

## **MEDIA RELEASE - 9 March 2004**

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### **Addo Elephant National Park Receives \$5,5 million World Bank Grant**

THE World Bank Board has approved a further grant to the tune of US\$ 5,5 million from the Global Environment Facility to assist with the expansion and conservation of the exhilarating Addo Elephant National Park in the Eastern Cape Province.

The grant, announced by the World Bank recently, brings the total overall investment in the park to a whopping US\$ 40 million, including private sector and government financial support.

It will assist South African National Parks (SANParks) to conserve representation of five of the country's seven terrestrial biomes; the creation of a major new adjoining Marine Protected Area (MPA) and to enhance socio-economic opportunities for an impoverished Eastern Cape.

The project will focus on five key areas, namely: Conservation Planning, implementation, institution and governance, community development and economic development. While SANParks' Jill Gordon will remain the overall coordinator of the project, SANParks will appoint an independent Project Management Unit (PMU), which will consist of a Project Manager, Procurement Manager and Financial/ Administration Officer.

Established in 1931, on just 2000 ha of land and currently at 145 000 ha, the Addo Elephant National Park is expected to grow to 236 000 ha with an additional MPA of 120 000 ha.

The expanded area will support the park's growing elephant population and the restoration of degraded farmlands to enhance its increasing biodiversity mandate. With the inclusion of a marine zone, species such as the southern right whale and great white shark are guaranteed, ultimately, to make the park an exciting Big 7 destination, a first for South Africa.

These plans have received a significant boost with Minister Vali Moosa having recently announced the intention to have the area around Bird Island declared as a MPA, initially to quell abalone poaching but towards the later larger MPA.

Furthermore, with the emphasis on the conservation of biodiversity, the complete wildlife experience is possible across a series of landscapes unrivalled in beauty, all within a single conservation area, at the beginning of the world famous Garden Route.

SANParks Chief Executive David Mabunda is expected to sign an agreement with the World Bank in Pretoria later this month. Mabunda further expressed his gratitude to the world financial institution and said the grant was a huge shot in the arm for SANParks.

"The grant is further proof of confidence in the work that SANParks continues to undertake in terms of our core mandate of bio-diversity management. It will also ensure that the expansion process that we have undertaken in the Addo Elephant National Park delivers a much larger ecological area for our wildlife and improved facilities for all our tourists," said Mabunda.

The World Bank's Task Team Leader, Chris Warner, said that the Addo Elephant National Park project brings the World Bank - Global Environment Facility committed investment in South Africa to close to \$36 million. Both institutions recognise that South Africa boasts a remarkable array of biodiversity and cultural heritage, which is of global conservation value. The project is expected to have spin-offs for the management of other national parks in South Africa as well as marine protected areas.

The World Bank also welcomed the sizable financial commitment and support, which SANParks and the South African government have provided to this significant project.

***Issued by South African National Park***

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