



A D V E N T U R E
I N D U S T R Y
A S S O C I A T I O N

SA AIA Environmental Policy

Approval page

The signatories hereof, being duly authorised thereto, by their signatures hereto authorise the execution of the work detailed herein, or confirm their acceptance of the contents hereof and authorise the implementation/adoption thereof, as the case may be, for and on behalf of the parties represented by them.

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1 Purpose

The South African Adventure Industry Association (SA AIA) recognises the value of South Africa's diverse natural and cultural environments and promotes responsible, respectful, and sustainable outdoor practice across all adventure and outdoor learning activities.

This Environmental Policy serves as a guideline for anyone engaging in outdoor activities - including:

- a. Members of the public
- b. Adventure guides and operators
- c. Outdoor education practitioners (facilitators)
- d. Instructors and training providers
- e. Schools, youth groups, families, and community groups
- f. Landowners and venue managers

This policy applies broadly to all environments encountered in adventure activities:

- a. Rivers, wetlands, lakes, coasts
- b. Mountains, cliffs, forests, grasslands, fynbos
- c. Off-road routes, trails, bike parks, and wilderness areas
- d. Nature reserves, tourism areas, community land, and school camps

2 Guiding Principles

2.1 Environmental Stewardship

Activities must be planned and delivered in ways that protect, preserve, and enhance natural and cultural environments.

2.2 Leave No Trace

All activities must be aligned with globally recognised Leave No Trace (LNT) principles and adapted for South African ecosystems.

2.3 Sustainability and Regeneration

Where possible, activities should contribute to long-term ecosystem health, community benefit, and sustainable land use.

2.4 Respect for Landowners and Indigenous Knowledge

Access agreements, landowner rules, and local cultural and ecological knowledge must be adhered to with respect and transparency.

2.5 Climate Awareness and Resource Efficiency

Individuals, guides, and operators should promote low-impact travel, reduced emissions, and responsible use of water, energy, and materials.

2.6 Duty of Care and Risk Management

Environmental risk (floods, fire, wildlife, erosion, weather patterns) must be actively assessed and mitigated.

3 General Environmental Practices for All Outdoor Activities

These guidelines offer practical actions that anyone can follow to help protect the environment.

3.1 Access and Permissions

- a. Use only approved routes, sites, trails, and access points.
- b. Honour all permit requirements, conservation fees, and protected area regulations.
- c. Coordinate with landowners and reserve managers where needed.

3.2 Waste and Sanitation

- a. Pack-in, pack-out: No litter, micro-trash, food scraps, cigarette butts, or disposable plastics left behind.
- b. Use approved sanitation methods (pit latrines, composting toilets, sealable waste systems).
- c. No washing with soap in rivers, dams, or streams – even biodegradable soaps.

3.3 Wildlife Protection

- a. Maintain safe distances and minimise disturbance to wildlife.
- b. Prohibit feeding, baiting, approaching, collecting, or harassing wildlife.
- c. Reduce noise pollution and light pollution where possible.

3.4 Vegetation and Terrain Care

- a. Stay on durable surfaces and established trails.
- b. Avoid shortcutting switchbacks, widening trails, or causing soil erosion.
- c. Protect sensitive plant species, wetlands, riparian zones, dunes, and fragile terrain.

3.5 Water Resource Responsibility

- a. Prevent contamination from human waste, chemicals, fuel, soaps, or greywater.
- b. Avoid altering riverbeds, vegetation, or hydrological features unnecessarily.
- c. Use water-based site only under safe and legal conditions.

3.6 Fire Safety

- a. Follow all seasonal fire bans, park regulations, and landowner rules.
- b. Use designated fire rings or stoves where permitted.
- c. Extinguish fires fully and manage ash responsibly.

3.7 Vehicle, Equipment, and Trail Impact

- a. Use only approved roads and tracks.
- b. Prevent soil erosion, track widening, and sensitive habitat damage.
- c. Contain oil leaks, fuel spills, and mechanical waste.
- d. Clean bikes/vehicles to prevent spread of invasive seeds or pathogens.

4 Responsible Practices for Groups, Guides, and Leaders

Regardless of whether you are a professional or a casual trip leader, these practices help ensure group safety and environmental respect:

4.1 Planning

- a. Conduct environmental risk assessments as part of activity planning.
- b. Select sites and routes appropriate to group size and environmental sensitivity.
- c. Prepare emergency and incident response aligned with environmental protection.
- d. Check for weather risks, fire danger, and environmental alerts.
- e. Prepare groups with information on minimal-impact behaviour.

4.2 Implementation

- a. Encourage responsible environmental behaviour at all times through positive modelling.
- b. Enforce participant compliance with leave-no-trace practices.
- c. Prevent or effectively manage activities during extreme environmental conditions (fire danger, flooding, erosion risk, lightning, etc.).

4.3 Group Management

- a. Manage group size to reduce impact.
- b. Provide environmental briefings before activities.
- c. Supervise participants to prevent harmful behaviour.

4.4 Reporting and Compliance

- a. Report environmental incidents, pollution events, or unauthorised activity.
- b. Engage with SA AIA or landowners when repeated environmental issues occur.
- c. Contribute to monitoring, data collection, or stewardship initiatives if requested.

5 Responsibilities of Skills Development Partners (SDPs), Training Providers, Venues, and Programme Leaders

- a. Integrate environmental ethics and Leave No Trace into all training programmes.
- b. Train instructors and trainees on ecosystem sensitivity and environmental risk factors.
- c. Ensure facilities, venues, and equipment meet environmental compliance standards.
- d. Keep accurate records of environmental incidents, mitigations, and improvements.
- e. Promote carbon-aware operations and energy-efficient practices where feasible.

6 Environmental Considerations in Safety and Risk Management

Responsible outdoor practice includes being aware of environmental risks such as:

- a. Floods, rising water levels, and flash-flood risk
- b. Fire risk and fire behaviour
- c. Weather instability (storms, wind, lightning, heat stress, cold exposure)
- d. Erosion hazards, unstable terrain, rockfall, or hazardous trails
- e. Wildlife interactions
- f. Plant hazards (e.g., thorns, poisonous species)
- g. Water contamination risks

Mitigation strategies must be documented as part of activity planning, training programmes, and operational guidelines. Leadership decisions should balance safety, environmental protection, and activity goals.

7 Education and Continuous Improvement

SA AIA commits to:

- a. Promoting environmental education across all chapters.
- b. Supporting research and industry-wide best practices.
- c. Providing workshops, CPD opportunities, and technical updates.
- d. Updating environmental standards as ecosystems and climate patterns change.

Individuals and organisations are invited to:

- a. Share positive practices
- b. Provide suggestions for improvement
- c. Report environmental concerns where appropriate
- d. Participate in stewardship and conservation activities.

8 Policy Nature and Use

This Environmental Policy is intended as a public guideline, freely accessible to anyone who wishes to adopt principles of responsible environmental behaviour.

It is not a regulatory document and does not impose enforceable obligations. Instead, it reflects SA AIA and its members' commitment to supporting ethical, sustainable, and respectful outdoor practice across all contexts.

9 Version Control and Review

Item	Details
Date of Publication	December 2025
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Responsible SA AIA Subcommittee	Skills and Ratification Committee