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# Fynbos tool app scoops UN prize

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A TEAM of scientists from South Africa's environmental observation network has scooped a prestigious UN data prize for a tool that helps detect threats to the country's unique fynbos.

The scientists at the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) and the State University of New York at Buffalo won the UN Data for Climate Action Challenge contest in the thematic award for climate mitigation.

This was for their prototype near-real time monitoring tool that reports on the state and change in vegetation based on satellite observations.

SAEON is a research infrastructure platform within the National Research Foundation. Run by UN Global Pulse, the contest tasked contestants with developing research papers or data visualisations that address problems tied to climate change.

SAEON's team, led by Dr Jasper Slingsby of the fynbos node, included research associate Dr Glenn Moncrieff and Professor Adam Wilson from the university at Buffalo, submitted a paper that included prototype web and smartphone apps for an ecosystem monitoring tool. Called the Ecosystem Monitoring for Management App, it detects abnormal changes in the greenness of fynbos in near-real time.

"Tools that provide spatially explicit biodiversity and environmental data, monitored over the long term but made available in near-real time, are the critical basis for ecosystem management..."

By detecting potential threats to the ecosystem in near-real time, the tool can inform the responses of conservation authorities, citizen scientists and policymakers while collecting data for long-term ecological research," said Slingsby.

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