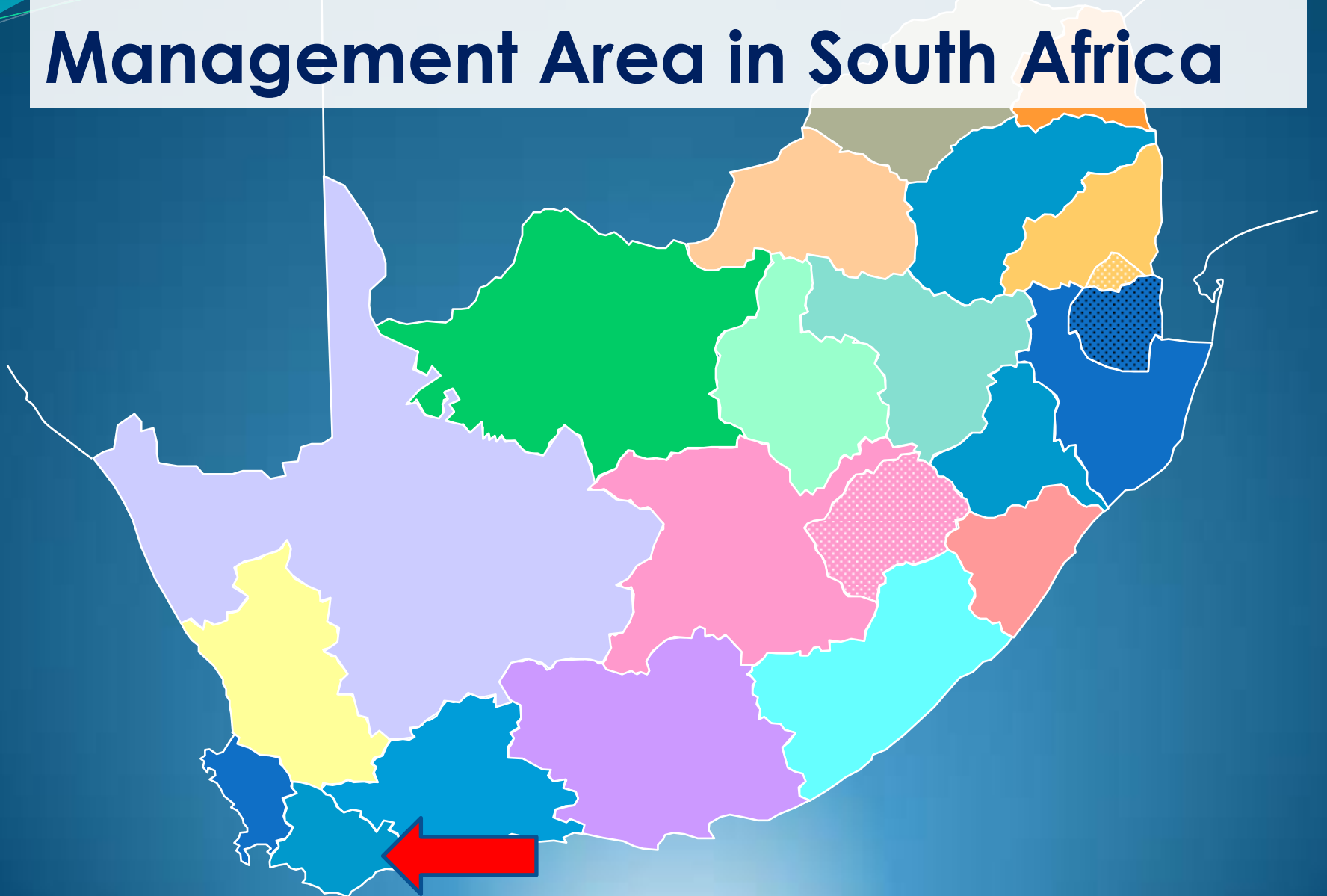


# The role of Water User Associations in viable decentralization for adaptive management:

## Lessons learned from the Breede Water Management Area

Dr Samantha Adey  
Breede-Overberg  
Catchment Management Agency

# Location of the Breede Water Management Area in South Africa







# National Water Act (36 of 1998)

- 2 rights to water:  
basic human needs and  
the environment.
- Provision for the establishment of  
Catchment Management Agencies



# Institutional Structure

**Water User Associations are the fourth tier in the water management structure**



**Functions are delegated down to the local level of the WUA**





**Furthermore:**

**WUAs are public law bodies –  
undertake functions of a public interest nature  
(NWA (36 of 1998))**

**WUAs are free within the law to make their own  
decisions**



# Water User Associations: roles and responsibilities

- Water resource protection, pollution prevention and conservation
- Self regulation of local water use activities
- Monitoring of water resource status and use
- Mechanism whereby water users are directly involved in management and decision-making
- Responsibility for Government Water Schemes
- Billing agent services to water users

# Is Decentralisation Viable?

**YES!**

- **DWA functions have been delegated to WUAs through CMA**
- **WUAs operate at the local level and include all sectors of water users in a given catchment**



A scenic landscape featuring a river in the foreground, a semi-transparent text box in the center, and mountains in the background.

# Key Questions:

- Is decentralisation effective?
- How does it become more effective?

# Adaptive management: key institutional factors

- Voluntary compliance
- Tradition and mental models
- Administrative responsibility and bureaucratic inertia
- Conflict resolution mechanisms
- Socio-political economy
- Acquisition of information



## **Summary:**

- **Management of the resource is effective: regulation and control processes well-established and well understood**
- **Collective decision-making is not as effective: processes that enable a supportive environment are not established nor well understood**

## **Conclusion:**

**Institutional processes have also been decentralised with the delegated functions**

# Key Institutional Challenges:

- Structures and processes within the CMA do not readily support effective decentralisation and adaptive management
- CMA currently practices only regulatory control of the WUA
- CMA acts largely in isolation regarding the planning and management of the water resource



# Way Forward

- CMA should adopt participatory and adaptive management processes in addition to regulatory processes
- CMA must drive and engage in inter-sectoral planning and management of the water resource



# **Thank You!**

**Samantha Adey**  
**[samantha.adey@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.adey@gmail.com)**