

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: Wilderness Foundation South Africa

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): *Baviaanskloof Decision-Makers Trails*

Implementation Partners for This Project: Eastern Cape Parks Board, Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve steering committee.

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): December 1, 2006 – June 30, 2009

Date of Report (month/year): September 2009

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

The Baviaanskloof Decision-Maker Trails project aimed to take eight guided wilderness trails into the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve over a two and a half year period ending in June 2009. Participants for these trails were carefully selected decision makers from the region, ranging from local community leaders, youth, municipal, tourism industry and agricultural leaders.

The selection of candidates was crucial as one of the key objectives of the trails was to develop an appreciation of the amazing biodiversity within the reserve by the participants, and in so doing build an understanding of the benefits and services supplied by the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve and conservation in general. It was also envisaged in the planning and implementation of this project that the experience would better equip participants in their roles as decision makers when making decisions that affect the development and future management of the Mega-reserve.

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

As mentioned in the opening remarks, the Baviaanskloof Decision Maker Trails project aimed to take eight guided wilderness trails into the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve over a two and a half year period ending in June 2009. Participants for these trails were carefully selected decision makers from the region, ranging from local community leaders, youth, municipal, tourism industry and agricultural leaders.

The selection of candidates was crucial as one of the key objectives of the trails is to develop an appreciation of the amazing biodiversity and ecosystems of the region by the participants, and in so doing build an understanding of the benefits and services supplied by the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve. It was also envisaged in the planning and implementation of this project that the experience would better equip participants in their roles as decision makers when making decisions that affect the development and future management of the Mega-reserve.

A further objective of the project was to provide an opportunity for guides that had been previously trained through Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve initiatives to be mentored and to gain experience in leading trails.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how.

No, the objectives of the project did not change. Challenges in getting potential participants to commit to trail dates did unfortunately result in six trails being completed as opposed to the eight originally planned.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

Six trails took place during the project period and included groups made up as follows:

- 2 groups of local community leaders from the western Baviaanskloof
- Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs: Environmental Compliance Directorate
- Agricultural leaders from within the Baviaanskloof
- 2 groups made up of tourism officials from within the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve planning domain

Local community members who had been trained by the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve Project (as Cultural and Heritage Tour guides) were involved in the trails whenever this was possible and they were given the opportunity to learn about trail guiding, safety and food preparation. This was planned as one of the objectives of the project and was successful in exposing these local community members to the opportunities presented as a professional guide. Most of the trainees are now employed across the Eastern Cape Province as registered guides or are involved in related activities.

The success of the trails can also be attributed to the high quality of the professional wilderness guide who was used to assist in all aspects of planning the trails and then actually leading them. Mr Bruce Dell proved to be the ideal trail leader and all participants commented on the high quality of the experience that he facilitated. The importance of having a person of the highest caliber performing this function cannot be over emphasized and much of the success of the trails is a result of the professional input of the guide.

All of the trail participants reported having had an experience of a lifetime which provided them with an opportunity to understand the significance of the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve as a provincial and national asset and as a World Heritage Site. Many trailists have had a long association with the Baviaanskloof with some even having been born in areas that are now incorporated within the protected area. Despite this, for most of the participants the trails were their first experience they had had of a wilderness area and many had never walked in this way in natural areas.

A further example of the success of the trails is the relationship between the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve and municipal officials (tourism and management) within the planning domain which was consolidated during their trail experience. The trails have lead to an improved awareness around the conservation significance of the Mega-reserve and there is renewed pride in having a World Heritage Site within the various municipal areas.

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

Disappointments were mainly related to actually getting people (especially at a higher level) on trail and having to deal with last minute changes of plan or cancellations. The last two trails

scheduled for early 2009 had to be called off after participants cancelled and this did not leave enough time to organise additional groups.

The main challenge in setting up the trails is to get potential participants to be able to jointly commit to the trail dates as they have busy schedules by the very nature of their positions. This is however a relatively minor logistical matter and has not significantly affected the achievement of the planned deliverables.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

The above mentioned challenge has also been a lesson but it has also provided an opportunity to mix groups (e.g. municipal and agricultural leaders) on one trail as this allowed for different views to be shared and networking could be done in an informal manner. It is therefore not considered vital to have trail participants grouped according to their specific areas of responsibility or interest.

The original concept of influencing decision-makers by exposing them to wilderness areas remains sound and there are many opportunities for replication. The importance of the role of the guide cannot be overstated. Their role is not only to ensure the safety of the group but to provide information which complements the overall experience and results in a positive association with the conservation initiative.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

The impact of the trails carried out during the implementation of this project was the main motivation for looking at ways to broaden the initiative to include other areas and stakeholders within the CAPE Programme. This led to the development and approval of a project currently being funded by CEPF, namely, the Cape Floristic Region Communicating Conservation project. This project is currently underway and there is every indication that the impact will be as desired.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

Due to the last minute cancellation of the trails planned for early 2009 there are funds remaining within the project budget. Should it be acceptable, the remaining funds could be used to carry out a further two trails as planned.

IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
		\$	
		\$	
		\$	
		\$	

****Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

A Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)

- B** *Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)*
- C** *Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)*
- D** *Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The trails were well managed from a logistical perspective but it was an ongoing challenge to get prospective participants to commit to dates and this led to a number of last minute changes to the projected programme. Despite this the impact of the experience on the trailists met our original objectives. This has added considerable depth to many of the existing relationships with stakeholders and has renewed understanding of the significance and potential of the Baviaanskloof Mega-reserve to the region. For many stakeholders the trail provided the first opportunity to experience the natural beauty and wilderness feel of the Baviaanskloof and many participants have commented how this has changed their perception of conservation and protected areas. It is therefore recommended that Eastern Cape Parks Board considers using this proven methodology to expose local decision makers to the Mega-reserve on an ongoing basis, even if it is only one or two trails a year.

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. One way we do this is by making programmatic project documents available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these in our newsletter and other communications.

These documents are accessed frequently by other CEPF grantees, potential partners, and the wider conservation community.

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