrupted access to membership benefits. We understand that individual circumstances may vary, and therefore, members may opt for instalment payment arrangements if necessary. If you wish to discuss a tailored payment plan, please contact the Custodians office directly.

Important Notice to Full & Field Members

SATIB24 cover information and documentation were emailed and sent via WhatsApp to you in December. If you have not yet submitted your SATIB option forms, please do so urgently, as we need to provide this information to SATIB through GRAA. In cases where completed forms have not been received from full and field members, they have been automatically registered for the Essential cover rather than the Premium cover.



2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Save the Date:

Our 2026 Custodians Conference is scheduled for 23–24 November. The venue will be confirmed, but we will make every effort to host it within a 90-minute radius from OR Tambo Airport.

The 2025 conference held at Goudini Spa in the Cape Winelands as always, struck the perfect balance between meaningful discussion and camaraderie—serious business paired with plenty of good moments! If you were unable to attend, you can catch the highlights here: [👉 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9IPNTpb2ds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9IPNTpb2ds)

We cannot mention the 2025 conference, without once again referring to our amazing sponsors and donors as published on the last page of this newsletter. We request our members to please support them whenever possible.

ACTIVITIES

Program Of Change & Custodians Trails:

In our last newsletter of 2025, we indicated that we would share more information about the Custodians Program of Change and the Custodians-trails initiative, which was presented at the Conference. This information will be included in our next newsletter, to be distributed at the end of January.

Presidential Multi-Sector Engagement:

Our chairman, Jacques Senekal, participated in the Presidential Multi-Sector Engagement held in Rustenburg on January 7, where representatives from the wildlife, mining, gambling, and tourism sectors were invited to share insights with President Ramaphosa. This was followed by plenary sessions for various sectors, including Disability, Farm workers, Liquor, CPA's, Taxi industry, NGO's – civil society; Widows, Business – NAFCO, Biodiversity, University young graduates, Faith Based organisations, Traditional healers, etc.

We extend our appreciation to Mr. Jonathan Denga of North-West for his efforts in ensuring the inclusion of the wildlife sector in the programme, particularly given the event was organised at very short notice.

We have distributed a video featuring Ms. Lizanne Nel from SA Hunters & Game Conservation Association and Mr. Stephen Palos from CHASA, who presented key points from the wildlife sector within the limited time available. During the full-day event, Jacques identified several matters that EXCO will address as part of our strategic discussions at the March EXCO meeting.

SURVEYS

Prof Peet van der Merwe from NWU (TREES) is conducting a research survey on the value of the export quota. Your input is valuable in gathering data to understand the economic impact of these species in the industry. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey using the link below: <https://nwu.questionpro.com/t/AcAUTZ7r1L>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS:

Custodians will be at the OPHAA Booth at DSC in Atlanta, and will also be represented in the Guides & Outfitters lane at SCI in Nashville.

If you would attend any of these two, please feel free to stop by.



Some members who have already travelled overseas have informed us that many of them did not receive their luggage upon arrival. As a gentle reminder, if you are planning to fly to the upcoming conventions, please pack at least three days' worth of clothing in your hand luggage.

Conservation Force

Custodians is a co-petitioner to the Conservation Force petition to delist the Bontebok from the Endangered Species Act.



U.S. Withdraws from Select International Organizations

The U.S. Department of State has announced it will withdraw from 66 international organizations deemed wasteful, ineffective, or not aligned with U.S. interests. This decision follows a review under Executive Order 14199. [Read more here.](#)

Following the recent announcement by the U.S. Department of State on its withdrawal from a number of international organizations, the implications extend beyond American policy alone. Several of the organizations affected have mandates that directly intersect with South Africa's strategic priorities, including biodiversity conservation, ocean governance, climate science, land use, and sustainable development. The overview below highlights these developments from a South African policy perspective, rather than a U.S. one.



Read more on the next page

The following are the possible affects on South Africa, **as per a paid credible AI platform.**

Biodiversity and ecosystems (high relevance to South Africa)

Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

This is probably the most important body on the list for South Africa.

Why it matters to South Africa:

- * Provides the global scientific assessments underpinning biodiversity policy, similar to what the IPCC does for climate
- * Strong focus on biodiversity hotspots – South Africa sits at the centre of the Cape Floristic Region, one of the world's richest
- * Heavily used by SANBI, DEA/DFFE, and conservation NGOs in policy formulation
- * Indigenous knowledge systems are explicitly integrated, which aligns closely with southern African land-use practices

US withdrawal reduces funding and political weight but does not weaken South Africa's standing – if anything, it creates space for Global South leadership.

International Union for Conservation of Nature

The IUCN is foundational to conservation work in South Africa.

Why it matters:

- Red List of Threatened Species – widely used in South African environmental impact assessments
- Protected area governance models used by SANParks
- Marine and freshwater ecosystem work relevant to South Africa's coastline and river systems
- Strong African regional presence

A US exit does not remove US scientists, but it does reduce funding and soft power inside the organisation.

Climate science and land–water systems

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Indirect but extremely important for conservation.

Why it matters:

- Climate change is now the primary long-term threat to South African biodiversity
- IPCC Working Group II directly informs adaptation strategies in water-scarce regions
- Used extensively in South Africa's National Adaptation Strategy and biodiversity planning

Even though the US withdrawal is politically symbolic, IPCC science remains heavily used in South Africa.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Not a conservation body in the narrow sense, but deeply relevant.

Why it matters:

- Climate finance mechanisms affect conservation outcomes (wetlands, rangelands, forests)
 - South Africa's conservation sector increasingly depends on climate-linked funding
 - US disengagement weakens global ambition, which disproportionately affects climate-vulnerable biodiversity regions like southern Africa
-

Oceans, fisheries, and coastal conservation

International Renewable Energy Agency

Indirect conservation relevance.

Why it matters:

- Offshore wind and renewable energy planning intersect with marine ecosystems
 - South Africa's energy transition affects coastal land use, seabirds, and fisheries
 - Loss of US participation reduces technical capacity-sharing
-

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Urban conservation matters more than people often assume.

Why it matters:

- Urban sprawl, informal settlements, and infrastructure pressure biodiversity corridors
- Relevant to South African metros expanding into sensitive ecological zones
- Integrates environmental planning with housing and land reform

Migration, land use, and human–environment pressure

Global Forum on Migration and Development

Conservation relevance is indirect but real.

Why it matters:

- Population movement affects land pressure, water systems, and protected areas
- Particularly relevant in southern Africa’s transboundary conservation areas
- Useful for planning around climate-induced migration

Why this matters specifically for South Africa

Three strategic implications stand out:

1. South Africa becomes relatively more influential

US withdrawal reduces Northern dominance in conservation governance. Countries like South Africa gain more agenda-setting space, especially within IPBES and IUCN.

2. Funding gaps may open

Many of these bodies rely heavily on US financial contributions. That can slow projects in Africa unless alternative donors (EU, China, foundations) step in.

3. Conservation becomes more geopolitically fragmented

South Africa may increasingly work through Global South coalitions and regional African frameworks rather than US-centric ones.

Bottom line

From a South African conservation perspective, the most consequential organisations on the US withdrawal list are:

- * IPBES
- * IUCN
- * IPCC
- * UNFCCC
- * UN-Habitat (indirect but important)

None of these withdrawals harm South Africa’s formal participation. The real effect is on global momentum, funding, and scientific coordination – not legal standing.



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