

Marico listed as UNESCO biosphere reserve

The North West Department of Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development has welcomed the listing of Marico as a biosphere reserve through the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO).



Groot Marico, North West by SA Tourism, CC BY 2.0, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The announcement of the listing was made at the 30th International Coordinating Council (ICC) session of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme sitting in Indonesia on Wednesday, 25 July.

The announcement took place as part of the six-day sitting of UNESCO's MAB programme to establish a scientific basis for the improvement of relationships between people and their environments.

MAB combines the natural and social sciences, economics and education to improve human livelihoods and the equitable sharing of benefits, and to safeguard natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate, and environmentally sustainable.

Intensive application process

The North West Department of Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development has been on an intensive application process to ensure the listing.

Speaking during the acceptance session, department head Dr Poncho Mokaila, who was leading a South African delegation, said the road to secure the honour was not easy.

"The public engagement process, the development of the management plan, and the compilation of the biosphere nomination dossier for the listing of the unique freshwater system was commissioned three years ago, but we had to use the lessons learnt from Magaliesberg Biosphere nomination application to our advantage and to ensure that we get our facts right away," Dr Mokaila highlighted.

Expressing her appreciation, rural, environment and agricultural development MEC Manketsi Tlhape said the current administration has made strides in rebranding and repositioning the province.

"This clearly reflects a society that has interpreted the vision of the administration so well and has lived up to the expectations of the communities," Tlhape said.

Tlhape said the onus is now upon the Marico management body to ensure that the biosphere will reach its goal of maximising

conservation of the natural environment, sustainable development, advancement of research programmes and social upliftment.

She also applauded and expressed gratitude to all stakeholders who supported the listing process, including landowners and communities for their dedication.

“Initiatives within the biosphere reserve will be driven by the local community and through a public participatory approach, using an integrated management plan,” Thape indicated.

Biosphere reserve

The biosphere reserve has a remarkable aquifer which is visible through the clear, unpolluted mountain streams emanating from the area. A large majority of dolomitic ‘eyes’ are located within the biosphere area.

These culminate in the formation of the Groot Marico River, which at its source can be described as the southern-most tributary of the Limpopo River, located on an international border.

Marico is an area of scenic beauty, unique natural features, rich natural and cultural heritage value and significant biodiversity of interest. This justified the need for its protection and sustainable utilisation, which led to the listing with the World Biosphere Programme.

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