

**UPPER THUKELA STEWARDSHIP PROJECT**  
**FINAL REPORT**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Upper Thukela Stewardship (UTP) project is located in the Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund's (CEPF) Maputaland, Albany, and Pondoland Hotspot (MAPH) programme strategic direction, *"Expand conservation areas and improve land use in 19 Key Biodiversity Areas through innovative approaches"*.

The main focus of the UTP was to continue to facilitate the Biodiversity Stewardship process with the Amazizi and amaNganwe Traditional Authority communities in the Upper Thukela valley. The outcomes of the project were for the:

1. Full support for the wilderness area concept, the protected area, proclamation and the concept of ecosystem services by the two communities, as a precursor to ensuring the success of the project.
2. Understanding and support for the the need to adjust or address livestock grazing management in support for the payment for ecosystem services (PES), which will be catered for in the management plan of the protected area.
3. Perform a cross-learning exchange visit to other successful community projects.
4. Securing the proclamation of a 45 000 ha protected area, with an approved management plan.
5. The zoning of an appropriate area with the project boundary as a "wilderness" zone.

A short term grant was sought and approved for one year commencing in August 2011.

This report details the work and achievements of the project outcomes.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The Drakensberg Mountain Range is an extensive mass of basalt and sandstone that stretched from the Eastern Cape in the south through KwaZulu Natal, the Free State, Mpumalanga and into the Limpopo province in the north. The portion of the range that is within KwaZulu Natal is the most spectacular and includes features such as the second highest waterfall in the southern hemisphere, i.e. the Tugela Falls; and the highest peak south of Kilimanjaro, i.e. Thabana Ntlenyana (3842m), although this is just inside Lesotho. The diversity of habitat types that are created by the extreme range in altitude in combination with topographical diversity and geology, host a rich assemblage of biodiversity which includes local endemic and threatened species in forests, grasslands, wetland, riverine and rocky habitats. The area also includes a rich representation of a cultural heritage left by the San which is heralded as one of the finest outdoor art galleries in the world. In addition to this internationally significant natural and cultural heritage, the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg is of significant economic importance to South Africa through the valuable ecosystem services that it produces. The most significant of these are water catchment services, which are becoming increasingly more important as the country's water resources become increasingly over-subscribed.

The water catchment importance of the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg was recognised by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry in the mid-1900s and who took ownership of what is today the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, and declared the area as a Water Catchment Area. A portion of the Drakensberg between the Royal Natal National Park and the Cathedral Peak Section of the World Heritage Site was not included in the Water Catchment Area and/or the World Heritage Site, as it was and still is under communal land tenure and the leadership of Traditional Authorities and the Ingonyama Trust Board. The latter are the AmaNgwane and AmaZizi Traditional Authorities who today are supportive of the notion of having the upper portions of these two areas formally proclaimed as nature reserves and managed as Community Conservation Areas.

Despite the fact that these two Traditional Authority areas were excluded from the Water Catchment and World Heritage areas, they have enjoyed a long history of attention from a wide variety of conservation minded individuals and organisations, which continues today. Through

these efforts much awareness has been generated within the communities of these two Traditional Authority areas as to the value of the natural and cultural resources of the Upper uThukela. These efforts continue today with millions of Rands being invested in the eradication of alien invasive plants, the reclamation of erosion gullies, the monitoring of rock art sites and the delineation of wilderness areas. In recognition of this effort as well as the positive alignment of the Traditional Authorities to this work, the KwaZulu Natal Biodiversity Stewardship Programme recommended that the process of entering into Stewardship Agreements be used as a mechanism to secure formal proclamation for the Upper uThukela. The delineation of a “wilderness buffer boundary” by the Wilderness Groups in the Upper uThukela was a catalyst in this process, as it provided a definite geographical entity with which the Stewardship Agreement process could begin working.

**Through Climate Action partnership (CAP)**, in April 2010 a Stewardship Facilitator was posted in the area and relevant stakeholders were engaged with the idea of adopting the Stewardship Agreement process. However, a stake holders meeting (which known as Synergy meeting) was established where technical issues are discussed and it seats in every three months. The aim of establishing this forum was to avoid duplication. This synergy is made up of different organisations that work in Upper Thukela which have similar objectives or vision. These organisations are as follows:

- African Conservation Trust,
- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
- Working for Water
- Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Project(MDTP)
- South African National Biodiversity Institute(SANBI)
- Department of Grassland Science (from UKZN)
- INR-Afromaison Project and
- Wildlands Conservation Trust.

Furthermore, Having obtained acceptance from the two Traditional Authorities the Biodiversity Assessment phase was undertaken and was completed in December 2010, and the very positive outcome was obtained from the Stewardship Review Panel in January 2011, i.e. a score of 18.3/20 and the recommendation for the proclamation of a nature reserve (a copy of the assessment can be obtained from Mxolisi Fulumente or Kevin McCann). This positive outcome served to further motivate the Traditional Authorities to continue with the process and the management planning process was initiated at the end of January 2011.

Numerous Workshops were held with the two Traditional Authorities and other role players and stakeholders through the months in which consensus were reached on various issues and the management planning framework was completed (A copy of the document that was produced as a result of this process can be obtained from Mxolisi Fulumente). This included a vision statement, a list of management objectives and related operational goals. Task teams were then set up to put the detailed action plans together and to complete the process.

In July 2011 the CAP funding got finished and CEPF funding which was obtained from Wildlands Conservation Trust took over as from August 2011 to the present in order to finalise the proclamation of Upper Thukela as Nature Reserve(s).

**Although a goal of proclaiming the two areas as Nature Reserves has not been achieved, through this CEPF funding** which was/is implemented by Wilderness Action Group (WAG) but it could be highlighted that some activities had happened for example Ingonyama Trust meetings, Cross visit to Umgano Project, Payment for Ecosystem services workshop, meeting with the traditional authorities, and sending a letter to the Okhahlamba Local Municipality.

### 3. PROJECT OUTCOMES

#### 3.1 GAIN SUPPORT FOR WILDERNESS CONCEPT, PROTECTED AREA PROCLAMATION AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

##### 3.3.1 TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES (AMANGWANE AND AMAZIZI) MEETINGS

On 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011 the Imbizo was attended at AmaNdwane Traditional Authority. The aim of attending the Imbizo was to inform the whole community that their area is going to be proclaimed as a Nature Reserve. Mxolisi explained the process as follows:

The Biodiversity Assessment has indicated that the area between Royal Natal National and Cathedral Peak Managements Units is very rich in Biodiversity, cultural heritage and water production so it has to be protected. Therefore it had been given a status of a Nature Reserve by the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife review panel on January 2011. It was also explained that Stewardship phases would be followed in order to proclaim the area as a Nature Reserve. Furthermore it was indicated that an access to grazing will not be left out but a clear plan will be established in terms of how grazing will take place in a Community Conservation area(s)/ Nature Reserve(s). Everyone agreed that the area needs to be protected for present and future generations.



**Fig 1: A photo showing community members of AmaNdwane who attended Imbizo at AmaNdwane Traditional Authority offices.**

The AmaNdwane Traditional Authority has been approached by the company that is specialising about the establishment of game reserve and resorts. A preliminary meeting was held with the purpose of giving Mr De Villiers (of the company dealing with these establishment) an opportunity to table his proposal. Mr De Villiers indicated that they are in partnership with the queen (the wife of the Chairperson of the Ingonyama Trust) and they would like to put a big five in the proposed Nature Reserve and also built some lodges in the upper areas. Outcome: It was suggested that the big five would not be suitable in the Drakensberg because of the vegetation type. In terms of the establishment of the lodges, it was promised that relevant experts will be consulted and a follow up meeting will be scheduled.

On 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011 a meeting was held at AmaZizi Traditional Authority. The aim of the meeting was to give a feed back to the team which was part of the draft Management Plan Process as it was left out during the process. Nkosi Miya with the assistance of Mxolisi Fulumente informed

the team about the developments that took place since April 2011 –November 2011. It was indicated that a Draft Management Plan had been completed and is now waiting for some comments from Community at large. It was also explained that a Community Exchange visit was undertaken on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October and 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 to Umgano Project and the purpose of the trip was to find out about their Management Structure.

## **3.2 GAIN UNDERSTANDING AND SUPORT TO ADDRESS LIVESTOCK GRAZING MANAGEMENT TO UNDERPIN THE PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES MODEL**

### **3.2.1 PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES WORKSHOP/MEETING**

Basically the National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme that is being coordinated by SANBI has embarked on a process of brokering market-based Payment for Ecosystem Service (PES) agreements that will act as demonstration projects for replication throughout the country. Based on a substantial body of work that has assessed the supply side of potential PES agreements in the upper uThukela catchment, SANBI now seeks to better understand the demand side.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2011 a Payment for Ecosystem Service (championed by SANBI) meeting was attended at Eskom. Basically the meeting was attended by the following people, from supply side – Mr Mahlodi Tau (SANBI PES Project Manager), Kevan Zunckel (SANBI PES Service provide) and Mxolisi Fulumente (Stewardship Facilitator for Upper Thukela). From demand side it was Mr Patrick Mhlongo (Plant Manager) his 3 team members. The purpose of the meeting was to find out whether there is any demand from Eskom side in terms of supporting the Upper Thukela catchments. Because the perception of the supply side was that Eskom Drakensberg Pump Storage is benefiting from wood stock dam which receives water from upper Thukela catchments. But Eskom responded as follows: Eskom Drakensberg Pump Storage Scheme is largely independent of the water which is stored in the Woodstock Dam and would therefore not be in the market for a possible payment for ecosystem services agreement with communities in the upper uThukela.

However, Eskom pointed out that they are an important member of the broader society of the community in the Upper Thukela and therefore they may still contribute to community-based initiatives (in terms social aspect) through the Eskom foundation. It was promised that the information would be passed on the two traditional Authorities and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife who might want to track this further.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2012 a PES workshop was attended at SANIB offices in Pretoria. The purpose of the workshop was as follows:

- To present all the available information on the supply of catchment services from the upper uThukela that are relevant to Rand Water and DWA;
- To consider the developments that have taken place in the upper uThukela as far as the KZN Stewardship Programme is concerned;
- To develop an understanding of the demand for catchment services; and
- In the light of this information, investigate the feasibility of pursuing a PES agreement between Rand Water and the Traditional Authorities in the upper uThukela.

From supply side -

Greg Martindale of KZN Biodiversity stewardship programme gave a presentation about stewardship programme and also gave an update about the developments that has taken place in Upper Thukela as far as Stewardship is concerned. Kevan Zunckel also gave the presentation about the feasibility study that had been undertaken for Upper Thukela catchment.

From Demand side (Dept. of Water Affairs and Rand Water) -

During the discussion it came out that Rand after is paying already to water affairs so they cannot pay twice. Maybe one of the alternatives is to approach the Minister of water affairs at a national

level. It also came out that not all the water that supplies Gauteng are from Upper Thukela catchments. However, no decision was taken during that workshop as were there to understand the supply side and demand side but it was agreed that a follow up meeting will be scheduled when necessary.

**It is so unfortunate that the efforts to establish the process of brokering market-related Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) agreements is not possible at this juncture, but other avenues are being explored.**

### **3.2.2 FIRE BREAKS BY BOTH COMMUNITIES**

African Conservation Trust is one of the strongest partners in this project. Therefore one of their contributions was to assisting in the establishment of the traditional burnings. Community facilitators (from AmaNgwane and AmaZizi) which are employed by both Wildlands Conservation Trust and African Conservation Trust facilitated these firebreaks. Additionally, the Inkosi of AmaZizi also played a crucial role in terms of organising the Gramaxon from the nearby resort(s). It is believed that once the areas are proclaimed, the use of fire as management tool would be used more often because for the time being the areas are burnt in a traditional way. It is also noted that arson fires are one of the challenges that face both proposed nature reserves. Below is the photo showing AmaZizi team.



**Fig 2: AmaZizi community members together with AmaZizi Wilderness Group creating fire breaks in the proposed Nature Reserve.**

## **3.3 CROSS-LEARNING EXCHANGE VISITS**

### **3.3.1 COMMUNITY EXCHANGE TO UMGANO PROJECT**

A community exchange visit was undertaken on the 31<sup>st</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2011 to Umgano project with the Traditional Authority of AmaZizi. The objective of the trip was to encourage the traditional Authority of AmaZizi to establish a community trust as it is outlined on the Draft Management Plan. Mr. Jaca explained the process as follows: Mabandla Community trust is made up of 12 trustees which are from different wards within the community. This trust is chaired by Mayford Jaca and is also having other members who are part of the management structure like Mr. Peter Nixon and Mrs. Kim Hodson as well as others. This trust is also getting advices/trainings from external expertise. This trust enables them to raise funds on behalf of the

Community. Therefore, the AmaZizi Traditional Authority was convinced that a trust has to be established but once they have held a follow up meeting.



**Fig 3: Photo showing Mr. M.E Miya with his councilors, Mr Mxolisi Fulumente and Mr. Jaca at Umgano**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November a follow up meeting was held with AmaZizi Traditional Authority as it was agreed at Umgano that a community trust will be established, and the trust will represent all the villages particularly wilderness, rock art, donga, livestock and others as Bawinile suggested. Discussions are being held in terms of who will serve on this structure and relevant processes of establishing a Community Trust are undertaken.

### **3.4 SECURING THE PROCLAMATION OF A 45 000ha.PROTECTED AREA WITH AN APPROVED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **3.4.1 INGONYAMA TRUST BOARD (ITB)**

On the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2011 a very positive meeting was undertaken with the Amangwane and Mr Duncan Pakkies of the Ingonyama Trust (ITB).

The purpose of the meeting was to give an update about the project and also to discuss about the role that has to be played by Ingonyama Trust Board in this project as it is the currently land owner in law in terms of section 3 of the Ingonyama Trust Act, Act 3 of 1994, and is owning about 2, 7 million of hectares in the communal land of the KwaZulu Natal. A brief summary about the project was given by Mxolisi Fulumente (Stewardship +WAG) and Kevan Zunckel (Stewardship +SANIB) to Mr Pakkies of the ITB.

Mr Pakkies also explained the process of ITB as follows; ideally any Stewardship process that is initiated on communal land needs to include the Ingonyama Trust from the outset. This will ensure that they are informed and up to date with the intentions of the Stewardship Programme and the process that should followed. They in turn will be able to provide relevant information pertaining to the land in question and assist with the process.

However, ultimately when it comes to the point of signing agreements, the Ingonyama Trust will need to play an important role as the recognised “Land Owner” in law. There are other options

though as communities can elect to apply for a “Land Availability Right” (forms ITB 1 and 2 are available on the Ingonyama Trust’s website). This application process would need to be accompanied with as much relevant information as possible in order to facilitate a smooth decision making process within the Ingonyama Trust as their Board must make the final decision. As far as the timing of such application is concerned, it was recommended that it has be done as early in the process as possible, but at a point where there is sufficient relevant information and where the community in question is in a place to be able to agree that this is the route that they want to take. The outcome of this process is potentially that the communities are given permission to continue the process independently of the Ingonyama Trust if the latter are satisfied that the necessary institutional structures and capacity are in place to do so. However, it must be noted that AmaZizi community were not represented on that meeting and was promised that the very same process would be explained to them. The relevant information (Biodiversity assessment, outcomes of the review panel, Draft Management Plan for both areas) was submitted to the ITB in order to fast forward the process of proclamation.

Furthermore, Amangwane Traditional authority has selected the route of Land availability Right (where they have to complete ITB 1 and ITB 2 Form) in order to get the independence and they already submitted to the ITB1 form.

Meanwhile the Amangwane Traditional Authority together with Mxolisi and other role players are to prepare a presentation, which would be presented to the Ingonyama Trust Board. Prior to this Board meeting a preliminary meeting will be held with the relevant staff of ITB with the purpose of achieving the following:

- To provide relevant information to relevant officials of the ITB in order to pave the way for the presentation to the Board, and
- To provide the Traditional Authority and its representatives with an idea of what the Board would be expecting from the presentation in order to assist in this process

AmaZizi Traditional Authority has indicated that they are not going to apply for the land availability right, they want to keep the Ingonyama Trust Board as the land owner in law for this process of proclamation and implementation. Therefore it means that the stewardship agreements will be between Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Ingonyama Trust Board and AmaZizi Traditional Authority.

In the meantime Amangwane Traditional Authority together with Kevan Zunckel, Mxolisi and other role players are preparing presentation for the Ingonyama Trust Board meeting which will be held on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Prior to this Board meeting a preliminary meeting will be held with the relevant staff of ITB with the purpose of achieving the following:

- To provide relevant information to relevant officials of the ITB in order to pave the way for the presentation to the Board, and;
- To provide the Traditional Authority and its representatives with an idea of what the Board would be expecting from the presentation in order assist in this process

AmaZizi Traditional Authority has indicated that they are not going to apply for the land availability right they want to keep Ingonyama Trust Board as the land owner in law for this process of proclamation. Therefore it means that the stewardship agreements will be between Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Ingonyama Trust Board and AmaZizi Traditional Authority.

### **3.4.2 LETTER TO THE OKHAHLAMBA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

A request for the letter of support for the proposed declaration of Nature Reserve(s) between the Royal Natal and Cathedral Peak Sections (Upper Thukela) of the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site had been sent to the Okhahlamba Local Municipality as it is one of the requirements for the proclamation and also the area falls under the Okhahlamba Local Municipality jurisdiction. However, the municipality requested the supporting documents before they respond and the project is now waiting for their response before sending the documents to Ingonyama Trust Board which is currently the land owner in law

### 3.5. THE ZONING OF AN APPROPRIATE AREA WITH THE PROJECT BOUNDARY AS A “WILDERNESS” ZONE

This will be done when the protected area is proclaimed.

### 4. SUMMARY OF THE UPPER THUKELA BUDGET

Description/item	Total Budget	Total expenditure	Remaining Budget
Salary	R 96, 000.00	R 56, 000.00	R 40, 000.00
Telecommunication	R 3,600.00	R 259. 99	R 3, 340.01
Meetings	R 10,000.00	R 2450.2	R 7,549.80
Sundry(e.g. Printing)	R 1,500.00	R 000.00	R 1, 500.00
Capital items	R 1,000.00	R 000.00	R 1,000.00
Email	R 1,8000.00	R 104.99	R 1, 695.01
Travel	R 20.4000.00	R 529.00	R 19, 871.00

### 3. CONCLUSION

Although a goal of proclaiming the two areas as Nature Reserves had not been achieved, through this CEPF funding which is/was implemented by Wilderness Action Group (WAG) but it can be highlighted that some activities had happened. The project had progressed in such a way that both sites (AmaNgwane and AmaZizi Traditional Authorities) are engaging the Ingonyama Trust in terms of getting the approval, but as indicated on page 5, the situation for Amangwane Traditional Authority is bit different and might take longer than expected. The ITB has asked the Communities to firstly get a letter of support from the Municipality before they approve and once the approval is obtained from ITB all documentation will be taken to Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife committees for approval which in turn will be submitted to the MEC of the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development.