



FINAL REPORT TO WILDLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

Re-deployment and capacity building of twelve community field rangers for the proposed Lambasi Provincial Nature Reserve and Mtentu Gorge Protected Area, with an emphasis on the Pondoland Marine Protected Area adjoining Lambasi and the Mtentu Estuary

1. Background

One of the core functions of the Wild Coast Project (2007 -2013) was to recruit, train, equip and deploy community forest/field rangers to enhance the law enforcement capability of DAFF and the ECPTA in those high biodiversity areas on the Wild Coast prioritized for expanded protected areas. The WCP appointed 64 community rangers for Manyube, Sebeni, Nqabarha, Mpame, Pagela, Umgazana, Caguba, Lambasi and Mtentu.



When the project was terminated, these rangers were retrenched. The Project Co-ordinator of the WCP, Peter Tyldesley, then held discussions with representatives of the communities, and there was unanimous agreement that the community rangers should be re-appointed as a matter of urgency. With this in mind, an application for the registration of an NGO (Wild Coast Foundation) was submitted, and a proposal for funding was made to the Wildlands Conservation Trust through the CEPF programme.

The proposal was approved for the sum of R210,846, and the contractual time frame for the project was fixed as 01 August 2014 to 31 July 2015. The contract was received and signed on 29

August, and the first disbursement of R105,423 transferred in late September 2014. As a result of these delays, formal discussion with the Mtentu and Lambasi communities regarding the appointment of the field rangers was only initiated in October. By this time community dynamics had resulted in changes in traditional leadership, and as a result, further negotiations and discussions were required before the field rangers could be appointed.

2. Progress Report

The project area contains two proposed protected areas, viz Lambasi and Mtentu.

2.1 Lambasi

The proposed Lambasi protected area is approximately 8,000 ha in extent and consists primarily of grassland. It is located to the south of the Msikaba river (southern boundary of the Mkhambathi Nature Reserve) and its boundaries are the Indian Ocean (Pondoland MPA) to the east and the Ntsubane forests to the south. During the time of the WCP this area was demarcated and surveyed. The intention to proclaim the area as a (Provincial) Nature Reserve was gazetted in 2014. Due to an objection from the local headman the proclamation has been delayed. Subsequent to this objection, Wild Side and DAFF have arranged several meetings with this headman and his community allies. From these meetings and subsequent follow-up telephonic conversations with all relevant stakeholders, it is clear that there is a community power struggle regarding “ownership” of the proposed protected area. The headman is supported by a group of younger community members, led by a Mr Khumalo, who have challenged the authority of the existing Communal Property Association. This group has met with the Director of Rural Development and Home Affairs, Mr Pityi, who informed them that the membership of the existing CPA could only be changed if due process was followed, i.e. by community agreement at a recognized community meeting which was attended by representatives of his department. Notwithstanding several assurances by Mr Khumalo that the meeting would be arranged and that the membership of the CPA would be changed, this has not happened. In recent discussions with Mr Mnyaka, the previous chairperson of the initial CPA, it has come to light that he, along with 6 other committee members has resigned. He has also informed me that the proposed reserve has been sidelined by traditional leaders, who in collaboration with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform are looking to implement new initiatives including a cattle feedlot and possibly new plantations of Eucalyptus.

These developments do not bode well for the proposed Lambasi reserve, which will not materialize without political support at a high level. I am still in discussions with the ECPTA, which appears to be keen to see the reserve proclaimed, however the intentions and efforts of this agency are restricted by the agendas of the traditional leaders, DEDEAT and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

As was mentioned in the mid term report, land-based patrolling of that section of the Pondoland MPA which is located between Lupatana and Cutweni (i.e. no catch zone), is limited to occasional patrols by staff from Mkhambathi and an annual operation by DEDEAT during the Christmas festive season. There are reports of illegal harvesting of fish and crustaceans in this area, and there are concerns that law enforcement in this area is largely ineffective. On a more positive note, the offshore patrolling is reported to have been effective, with few recreational or professional skiboats now being found in the area. ORI reports also indicate good concentrations and diversity, with some reef species having being caught almost annually for the past five years.

2.2 Mtentu

The proposed Mtentu protected area is located on the northern bank of the Mtentu river, and stretches from the mouth to approximately five kilometers inland. The total area proposed for the PA is estimated at 3,500 ha.



The six community members appointed to monitor this area worked closely with the Mkhambathi field staff, and as a result, there were regular field patrols and thus reduced incidents of illegal fishing. This group of field rangers was monitored by Nondumiso, a former Community Liaison Officer of the Wild Coast Project, living near the Mkhambathi village. She ensured that the attendance registers were correct and attended to any staff problems. She played a key role in mobilising community members, arranging meetings etc, as required. Community members have indicated that they would like the northern bank of the Mtentu estuary proclaimed as a reserve, and were prepared to arrange a community meeting to get a community resolution for this purpose. In the follow on to this project, it is believed that Nondumiso could play a key role in facilitating the possible proclamation of the estuary reserve.

2.3 Comment

It is difficult to assess what the direct impact has been of the community rangers on illegal harvesting of marine resources on the Mtentu and Lambasi portions of the Pondoland MPA. It would appear that where the rangers have worked together with the ECPTA field staff (i.e. Mtentu), illegal harvesting has been effectively monitored and controlled. However, where they have operated in isolation, it has been more difficult to implement an effective monitoring programme. The challenges facing the community rangers are compounded by the fact that they have not received intensive law enforcement training, as WILD SIDE is not

registered as a security company, and therefore they cannot arrest anyone for conducting illegal activities. Nevertheless their presence along the coast has not gone unnoticed.

In addition, it must be noted that by simply employing the community rangers, a strong message has been conveyed to the communities that their needs and aspirations are being considered, and that they will be partners in a participative management agreement and the benefits which would accumulate from a proclaimed protected area.

In conclusion, the short time frame and limited budget of this project along with the delays experienced in appointing the community field rangers have restricted the ability of WILD SIDE to establish the community field rangers as an effective law enforcement unit. The project has provided more than enough evidence that there is a willingness on the part of the communities and government agencies to work together on expanded protected area interventions, given additional financial, operational, management and capacity building support and resources. Under such a scenario, a co-management agreement would include relevant government departments, community forum representatives and an external management/funding agency (i.e. WILD SIDE or an NGO).

3. Summary and recommendations

3.1 Summary

As of November 2015 it would appear as if considerable ground has been lost with regard to the proclamation of the proposed Lambasi Nature Reserve, due primarily to political agendas and the role of the traditional authority. This is unfortunate and regrettable. On the other hand, the positive response from the Mtentu community towards the possible proclamation of the northern bank of the Mtentu estuary is encouraging, and should be followed-up.



In addition to Mtentu, it came to light during this project that there are two communities located on the southern banks of the

Umtamvuna river which have managed to establish camping facilities on the southern banks of the river. I have visited both of these sites, and in discussions with the community representatives and DAFF, it has become apparent that there is a real opportunity to proclaim some 75 kilometers of riverine forest on the southern bank of the Umtamvuna. If this section is proclaimed, it would mean that both banks of the Umtamvuna are protected from the estuary to

approximately 70 kilometers inland. In addition, it opens up the possibility of a Source to Sea project, with protected status for the Umtamvuna from source to sea.

3.2 The Project

The following factors were prioritized during initial discussions on the re-appointment of community field rangers;

- (i) **Employment** – this was the primary objective of especially the youth. All of the communities which were identified as priorities for CEPF funding, (i.e. Mtentu, Lambasi, Nqabarha, Sebeni and Manubi), insisted that opportunities be provided for newcomers to access the field ranger programme. In most cases all of the original field rangers appointed by the Wild Coast Project were replaced. As a result, (i) there were conflicts between the “old guards” and the new appointments, (ii) new rangers have had to be trained – without an adequate budget, (iii) new appointments would need additional uniforms and equipment, (iv) whereas in the past CPA or PFMC members selected a number of young community members from different villages for training and selection, it would appear that in the latest appointment process, selection was influenced by prominent individuals, and as a result, the names of children or relatives of community leaders have been provided for selection.
- (ii) **Ownership and control** – it is now evident that having experienced the Wild Coast Project, and being made aware of the potential benefits of a Protected Area or Nature Reserve, community chiefs and headmen are more anxious than before to retain control of areas prioritized for Protected Areas. This problem is exacerbated in proposed protected areas which stretch across the areas of influence of several headmen.
- (iii) **Political interventions**
Wild Side is of the opinion that the letter of objection to the proclamation of Lambasi, supposedly submitted by the headman, was in fact drafted by DEDEAT representatives. The direct reference in the letter to two DEDEAT projects, i.e. the vulture hide, and the wetlands project, which were never approved by the CPA, has reference.

In addition to the above:

- (iv) Of specific interest is the fact that, notwithstanding the challenges mentioned above, once community field rangers were appointed, they do not appear to have been influenced or interfered with by political or cultural leaders. In addition, where it has been logistically possible, both DAFF and the ECPTA have been keen to include the community rangers in their daily operational routines. This aspect was noted in

the lessons-learned of the Wild Coast Project. It raises at least two points for consideration:

(a) Is it absolutely necessary to focus on the proclamation route, when in fact the conservation status of a proposed protected area could be significantly enhanced by the appointment of community game guards managed by an external agency, i.e. NGO? If the boundaries of a PA can be agreed, without insisting on land tenure obligations (thus reducing the threat of reduction of traditional influence), and effective conservation management systems introduced, could this not be integrated into a longer term vision as a first step?

(b) Wild Side is of the opinion that, within the Wild Coast scenario, at least three core agencies, i.e. communities, government agency and external management agency, are required for successful co-management practice. The external management agency would attend to aspects such as financial control, training and effective management processes. In addition, this agency would assist the community to register as a legal entity, and organize/capacitate it as an effective participant in the management process.

(v) I met with Wayne Erlank, Acting Chief Operational Officer of the ECPTA, to discuss the agency's strategy and views with regard to expanded protected areas along the Wild Coast. I am aware that during the Wild Coast Project time frame, Lambasi and Mtentu were included in the Protected Area Expansion Strategy of this agency. He informed me that there was the possibility of funding for infrastructure and development from DEA, through the ECPTA, but that he would not consider a proposal/request unless he was reasonably sure that such a project would be successful, i.e. that the community would agree to, and participate in, the venture.

(vi) I have held discussions with Mr Izak van der Merwe (DAFF) and Bev Geech (ECPTA) regarding the offset of the proposed N2 road. There is general agreement that the offset should be used to support the development and infrastructure of the proposed Mtentu and Lambasi reserves.

(vii) As a result of the delay experienced in appointing the field rangers, the proposed budget has not been spent. The recommendations below include a request for a no-cost



extension to keep the field rangers employed for another two/three months, and a proposed workshop with WWF, WLT, ECPTA, DAFF and WILDE SIDE to discuss the future sustainability of the project.

Recommendations

At the current time, ie 30 November 2015, it would appear as if the three most likely opportunities for expanding the protected area estate along the Wild Coast are; (i) Manyube (Mazeppa Bay), Mtentu and the Umtamvuna River. In all three cases, the communities have indicated their willingness to proceed with the proclamation process, and DAFF has indicated that Manyube at least is on its priority list for proclamation as a State Forest Reserve, which would provide it with the same conservation status as a Provincial Nature Reserve.

It is however recognized that the proclamation process may take time, and the existing window of opportunity may be terminated at any time due to personal, traditional or political agendas. Of cardinal importance therefore is to maintain sound, reliable communication links with the targeted communities to keep the momentum going while looking for additional resources with which to drive the process to the next level.

It is therefore recommended that:

- (i) The WILD COAST FOUNDATION FOR CONSERVATION, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION be established to serve as; (i) a community support/contact agent, and (ii) a facilitation/co-ordination agency for conservation, education and development strategies, planning and activities along the Wild Coast. The first priority of this Foundation would be to establish two key points of contact with the target communities, i.e. Mtentu and Umtamvuna and Manyube/Sebeni/Nqabarha . Two community members have been selected as these two contact points, and they will be provided with computers and a limited amount of airtime to main a direct link between the communities and the Foundation. Their duties would include but not be limited to; (i) report back on community activities (in the case of Manyube the newly established honey and sewing industries), (ii) mobilise the communities for meetings (Mtentu community resolution, regular Trust/PFMC meetings), (iii)keep community members informed of fund raising efforts and (iv) taking minutes of meetings etc.

The Foundation has funding to keep the two community contacts employed for a period of at least 12 months, on a part time basis.

Note:

In addition to the points mentioned above, contact points in the community would assist prospective donors/supporters to maintain focus in these areas, and should resources become available, they would facilitate implementation.

- (ii) Additional fund raising/resource mobilization efforts be conducted to maintain the momentum generated by the project for expanded protected areas in and around the target areas.
- (iii) The Foundation maintain high levels of communication and good working relationships with all relevant government departments to continually assess and be aware of opportunities which might contribute to or sustain progress made by the project.

3 Financial Report

WLT/CEPF : LAMBASI/MTENTU BUDGET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2014				
ITEM	Budget	Expenses	Balance	Income
Project Budget				210,846.00
WSES Loans				12,400.00
TOTAL				223,246.00
EXPENSES				
1. Equipment/uniform (Transfer salaries August/September)	22,924.00	0	22,924.00	
2. Salaries	123,696.50	117,170.40	6,526.1	
3. Travel and accommodation	8,000.00	14,641.55	-6,641.55	
4. Project Administration (12%)	25,301.52	23,085.00	2,216.52	
5. Miscellaneous	30,924.00	2,235.75	26,819.92	
6. Loans		14,707.98	-	
7. Professional fees	-----	51,405.32	-	
TOTALS	210,846.02	223,246.00		0

Notes :

1. The loans line item is for loans provided by WSES when the bank account did not have sufficient funds due to unforeseen delays in transfer of the second disbursement.
2. The professional fees budget line was omitted when the budget was prepared, and is made up of the balances on the uniform/equipment and miscellaneous budgets. As the project started late there was little time to purchase uniforms and several rangers had uniforms from the WC project which they shared amongst themselves.
3. The travel and accommodation budget was inadequate and thus overspent. The over-expenditure was exacerbated by the extension of the project.
4. The miscellaneous line item consisted of salaries unpaid for Oct/Nov due to delays in appointing rangers as a result of community conflict.

Peter Tyldesley

30 November 2015

