



GREEN COAST MANUAL

WESSA GREEN COAST





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1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa is blessed with an incredibly diverse coastline that stretches over 2,500 kilometres from our border with Namibia in the west to the Mozambique border in the east. The coastline boasts around 200 swimming beaches, 24 Marine Protected Areas and 3 World Heritage Sites.

In order for our country to fully appreciate our coastal space and reap the long term rewards of coastal tourism, it is essential that specific portions of our coastline are, at the same time, both adequately promoted and protected.

The WESSA Green Coast award aims to actively promote and protect less developed beaches with high biodiversity value along our coastline. These beaches appeal to a specific sector of the tourism market who are looking for experiences in adventure, outdoor living and nature tourism along our coastline. The Green Coast award assists these sites by putting them on the tourism map and promoting them all under one tourism standard. The award complements aspects of the International Blue Flag Award, and allows local municipalities, civil society and local businesses to sustainably co-manage those coastal sites outside of traditionally developed swimming beaches.

The Green Coast award has been developed by WESSA to recognise coastal sites that are managed according to standardised criteria and are able to maintain a consistent improvement of conditions at the site. Green Coast sites aim to protect at least one of three main coastal themes, namely: sensitive habitats, sensitive species and cultural heritage. The Green Coast criteria include aspects of basic ecological monitoring which encourages citizen science initiatives that empower communities for civic action and influence localized decision-making.

The award has been developed in a way that will allow for adequate monitoring and protection of the site, whilst also allowing for the development of low impact coastal tourism, should there be potential for this. The vision for the Green Coast award process is that a local organisation/s will partner with the local municipality in helping to apply for and sustain the award which will be made on an annual basis.

The standardised criteria, together with explanatory notes, are listed in the Criteria Checklist. Both this Manual and the Criteria Checklist should also prove valuable for the management of those coastal zones accredited with Green Coast status, and will also serve as a guide for the National Jury which is the decision-making body for assessing Green Coast applications.

The technical aspects of ensuring the fairness and objectivity of an award system can be very complicated. There are many definitions and rules that are accepted by most award schemes and certifiers. A few of the most important are:

- **Non-discrimination:** award will be available to all applicants who meet the standards and whose activities are covered;
- Award should be free of undue financial considerations and independent of size or membership in groups or organizations;
- The award body must be free from commercial or financial pressures that might influence decisions;
- The award standard will consist of clearly defined criteria;
- The National Jury will make impartial evaluations and award decisions, based on clearly defined criteria;
- The awarding body should allow the participation of all parties significantly concerned with the activity being assessed, with respect to the content and function of the award system.

2 STAKEHOLDERS' ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 NATIONAL OPERATOR

The National Operator of Green Coast (WESSA) has the following responsibilities:

- To ensure the general day to day administration of the National programme.
- To ensure and encourage effective communication between the Implementer and the Municipality.
- To ensure effective communication with other Green Coast stakeholders.
- To ensure that a Green Coast annual budget is produced and followed.
- To ensure that the Green Coast criteria, manuals and application documents are continuously assessed for relevance and updated accordingly.
- It functions as the head office for the National Green Coast programme.
- To receive annual application documents and conduct all Green Coast site inspections.
- To facilitate the Green Coast National Jury assessment process.

2.2 IMPLEMENTER

The Implementer can be either a municipality and/or the main collaborating interest Group, (Friends, Conservancy, etc) which takes responsibility for project management, etc. Responsibilities can be shared or distinct. The Green Coast Implementers have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that the Green Coast criteria are being adhered to at their specific site.
- To ensure that the Green Coast monitoring file is kept up to date.
- To ensure that the annual Green Coast application is submitted timeously.
- To ensure that the annual Environmental Education programmes and beach clean-up take place and are reported on.
- Support the Green Coast National Operator (WESSA) in the communication with the local municipalities.
- Support the Green Coast National Operator (WESSA) in the marketing of their Green Coast award.
- To ensure that the Green Coast theme monitoring plan is being implemented and that the data are being collected and stored. Please note, that the municipality may also be the Implementer.

2.3 MUNICIPALITY

The Municipalities have the following responsibilities:

- To ensure that the MOU between the Municipality and the Implementer is adhered to, should one be in place. If there is no Implementer that has been identified, the municipality may take on those responsibilities.
- To ensure effective communication is maintained with the Implementer.
- To ensure that the Green Coast facilities and municipal services are maintained and adhere to the Green Coast standard.
- To ensure that the sensitive species, habitat or cultural heritage identified at the Green Coast site is effectively conserved according to local and national legislation.
- **It is the responsibility of the municipality to finance the application fee unless an agreement has been made with the Implementer.**

2.4 NATIONAL JURY

The Green Coast National Jury is the decision-making body for awarding Green Coast status to coastal sites. The National Operator (WESSA) has the “administrative” role to serve the National Jury, the Implementers and the municipalities (if the municipalities and Implementers are separately identified). Given this division it is important that the National Operator should not be a member of the National Jury. The jury will comprise of 5-10 individuals selected by WESSA. The decision-making process will be in the form of online submissions which are submitted annually in July.

The National Operator must ensure that all necessary and relevant information for each applicant is available. Relevant information includes the application form and all of the required documentation. The National Jury will reject incomplete applications.

The main task of the National Jury is to assess applications according to the Green Coast criteria.

2.4.1 The responsibilities of the National Jury are to:

- Examine applications for compliance with the Green Coast criteria.
- Ensure that national control visits have been carried out during the year.

The National Jury will evaluate applications on the basis of the details forwarded by the National Operator in accordance with the Green Coast criteria. Each application is given a national approval, rejection or further review.

At its sole discretion the National Jury may give a rejected applicant the opportunity to re-submit a revised application.

By accepting an application, the National Jury members indicate that they have examined the fully-compliant application.

For candidates approved by the National Jury it is the responsibility of the National Operator to ensure compliance with the criteria throughout the year through independent national control visits.

2.4.2 National Jury Composition:

The National Jury must comprise at least 5 members with relevant experience in coastal, tourism, ecological or educational fields.

A balanced representation will ensure that no part of the Programme would have more influence on the awards than another (e.g. environmental representation vs. tourism representation). This aims to ensure the highest possible credibility of the Programme through recognized expertise in the fields governed by the criteria.

Ideally, the composition of the National Jury would include the following:

- Coastal Management Specialist
- Estuarine Specialist
- Local Coastal Tourism Representative
- Coastal Habitat Specialist
- Cultural Heritage Specialist
- Education Specialist

2.4.3 Confidentiality Clause:

Jury members agree to treat all information provided by the National Operator as confidential.

3 GREEN COAST APPLICATION PROCESS

Green Coast status is renewable annually. Renewals and new applications are due in July. The manual, criteria checklist and templates can be downloaded from the [WESSA Website](#). New sites must register via the [registration form](#) also found on the website. The Green Coast application fee will be set annually. Applications are submitted via an Online cloud-based platform which may evolve over time in order to streamline the information flow. Applicants will be kept informed on the how this process will be managed as it evolves.

On receipt of an application the National Operator will conduct a site visit to ensure that the site meets the Green Coast criteria. The applicant will be invoiced for the application. WESSA will forward site visit results and completed applications and supporting documentation to the National Jury for final assessment. The National Jury decides whether to award the site or to request that more information is provided/collected before GC status can be awarded.



When applying for the Green Coast award, applications and reapplications need to be accompanied by certain documents. Please see which documents apply to first-time applicants and reapplications as indicated by ticks in the table below.

GREEN COAST APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

#	DOCUMENT	1st YEAR APPLICATIONS	RE-APPLICATIONS	DESCRIPTION
1	Fully completed online application	✓	✓	All applicants will need to fully complete and submit an online application form.
2	Green Coast site must select one main site theme (Habitat, Species or Cultural Heritage) for protection	✓	✓	All applicants must identify at least one relevant theme for their site.
3	Declaration and demarcation of all existing waste discharges	✓		All first-year applicants must submit a detailed map of all existing waste discharge outlets (e.g. storm water).
4	A Waste Management plan		✓	Reapplicants must submit a waste management plan. This is not a requirement for first-year applicants but a plan may be submitted if one has been completed.
5	Pollution Emergency plan		✓	Reapplicants must submit a pollution emergency plan. This is not a requirement for first-year applicants but a plan may be submitted if one has been completed.
6	Tourism activity plan		✓	It is recommended that all re-applicants submit a tourism activity plan which describes all activities that are available on site (e.g. hiking trails).
7	One map of the site indicating all facilities, tourist activities (walks, hikes)	✓		All first-year applicants must submit a detailed map of the Green Coast site. This map must indicate the tourism activities, the ablution facilities, waste bins, pathways and parking areas.
8	Monitoring plan/s according to the selected theme	✓		All first-year applicants must complete a monitoring plan (see appendices) based on their selected theme(s). This plan will describe the theme that will be monitored over the year.
9	Data/results collected from the monitoring plan		✓	All reapplications must provide the results of the monitoring that has taken place based on the monitoring plan submitted in the previous year's application.
10	Indigenous and invasive species lists		✓	All reapplications must provide lists of indigenous and invasive species that are found on the Green Coast site. This is not a requirement for first-year applicants but a plan may be submitted if one has been completed.
11	One high-resolution photograph of the site	✓		All first-year applicants must submit one high-resolution photograph of the Site. This photo must be a landscape shot that clearly shows the site theme.
12	Support letter/MOU from the municipality	✓	✓	If possible, all applicants must provide a letter or MOU between the Implementer and the municipality to show that both parties understand their roles and responsibilities.
13	Environmental Education report		✓	All reapplications must provide a report on their environmental education programmes and beach clean-ups that have taken place at the site.

4 GREEN COAST APPLICATION FEE

Green Coast applicants will be required to pay an annual fee that is reviewed annually. This fee will need to be paid on initial application, and then on an annual basis with each renewal application. The fee is subject to change at the discretion of the National Operator.

The Green Coast applicant will be invoiced upon receipt of the application and all required documents.

5 GREEN COAST MERCHANDISE

All successful Green Coast sites will receive the following merchandise:

- One Green Coast information board. The board will display a Green Coast map with the locations of all facilities, tourism activities, Green Coast information, and the specific site theme and site regulations.
- Two Green Coast flags
- One WESSA flag

The Implementer will be responsible for the care and maintenance of the merchandise.

6 CORE GREEN COAST ELEMENTS

All successful Green Coast sites will have the following core components, the first two of which will be issued to successful sites upon being awarded Green Coast status.

6.1 GREEN COAST FLAG

The Green Coast Flag will be issued to all successful Green Coast sites. The flag must be flown every day to signal that the site is an official Green Coast site. It is the responsibility of the Implementer to ensure that the flag is kept safe and maintained. The flag can be taken down by the National Operator if non-compliance is found.

6.2 GREEN COAST INFORMATION BOARD

The Green Coast information board will be issued to all successful Green Coast sites. The location of the board is at the discretion of the Implementer and the municipality. The board will display the following information:

- Emergency contact numbers provided by the applicant;
- Implementer contact numbers;
- Information about that Green Coast site (main theme(s));
- Green Coast programme information;
- A detailed map of the Green Coast site;
- Green Coast site regulations (e.g. no dumping).

It is suggested that the board be erected near the main entrance to the Green Coast site where the carpark or facilities are located. It is the responsibility of the Implementer and the municipality to ensure that the information board is kept safe and maintained.

6.3 GREEN COAST THEME

It is imperative that all sites that apply for the Green Coast award identify one of the three main themes worthy of protection at the site, namely, Habitat, Species or Cultural Heritage. A site will only be considered if it falls into at least one of these themes.

6.4 ABLUTION FACILITIES

It is not imperative that a Green Coast site has ablution facilities if it can be proven that there is in fact not a need. If ablution facilities are available, they will need to be regularly cleaned and maintained. It is the responsibility of the municipality to ensure the ablution facilities are clean. The facilities will be audited quarterly by the implementer and during the WESSA control visit and rated from 1 to 5 according to cleanliness and maintenance issues. Should any facility be rated below 4 the local authority must indicate how this will be addressed going forward.

6.5 OPEN ACCESS

All Green Coast sites will have open and free access to visitors. They will have designated parking areas, this includes disabled parking, where possible. An access fee may be accepted if the site has an existing access fee (e.g. Nature Reserve). Domestic animal access rules must be clearly indicated.

6.6 SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Solid waste disposal bins must be available on all Green Coast sites. There must be adequate waste management at the site to ensure that the waste is removed on a regular basis.

6.7 DISABLED FACILITIES

At least one Green Coast site per municipality must be accessible to people with disabilities. All sites will need to have disabled parking available and accessible ablution facilities. This is not an imperative for the first site being applied for.

6.8 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

A Green Coast site will have at least two environmental education programmes and one beach clean-up event per year. These events will need to be reported on to the National Operator as a requirement of the application process (see Section 3 above).

7 GREEN COAST APPLICATION FORM

Applications are submitted via an Online cloud-based platform which may evolve over time in order to streamline the information flow. Applicants will be kept informed on the how this process will be managed as it evolves. By submitting the application form, the applicant is agreeing that all information is correct. The information given on the application form will also provide the basis for inspection of the site by the National Operator. Applications are due in July annually. All Green Coast documentation that accompanies the application will be made available online at www.wessa.org.za.

8 WESSA BENEFITS

A successful Green Coast site will also receive a number of services from WESSA. These services include:

- Press releases
- Marketing to local tourism organisations
- WESSA social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- WESSA webpage advertising

9 GREEN COAST MANAGEMENT TEMPLATES

The Green Coast templates have been designed as a guideline for all new Green Coast applicants and may be edited accordingly, or simply referenced as a guideline for the type of information required. The templates are available at www.wessa.org.za. They include:

- Green Coast MOU
- Species monitoring plan
- Habitat monitoring plan
- Cultural heritage monitoring plan
- Waste management plan
- Pollution emergency plan
- Tourism activity plan
- Environmental education report

10 GREEN COAST SITE INSPECTION

Formal site inspections will be conducted by the National Operator (WESSA). Inspections will take place in the first year, second year and every third year thereafter. For all years without an inspection, a formal desktop review of the application material will take place. The results of the inspections will be given to the Implementer. In the case of non-compliance, the Implementer will have 14 days (2 weeks) to rectify the compliance issue. If more than 14 days is needed, the Implementer must notify the National Operator accordingly.