

Environmental and infrastructural projects handed over

The Department of Environmental Affairs has recently completed environmental and infrastructural projects in six nature reserves to the value of over R125m in the Free State.



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The projects created a total of 930 work opportunities and formed part of the Department of Environmental Affairs' Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programme.

The Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Barbara Thomson, handed over the projects at a ceremony held at the Sandveld Nature Reserve on 28 August. She said the investment was motivated by the strong link between biodiversity-preservation and tourism, coupled with the opportunity for job creation. She added that an amount of R248.5m would be further allocated in the new funding cycle.

"Biodiversity is the main catalyst for tourism growth and as a Department, we will always encourage this mutual beneficial relationship. In this relationship, both nature and tourism win, and economic growth is created," Thomson said.

"A key constraint to tourism development in many provinces relate mainly to the improvement of tourism-infrastructure. The importance of the tourism system for economic development in the Free State has been clearly acknowledged in the development strategies and plans for the province."

Focus areas

The six projects include Sandveld Nature Reserve, Maria Moroka Resort and Reserve, Sterkfontein Resort and Reserve, Willem Pretorius Nature Reserve, Tussen die Rivier Resort and Reserve, and Seekoeivlei Nature Reserve.

These projects were classified according to seven focus areas, namely, Working on Waste, Working for the Coast, Working for Land, People and Parks, Wildlife Economy, Youth Environmental Services, and Greening and Open Space Management.

The Department made use of labour-intensive methods as per the requirements of the Expanded Public Works Programme. Both accredited and non-accredited training opportunities were created, equipping locals with skills that make them eligible for other employment opportunities.

"Additional funding that will be allocated in the new funding cycle will not only create work opportunities but will also create the necessary infrastructure for waste management, infrastructure in the protected areas as well as encouraging greener environmental management practice," the Deputy Minister added.

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