

A quick guide to: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WATER PROVISION



Providing water for animals (wildlife and livestock) is essential as movement is often limited by fences and natural water not available. The provision of water is one of the main management interventions available to wildlife managers. The correct placement and management of water points is essential to prevent overgrazing and environmental degradation, and excessive use around water points leads to a piosphere effect.



Elephant using a raised concrete dam

Ecological considerations for water provision

- Use natural water wherever possible.
- Muddy pans play an important thermoregulatory role in many species that like to wallow and role in mud (e.g. elephant, buffalo and warthog).
- The incorrect placement of water points can result in the under- or overutilization of an area.
- If water is provided in troughs (as is often the case for larger animals) build stone ramps inside and outside the water point to allow access for smaller species (e.g. rodents, reptiles and amphibians).
- Monitoring around water sources is essential to know what species are using a water source and the extent to which heavy trampling by animals may be causing damage.
- Water points are focal points for animals in the dry season and can result in increased competition and predation



Black wildebeest at an artificial pan

Spacing and rotation of water points

- Water points should be no closer than 7 km apart. Even the most water dependent species can move 5-7 km from a water source.
- To avoid excessive impact, artificial water points can be opened and closed to facilitate the movement of animals to new areas.

Where is the best location for a water point

Selecting a site for the placement of a water point should consider the environment and needs of an animal.

- Avoid steep areas where trampling can lead to soil erosion.
- Place water points in open areas where animals feel safe and there is little risk of the surrounding vegetation polluting the water. Open areas are also better for game viewing.
- Try not to place water points near to sensitive vegetation or soils that can be easily damaged.
- Avoid already degraded areas that need time to recover without animal pressure

A final consideration for water points is where does the water come from? Is water going to be pumped from the ground, collected as runoff from buildings or fed from storage dams. Furthermore, is there enough storage to provide water year-round and how far will you have to pump/move water from a storage to a water point?



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