

AILEEN ANDERSON

South African | MSc Resource Management & Environmental Science
MSc Public Management and Governance

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PROFILE

Environmental scientist and conservation leader with over 20 years' experience in freshwater and catchment management in Southern Africa and internationally. Based in the Grootvadersbosch Conservancy (Western Cape, South Africa), I have led multiple projects to protect endangered freshwater fish species, restore river ecosystems, and build local conservation capacity. Recognised with national conservation awards, I combine technical expertise with strong leadership, mentoring young scientists, guiding community-based initiatives, and engaging landowners in collaborative river restoration. Currently leading efforts to establish a freshwater fish sanctuary for the Critically Endangered Tradouw redbin, ensuring its long-term survival through science, community partnership, and innovative conservation solutions.

KEY QUALIFICATIONS & RECOGNITION

- Leader in freshwater fish conservation: Over 10 years managing aquatic restoration projects in the Huis–Tradouw catchments, including the Barrydale and Tradouw redbin species action plans.
- Technical expertise: Certified SASS5 practitioner in aquatic bio-monitoring; experienced in freshwater fish surveys, river restoration, and invasive species management.
- Mentorship & capacity building: Founder of the “Rivers of Tomorrow” youth-led monitoring initiative; mentor to conservation interns, students, and community youth.
- Community-based conservation: General Manager of Grootvadersbosch Conservancy, coordinating 19 landowners in joint action on invasive alien clearing, forest restoration, and river protection.
- Award-winning conservation leader: Recipient of Best Managed Conservancy Award (2019) and Best Conservancy Manager Award (2018) and Conservation Driver Award (2023) from Conservation at Work.
- Science–policy linkages: Published on freshwater biodiversity, including policy papers on the Barrydale redbin; regular presenter at the Fynbos Forum and national conservation platforms.
- London School of Economics and Political Science award for best research project on water utilities in Zambia (2009).

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Chartered Institute for Water and Environmental Management (MCIWEM C.WEM)

SELECTED EXPERIENCE IN FRESHWATER FISH & CATCHMENT CONSERVATION

Creating a Safe Home in the Huis River for the Tradouw Redfin (2024–2025)

- Leading a multi-stakeholder initiative to improve the habitat of the Huis River to protect the Critically Endangered Tradouw redfin.
- Coordinating ecological surveys, community engagement, and long-term management planning.
- Guiding a team of conservationists, landowners, and students in monitoring and habitat restoration.

WWF funded project to improve collective management of shared water resources in the Huis-Tradouw System (2004-ongoing)

- Creating employment opportunities that support nature-positive solutions (alien clearing and restoration).
- Creating a water balance tool to support the quantification of the ecological reserve to monitor environmental flows.

Tradouw Redfin Species Action Plan (2025)

- Developed the official Species Action Plan to protect the Tradouw redfin, working closely with scientists, CapeNature, and SAIAB.
- Co-author of national policy paper: Conservation Options for the Imperilled Tradouw redfin (2024).

Rivers of Tomorrow: Youth-led State of the River Reporting (2024–ongoing)

- Designed and implemented youth-led monitoring and awareness-raising programme.
- Training local youth as environmental reporters and freshwater stewards.

Aquatic Species Protection Project (2014–2018)

- Implemented monitoring and habitat protection for freshwater fish in the Grootvadersbosch rivers.
- Mentored interns and youth in fish surveys, macro-invertebrate monitoring, and riparian restoration.

Framework Plan for Future Investment in the Huis River Catchment (2023), funded by the Western Cape Government

- Facilitated consultations with landowners, farmers, and community groups to support water security planning.
- Provided technical and local expertise to ensure river restoration priorities were integrated.

Early Career Freshwater Work (1999–2013, Canada, UK, Tanzania, Zambia & South Africa)

- Consultant to the Department of Water affairs on developing a monitoring and evaluation programme for water allocation reform (2013).

- Drafted and presented reports on energy sector impacts on water resources to the Ramsar Scientific Technical Review Panel (2012).
- Completed a field-based evaluation of water utilities in Zambia (MSc research) (2009).
- Coordinated a health and hygiene campaign in rural Tanzania to support water supply improvements (2008).
- Worked with Canadian federal agencies on watershed stewardship and protection of indigenous fish habitats across Canada (2002-2004).
- Evaluated public participation processes used to establish South African Catchment Management Agencies (MSc research) (2002).

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

General Manager – Grootvadersbosch Conservancy (2013–present)

- Lead conservation and restoration efforts across 35,000 ha and 19 private properties.
- Manage government contracts for invasive alien clearing, employing ~60 full-time equivalents annually.
- Mentor staff, interns, and students in ecological monitoring, project management, and community engagement.
- Director of the Silver Mountain Music Festival, promoting nature, arts, and culture among rural youth.

Director – Crossflow Consulting (2012–present)

- Provided technical advisory and leadership for water resource management projects across Southern Africa.
- Specialised in water governance, public participation, water allocation reform and environmental monitoring.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS & MEDIA

- Species Action Plan for the Tradouw redbin – Presentation at Fynbos Forum, 2025.
- Conservation Options for the Imperilled Tradouw Redfin – Policy paper, SAIAB (2024).
- Restoration of the Huis River – Presentation at Fynbos Forum, 2023 and 2024.
- Key note speaker at Fynbos Forum 2021
- Multiple peer-reviewed papers and technical reports (2008–2023) on water resource management, monitoring frameworks, and river restoration.
- Media features:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/14JuDFgfHCN/>
 - <https://www.gvbconservancy.co.za/conservancyblog/public-meeting-and-comment-on-draft-action-plan-for-the-tradouw-redfin>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/live/72myIAfw2yc?si=0gySeEFnrg6F6UI5>
 - <https://www.greentrust.org.za/2025/08/10/how-the-redfin-is-helping-water-conservation/>
 - <https://www.gvbconservancy.co.za/conservancyblog/4th-bmp-workshop-for-the-tradouw-redfin>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/share/r/1GxY8vymjS/>

- <https://www.gvbconservancy.co.za/conservancyblog/monitoring-the-tradouw-redfin-a-concerning-decline>
- https://youtu.be/aDKmbXAIH7Y?si=kDgmWS46_xhfgQ0G
- https://youtu.be/-aVwb2YHhPc?si=J0H8bfQyEOJQ_nBk

EDUCATION and TRAINING

- MSc Public Management & Governance, London School of Economics (Chevening Scholar, 2009)
- MSc Resource Management & Environmental Science, University of British Columbia (2002)
- BSc (Hons) Environmental & Geographical Science, University of Cape Town (1998, with distinction)
- Diploma in Project Management (2007, with distinction)
- Certification in competence in Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation Training, International Institute for local Development, South Africa, 2013
- Advanced training in Integrated Water Resource Management for poverty alleviation, Swedish International Development Agency Training Programme, 2006 and 2010, Sweden, South Africa, Tanzania