

National Parks, nature reserves and rural development

1. BROAD POLICY STATEMENT

The ANC's policy on National Parks and nature reserves follow the broader ANC policy guidelines on the environment, as adopted at the National Conference 28-31 May 1992. The ANC is committed to:

- * Sustainable development compatible with ecological and human rights principles;
- * Affirmative action to ensure equitable access to and public participation in the management of natural resources;
- * Public right of access to information and the courts on issues of environmental concern;
- * Development of environmental awareness programmes for all sectors of our society;
- * The conservation of biological diversity and the protection of endangered species;
- * An integrated approach to environmental issues that relates to all sectors of society;
- * Recognition of the need for international cooperation.

This policy is also in accordance with the ANC's policy guidelines on the land and on rural development adopted at the same conference.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To bring about these conditions in National Parks and nature reserves the ANC proposes the following guiding principles:

- * The land, the flora and fauna, constitute South Africa's most precious asset. They should be the pride of all South Africans and all South Africans should share respect for their conservation.
- * To ensure ecological sustainability National Parks and nature reserves should play a key role in the conservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and endangered species. National Parks should further play a role in the development of multispecies animal production systems.
- * To ensure sustainable development in accordance with ecological and human rights principles economic benefits should be maximised. The potential of National Parks and nature reserves to be a source of foreign exchange should be expanded, wealth should be shared by local communities and used to stimulate local economies.
- * Communities which were forcibly removed or suffered other losses in the creation of National Parks or nature reserves must receive appropriate compensation.
- * Administration of National Parks and nature reserves should be restructured so as to represent the interests of all the people and imbalances with respect to race and gender need to be redressed.
- * Neighbouring communities should be enabled to gain access to economic benefits and be represented in management of National Parks and nature reserves.
- * National Parks and nature reserves should in principle be affordable and accessible to all people.
- * National Parks and nature reserves should play a key role in environmental education. There should be free access to information about conservation issues.

3. OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL PARKS AND NATURE RESERVES

The primary function of protected areas is to conserve ecosystems and biodiversity. The objectives of National Parks and nature reserves include the protection of viable representative samples of different habitats, the protection of rare species and the facilitation of research to further our understanding of ecosystems and their functioning.

The ANC recognises a need for National Parks as defined by the IUCN under the control of a central national government to protect areas that are of national and international importance. It recognises that central government has a financial commitment towards stimulating development of National Parks. These should be complimented by regional and private nature reserves.

Possible climatic changes that might occur due to the global warming caused by industrial pollution may be fundamentally unpredictable. To survive such climatic changes ecosystems will require flexibility and adaptability. Management strategies should therefore consider large ecosystems and long-term trends. Emphasis should be placed on habitat and ecosystem protection. Various land-use options should be developed in close co-ordination with each other within the broader socio-economic context. National Parks and other nature reserves should not be managed as isolated islands of biodiversity, but should be part of a holistic land-use policy. In this regard National Parks should serve as bench marks and scientific data-banks for other land-use options in similar habitats.

National Parks and nature reserves must be used for environmental education to bring home the need for ecological and economic sustainability and to promote the concept that people are part of nature.

National Parks are one of the most important draw cards for tourism, which could potentially become a major source of foreign exchange. Tourism could also be one of the most effective means of spreading wealth from affluent people to rural communities, provided that benefits related to tourism are made accessible for the development of economic opportunities within those communities.

4. RESTRUCTURING

In view of the historical imbalances created by the legacy of Apartheid, a process of restructuring is required.

Land issues and historical context

In the creation of National Parks, some communities were forcibly removed without receiving adequate compensation for the land they lost and future planning must take this fact into consideration. People were denied access to resources such as grazing for cattle, hunting ground, medicinal plants, firewood and thatching grass. In the process they were alienated from their natural environment and they largely lost the traditional knowledge and cultural values associated with the natural environment.

The historical context within which National Parks and nature reserves were created requires an equitable response in favour of those communities whose rights to land and land use were usurped. Land claims will be dealt with by a Land Claims Court as outlined in the ANC policy on the subject. The Court will, in cases where restoration of land is not feasible, or in the national interest, have the right to award appropriate compensation to those affected. Compensation could be part of a package which would include the types of measures proposed

in later sections of this document.

Administrative restructuring

A new and representative National Parks Board of Trustees should be elected/nominated in a transparent and democratic way. Appropriate regional representation at the national level should be secured. Whatever final constitutional arrangements are made with regard to the exercise of powers at different levels of government, a national framework and philosophy with regard to the protection and development of parks and reserves will have to be established.

There is a need for institutional change to redress the current imbalances with regard to gender and race in the management of National Parks and other nature reserves. The ANC recognises the invaluable expertise of the people currently employed in these reserves - none of the present employees should thus feel that their livelihood is threatened in any way. Creating additional employment opportunities will therefore be a priority.

National Parks and nature reserves should be restructured to give greater priority to social responsibility programmes. These new structures should enable neighbouring communities to gain access to economic benefits and allow them to participate in management decisions in conformity with guidelines determined at national level for National Parks, or at regional level for other nature reserves.

The ANC proposes the creation of a new Department of Environmental Planning, (based on the Namibian model), consisting of a research unit reporting directly to the Ministry of Environmental Affairs. This Department will have a mandate to inform the public of serious environmental problems. It will provide a consulting and advisory service to National Parks and other nature reserves on aspects where expertise in the park or reserve is lacking, such as community relations, and will act as a facilitator. The Department of Environmental Planning will also deal with broader environmental issues such as soil erosion, pollution and toxic waste. [This proposal is consistent with proposals made by the Western Cape Environmental Desk.]

Economic benefits and equitable access

It is recognised that the profitability of game reserves depends on the provision of facilities in some areas which conform to the demands of international tourists. However, other camps should be affordable to the general public. Unless the entire South African population can in principle have access to National Parks, conservation will always be perceived as elitist and irrelevant to the majority of people.

National Parks are a source of foreign exchange that benefits the entire country. Some of the income generated should therefore be used to stimulate the regional economy. National Parks should obtain goods and services from local producers as far as possible. Consideration should also be given to joint venture programmes or profit sharing. This should be done through structures on which the community is represented.

People are our greatest resource. Attempts should be made to maximise employment opportunities. Employment in the park itself can be expanded by developing labour intensive eco-tourism, such as small bush camps offering guided game drives and bush walks. Crafts marketing can be stimulated by giving the local crafts industry preference over imported curios. The local economy can also be stimulated by maximising the available human resources. For example, money spent on salaries go into the community, while money spent on expensive technology go to first world countries.

Research, training and education

Research on ecological processes is essential to ensure the scientific management of protected areas. In addition traditional skills and expertise should be used in research on animals and plants, not only for the scientific value of such expertise, but also as a way of involving members of the local communities in research and creating employment opportunities. Indigenous knowledge should be protected to ensure that communities are adequately compensated for their expertise and contributions.

Environmental education facilities should be an integral part of park management and visited by school children as part of their general education. Environmental education should be formulated to include traditional scientific approaches to resource management and should not be structured to respond only to the narrow demands of one value system. Education should involve all sectors of the community, including people who are land and resource managers such as farmers.

Poaching

In dealing with poaching a distinction should be made between subsistence hunting and commercial poaching. Anti-poaching management strategies should be worked out in close co-operation with neighbouring communities. One of the benefits of community involvement in the management of nature reserves is that poaching is much less likely to be a problem, since communities will protect their own resources. A "shoot on sight" policy should therefore be avoided at all cost. Anti-poaching units should also deal with dangerous animals that have broken out of the reserve.

Community based conservation and rural development

Communities are not homogeneous entities and development projects often create new divisions and disputes within communities. It is therefore not possible to impose a blueprint onto the nature of the community's involvement in the management of a nature reserve. Rather, a process of development should address problems that are unique to each area and community through a process of broad consultation.

Institutions need to be established consisting of members of neighbouring communities and the National Parks who jointly make decisions concerning the management of the park.

Resources should be utilised on a sustainable basis. A return to integrated land use is needed, including the creation of 'multi-use' buffer zones, (where possible), on the periphery of nature reserves. Direct benefits in such multi-use buffer zones could include grazing rights, hunting, and utilisation of medicinal plants, firewood and thatching grass should be determined by the park management in consultation with communities.

One of the models that may be applied is the Community Game Guards system. The essence of this system is that the game guards are appointed by the community and are primarily responsible to the community. The essential philosophy of these programmes is that communities must gain direct economic benefits from wildlife and other natural resources. Communities must therefore be empowered to manage their natural environment and to contribute to and enforce decisions that affect their environment.

Consideration should be given to the development of multispecies animal production systems. National Parks and nature reserves should play a positive role in the introduction of wildlife into communal and farming areas as an alternative resource supplementing conventional farming. By broadening a community's resource base, they become more self-sufficient and buffered against

drought and other hardships, and become less dependent on government for support. The economic utilization of wildlife by themselves or combined with livestock is more profitable and sustainable than livestock alone. African wildlife and indigenous, drought-resistant crops are also better adapted to the African environment than cattle, especially with respect to surviving droughts and disease.

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11/10/93

Dear Albie

I hope this draft (No 5!) will
now be ready for wider circulation

with kind regards

Louis Liebenberg