
20. MADIKWE GAME RESERVE: A PARTNERSHIP IN CONSERVATION

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SUMMARY

Madikwe Game Reserve was established primarily for socio-economic reasons while still achieving a number of conservation objectives. Wildlife ecotourism was found to be the most financially and economically efficient form of land use considering other options that were available. The policies developed for the management of the park have ensured that the three main parties in protected areas are all catered for meaningfully.

The Government has a major role to play in establishing and managing the conservation activities and facilitating the role of other sectors of society within the protected area. The private sector is responsible for financing, developing and managing the tourism operations while providing the funds necessary to support the reserve management activities and community development programmes through concession fees levied by the Government for use of the Reserve. The communities are responsible for identifying their own development priorities, ensuring these are carried out in a responsible, transparent and democratic manner and participating in developing policies for the Game Reserve. These three partners have been accommodated by establishing, in a participative manner, appropriate institutions and

a regulatory framework through which their different interests can be met, while still achieving a conservation goal.

These policies have allowed the reserve to develop rapidly and ensured that the potential economic opportunities that protected areas of this nature can supply are, in fact, to be turned into reality, and that conservation can be seen as a competitive form of land use when considered against other alternatives.

INTRODUCTION

What makes the Madikwe Game Reserve particularly unique is the fact that it was proclaimed primarily for socio-economic reasons rather than biodiversity which is the primary objective with most other conservation areas. Although biologically very important, the land was allocated to wildlife conservation because of the contribution the Reserve could make to the economic development of the immediate region. In what is generally a semi-arid area with few other land use options, the reserve would generate more economic opportunities and be more equitable than other natural-resource based enterprises. Although this concept is probably not universally transferable, its basic principles, once again thoroughly tested, could offer new opportunities for wildlife conservation in developing and developed countries alike.

The first phase of Madikwe Game Reserve was proclaimed in 1994. The area currently fenced into the reserve measures just over 58,000 ha (580 km²), with the Molatedi Dam, which has not yet been proclaimed as part of the reserve, measuring an additional $\pm 10,000$ ha (100 km²). The ultimate vision is to develop the larger area for wildlife-based tourism, offering the "big five" (lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo), while the dam area will be used predominantly for recreation-based tourism, where the presence of wildlife would not necessarily be the major reason for people visiting the facility.

Financial and economic models were developed for the reserve and these are currently being implemented to achieve both economic and conservation objectives. The land and the wildlife in the reserve is owned and managed by the State. The principle is that the private sector will finance, develop and manage all the reserve's tourism facilities through lease or concession agreements. These facilities may include lodges, hunting concessions, horse back safaris or even hot-air balloon safaris.

To date, four years after the developments commenced, the stocking of the game reserve is almost complete and two lodges have been built and are operational. Two more lodges are under construction and three more agreements have been concluded. Negotiations are already well advanced for a further two lodges. The lodges range in size from 12 to 60 beds and the average capital investment per bed is approximately US\$55,500 (US\$1 ~ South African Rand 4.60). Developments around the Molatedi Dam could commence from 1997 onwards.

LAND USE FEASIBILITY STUDY

Towards the end of the 1980s a number of farms, in what was then known as the Marico Corridor, were incorporated into the then Republic of Bophuthatswana, a