

## SanParks to donate game to emerging farmers

To contribute to the expansion of the wildlife economy, the South African National Parks (SanParks) will donate 2 448 plains game and 12 high value species to emerging game farmers in the coming year.



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This will be done through the SanParks Socio-Economic Transformation Action Plan, which aims to support greater participation of black-owned businesses, especially women, youth and people with disabilities, in infrastructure development and commercial tourism opportunities.

This is according to the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Barbara Creecy, who delivered the department's Budget Vote in the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) on Thursday.

Other focus areas include supplier development; direct and indirect employment creation; awareness, knowledge creation and exchange, and meaningful land claimant beneficiation.

"In additional initiatives to address visitor safety and combat marine and terrestrial wildlife crime in all our national parks,

SanParks has deployed the Sea-Air-Mountain Team in Table Mountain National Park to address safety concerns, wildlife crime, and search and rescue. It is also in the final consultation phase of the Baboon Management Plan for the Western Cape.

"Through the development of SanParks Vision 2040, all South Africans can participate in the re-imagining and co-creating of a new future for conservation in and through national protected areas.

"The focus here is on co-creating the future with diverse stakeholders, where youth, in particular, will play a significant role as custodians of that future. Given that SanParks will celebrate a century of existence in 2026, the development of Vision 2040 is a great opportunity to re-calibrate its future," the minister said.

SanParks will also undertake a strategic review of all programmes in line with the recommendations of the High Level Panel.

"In this regard, the process of re-imagining protected areas, in close collaboration with the department, commenced and new models of both expansion of national parks and establishment of new national parks are being explored.

"This includes different models of ownership, linkages through corridors with compatible land uses, integration with provincial and private conservation areas and strengthening co-management," Creecy said.

## **iSimangaliso**

Following the release last year of the Panel Review Report on the artificial breaching of the St Lucia Estuary in January 2021, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park management has taken a number of steps to address back flooding and the clearing of invasive species.

In 2022, the Minister made a commitment that St Lucia Lake, which is protected and managed by the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority, will no longer be managed as an isolated system, which ignores surrounding stakeholders.

"I am pleased to report that from my engagements in March this year, relations between the Park Management and the surrounding stakeholders have considerably improved.

"Last year, iSimangaliso received R340m from government for infrastructure projects, including road construction; the finalisation of the office block; new staff quarters for field rangers and the development of new lodges in the park as part of its commercialisation drive.

"These projects contribute to job creation and socio-economic improvement in an economically depressed area, where the park represents the only major economic development opportunity for adjacent communities," the minister said.

Through the infrastructure and environmental management projects, the park has created around 5,000 work opportunities in the past year.

More funding will be allocated this year to fund biodiversity conservation projects, while addressing unemployment, poverty and inequality in the area.

"iSimangaliso management is also working closely with municipalities in the implementation of the District Development Model by introducing environmentally friendly projects through municipal cleaning and greening programmes," the minister said.

## **Addressing unemployment rate**

In the past year, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi) has successfully implemented its Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy to address the high unemployment rate amongst young people.

This is being done through the Groen Sebenza Graduate Programme, post-graduate studentships, work integrated learning and internship programmes.

"In the past year, Sanbi has employed 1 653 people in its ecological infrastructure programme to clear 5,137 hectares of land. A total of 96% of the 442 Eco Champs employed were youth, while 87% of the 911 people employed in zoos and gardens in eight provinces were young people and 57% women. A total of 758 rural careers were established and 206 research assistants employed," the Minister said.

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