

To acquire and manage a system of national parks which represents the Indigenous wildlife, vegetation, landscapes and significant cultural assets of South Africa for the pride and benefit of the nation.



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NATIONAL PARKS

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02 December 2008

Mr John Mhlongo
Chief Executive Officer
Mjejane Trust

By email:

Dear Mr Mhlongo

Contractual Park Agreement between Mjejane Game Reserve and SANParks

I refer to your enquiry about the signing of the Contractual Park Agreement ("agreement") between the Mjejane Game Reserve ("MGR") and SANParks. As I explained, all agreements of this nature are ultimately approved by the SANParks Board.

I am positive that after the final draft agreement is recommended by our EXCO (Executive Management Committee), and then by the Conservation and Tourism Committee of the Board, the Board should approve the agreement because:

- (i) To comply with our mandate and meet targets SANParks started using contract parks as a means to expand national parks and, also, to harmonize land use. This was achieved by successfully mooted the amendment of our enabling legislation in order to authorise contract parks;
- (ii) In 2001 SANParks Board passed a resolution in support of the inclusion within the park system of the land owned by communities adjacent to national parks, in particular Kruger National Park ("KNP"), in order to form buffer zones;
- (iii) Also, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism ("DEAT") developed a buffer zone policy for national parks wherein contract parks were further accentuated, and, at our last bi-lateral meeting with the Minister, he gave the Board permission to continue with these agreements;
- (iv) Further, and in support of this direction, DEAT has specifically requested SANParks to amend the Management Plan for KNP to include contract parks, concessions and particularly MGR.

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bontebok

cape peninsula

golden gate highlands

katoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

kayana

kruger

marakele

mountain zebras

nomque

sanke kuroo

tsitsikamma

mleriveld

vaalbos

vhembe dongola

west coast

wilderness

Of course this is not to say there are no more challenges. While the policy of contractual parks is now firmly established, the pending land claims in and around our parks, particularly KNP, present a challenge going forward.


Given such a pioneering history, I was disappointed to hear that your investors are holding back their commitments to Mjejane Trust until the agreement is signed. The logic for their decision baffles me because Mjejane Trust has a paper trail of letters of support and evidence of the commitment of SANParks to the project. Noteworthy are:

- (i) The fence (Snyman fence) between MGR and KNP is removed, and the large mammals from KNP are moving freely between the two properties.
- (ii) I sent you a letter after the fence-removal re-affirming our support to ensuring that some form of physical access is carried out to link MGR to KNP. In the same letter, I requested that we should conclude the agreement.

With the fence gone and the application for the low-level water access facility/ bridge underway, I am of the view there is significant commitment from SANParks.

At the risk of becoming pedantic I hereby re-affirm SANParks' commitment to its earlier promises of concluding a contractual park agreement with MGR once all due process shall have been duly completed. We cannot jump the gun and short-circuit governance procedures and processes nor can we allow our communities to be condemned to under-development and poverty forever.

Sincerely,



Dr David Mabunda
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SANPARKS

cc: **Abe Sibiya, Acting Managing Executive: Kruger National Park**
Dr Hector Magome, Managing Executive: Conservation Services