Molweni GRNPers

Although summer seems to be a bit laid back in arriving in the Garden Route this year, the effect of Spring is certain to fully bloom during the next couple of months. With all the lovely rain, our forests are once again lush, providing a much needed sink for carbon dioxide, literally breathing new life into our visitors and staff alike. With Knysna having hosted the annual “Forest and Fynbos” forum, we were once again assured that the work we do here, via our brilliant Scientists and Planners, is ground breaking.

Tsitsikamma celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Africa’s oldest Marine Protected Area (MPA) in style in being the host park to launch the annual SANParks week. Deputy Minister Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Local Mayor Sam Vuso (Koukamma), Professor Graham Kerley, (SANParks Board), Hans Hillebrand (CEO: FNB) and Christian Des-Closier and other dignitaries were in attendance.

The GRNP was also graced by the presence of the second National Minister in our area this year, when the Honourable Minister of Tourism, Mr Derek Hanekom officially launched the Blue Flag beach season in Knysna. Blue flag beaches within the park include the Wilderness main beach and Nature’s Valley. The Park also partners the Knysna Municipality in the management of the Thesen Island Marine, as well as other partners - Eden District Municipality and WESSA.

While managing our natural resources, our heritage is never forgotten. Plans for the “10-places route” in the Knysna Forest is well advanced. This will afford yet another opportunity for visitors to go back in time in order to appreciate where we have come from. Whom of you have not hiked the world famous Otter Trail, which is a young 46 this year? You haven’t? Well maybe 2015 is your time. Hikers will now experience an upgraded trail, with an exciting new logo, once again claiming the “Otter Trail” as “ours”. Of course if you have walked it many a times, why not join the holy grail and run it? How does running it in sub 5 hours vs hiking it over 4 days sound? Magical, exciting, adventurous? Well that is just what the Park has in mind with its “Adventure is in our nature” slogan.

Responsible business partners are key to the success of the Park and to that end Andile Namntu from our Business Development Unit (BDU), Phelisa Casa (Supply Chain Manager) in conjunction with National Treasury, local business forums and Koukamma Municipality ran a very successful open business day in Tsitsikamma during SA Parks Week.

They say “every ending, brings a new beginning.” So while we sadly bid farewell to “Oom” Tok (38 years of dedicated service for SANParks), Shamley Titus (our computer boffin) and Sive Mphapha (financial specialist) and “Bhut” Zwai leaving us to become Park Manager at the Addo Elephant National Park, we excitedly welcomed Sandra Taljaard as the new Area Manager in Wilderness and Marks Mofokeng, as Technical Officer in Tsitsikamma.

Celebrating each other’s successes has become a signature in the GRNP. Recognising a colleague’s contribution, hard work and dedication is a sign of “sportsmanship.” This year’s GRNP Awards kicked off in style at the Wilderness Hotel. Guest speaker, also the speaker of the Eden District Municipality and an avid supporter of the Park, via the Honorary Ranger programme, enthralled guests with her talk. She was followed by a guest artists and then the excitement of the handing out of awards. The Park recognised the hard work of the Tsitsikamma Honorary Ranger Region, as well as the magnificent cooperation with the Nelson Mandela Metro university (NMMU) with Professor Christo Fabrichous.

Keep up the hard work colleagues. The season is knocking on our door and we need to fly our flag high.

Jill Bunding-Venter

General Manager: Garden Route National Park
Global news ..

Forests are crucial to daily living for various reasons including and not limited to providing habitat to animals and plants. They provide multiple timber and related products. They also store carbon, assist the water purification process, help against natural hazards such as floods.

‘As trees grow, they absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store the carbon in their trunks, branches and roots. Because they store more carbon than they release, forests are known as a carbon “sink.”

Forests are among the world’s most important carbon sinks. They store some 289 million metric tons (tones) of carbon in the trees and plants alone’ according to Rainforest Alliance.

A forest is usually an area filled with trees but any tall densely packed area of vegetation may be considered a forest, even underwater vegetation such as kelp forests, or non-vegetation such as fungi and bacteria. Tree forests cover approximately 9.4 percent of the Earth’s surface (or 30 percent of total land area), though they once covered much more (about 50 percent of total land area).

News from Southern Africa...

South Africa’s forests make up the smallest ecosystems in the country. Forestry areas can be found in coastal provinces such as the Western Cape, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. According to South African Tourism (SAT), ‘the deep gorges and ravines that characterize the rugged Eastern Cape are home to forests such as the indigenous Afro-montane Hogsback, Kologha, Longmore, Plaatbos, Storms River and the fynbos biome of Witselsbos.

They cover less than 1% of South Africa’s land area. Approximately 35800 ha of our temperate indigenous rain forest are state owned and are situated along the coastal belt between George and Storms River in the Western Cape, the region now known as the Garden Route. (discover Sedge)

They are described as “moist” and “medium moist” and consist of the tallest trees and most luxuriant undergrowth. The well-known spectacular tree species grow in the wetter forests, for example the Stinkwood, Yellowwoods, Hard Pear, Ironwood and Cape chestnut. White and Red Elder are found in wet river valleys and sheltered “kloofs”.

Psychotria elata a tropical tree of the Amazon. It is affectionately known as the ‘Hooker’s lips or the Hot Lips Plants and is pollinated by humming birds and butterflies. Gabrielle Scholtz
Knysna Oyster Fest and the Hope Spot

Partners in Knysna (SANParks, the Eden District Municipality, Knysna Municipality, Cape Nature, Knysna Basin Project, Biowise, Lakes Bird Club) are pooling efforts and resources to put Knysna on the map as the next Hope Spot. Hope Spots are places that are critical to the health of the ocean. The ocean occupies two-thirds of the planet’s surface and contains 97% of the Earth’s water. The total volume is approximately 1.3 billion cubic kilometers (310 million cu mi) with an average depth of 3,682 meters.

Some of these Hope Spots are already formally protected, while others still need defined protection. The prospective Hope Spot in Knysna includes the Knysna estuary which opens up to the Atlantic Ocean at the Heads. The estuary which is managed by SANParks is a protected area in the Garden Route National Park. It is rated as SA’s number 1 in terms of biodiversity significance. It is home to the Knysna seahorse (Hippocampus capensis), classified as Endangered (Hilton-Taylor 2000) and is widespread in Swartvlei and Knysna estuaries though not abundant. In excess of 200 species of fish have been recorded in the Knysna Estuary alone (Bulpin 1978). The permanently open estuary enables free access to typical marine species, with the result that there are many records of species which do not normally occur in estuaries.

FYNBOS FORUM 2014

‘Forests and fynbos’ was this year’s theme for the Fynbos forum. The multi-stakeholder annual event was held this year in Knysna, and attended by various stakeholders including researchers who work in fynbos, scientists, students, engineers, planners, the Working for Programmes (Working on Fire, Working for Water, Working for Wetlands, Conservation managers, foresters, landowners, Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

SANParks presented various papers prepared and presented by Johan Baard, Maretha Alant, Dr Tinneke Kraaij and other colleagues from SANParks.
SANParks forest ecologists are preparing for the 30-year re-measurement of trees in permanent sample plots (PSPs) in the forests of the Garden Route National Park. The 967 plots were established between 1984 and 1991, and have been re-measured every 10 years since. The data was used to calculate sustainable timber harvesting levels for different harvesting areas. The permanent plots were retained for the long-term monitoring of natural forest stand dynamics and responses to harvesting in harvested forest stands.

Plots are circular with a radius of 11.3m and an area of approximately 400m². They provide a sampling intensity of approximately 2.5% to 5% of the sampled areas. All trees with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of at least 10cm are measured within each plot. All trees are identified by true bearing and distance from the centre of the plot. This can be used to locate the plot centre if its pipe goes missing. The point of diameter measurement is fixed at 1.3m above the stainless steel pin driven into the base of the tree. The species, DBH and condition are recorded for each tree. Dead trees are recorded, and trees now larger than 10cm are added. The PSPs thus provide information on the tree species and size class composition for each area, and data on increments (growth rates), mortality rates and ingrowth rates for each tree, species and size class.

The fastest grower is hard pear (Olinia ventosa) with a mean diameter growth rate of about 3.8mm per year, with some trees growing by almost 10mm in diameter in a year when conditions are very favourable. However, the mean diameter growth rate for all species and size classes is a mere 1.091mm per year. Many trees have grown by only a few millimetres over the last 20 to 30 years, and some trees have even become thinner! This sometimes occurs when trees are under moisture stress during periods of drought, or when they are busy dying. These and other long-term monitoring results show us that our forest trees grow slowly and can live for hundreds of years. The size of a tree is not a very reliable indicator of the age of the tree, as different trees of the same species grow at different rates, which will also differ at different stages of their lives. We also know that trees of all size classes can die, and that there is plentiful regeneration of most species throughout the forest to replace those that die or are harvested.
SA National Parks Week 2014

A special dinner for 60 was held in the Storms River Rest Camp’s restaurant (Cattle Baron) where a SANParks Board member, Professor Graham Kerley gave a keynote address. This event was attended by guests from the official sponsors of SA National Parks Week (CEOs of Total and FNB), politicians, media and guests.

Every year South African National Parks launches the start of SANParks week in a different park. This year the honour befell the Tsitsikamma Section of the GRNP, as it is celebrating the 50th anniversary of Africa's first Marine Protected Area (MPA). This auspicious occasion was graced by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Rejoice Mabudafhasi, the local Mayor of Koukamma, Mr Sam Vuso, Provincial Speaker, Noxolo Kiviet, and about 80 guests from Municipalities, Tourism Boards, Civil society and the media.

Day 3 (business workshop for local entrepreneurs)

Over 120 local entrepreneurs heeded to the SANParks call to meet in Tsitsikamma. The purpose of the day was to connect to society, and specifically the business fraternity, to discuss and clarify policies and principles governing the way SANParks does business with private companies.

Also there to capacitate attendees was a speaker from the National Treasury who spoke frankly about Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).

SEDA (Small enterprise Development Agency), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Anglo American and the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) also spoke about various vehicles set aside to develop local small businesses. These organisations exhibited their resource educational and promotional material alongside SANParks (read more about this in the business and finance page).

Day 5 (community gig with live Local DJs)

Mr Shakes, DJ Superman and DJ Mjilo end entertained locals with popular tracks. Guests had brought their own food and drinks.

Through various events organised in all 3 sections of the Park including Tsitsikamma, Knysna and Wilderness, the SA National Parks Week annual campaign attracted about 4,037 this year (2014). This is 2,500 more than last year’s 1,500 (2013). ‘We would like to thank everyone who visited the GRNP this year and hope you will return to enjoy the Park and various activities on offer’ according to Bunding-Venter. She also congratulated all the teams behind all events.

During the last campaign, the most visited areas of the Park include the Storms River Rest Camp and Natures Valley in Tsitsikamma, Goudveld and Ebb & Flow (Wilderness). In the Knysna section of the GRNP, popular spots include the Knysna estuary, the Forest Legends museum in Diepwalle Knysna Forest and the Garden of Eden (Harkerville, Knysna forest).
Blue Flag launch in Knysna during Marine Week 2014

Three (3) of the 82 blue flag sites recorded this year by WESSA are in the Garden Route National Park (GRNP). One is in Wilderness and the other in Natures Valley as well as a Blue Flag Marina on Thesen Island in Knysna. The GRNP is the only National Park in South Africa traversing through the jurisdiction of 4 Municipalities. These include the Eden District Municipality (Wilderness section of the GRNP), the Knysna Municipality (Knysna section), Cacadu District Municipality and Koukamma Municipality.

Minister Hanekom of the Tourism Department graced the event. He was welcomed by the Mayor of Knysna and other dignitaries. Speaking at the event, Hanekom said Knysna is in his favourite top 5 holiday destinations along with Paternoster and others. He commended Knysna for its beauty and its biodiverse-rich estuary.

Various partners in Knysna, ensure the estuary lives up to its name and they include the Knysna Basin Project Eden District Municipality, SANParks and Knysna Municipality.

The Wilderness beach area, also a blue flag beach is co-managed by the Eden District Municipality, SANParks, WESSA, the NSRI and neighbouring Selinas restaurant.

A similar structure known as the Groot River estuary committee is a joint initiative among neighbouring partners including Bitou Municipality, Natures Valley Trust, SANParks and Natures Valley Ratepayers Association. Similarly, its work is to protect the Groot River and keep it clean. The beach in Natures Valley, also part of the Tsitsikamma section of the GRNP has blue flag status.

Various water activities in the Knysna estuary include swimming, stand up paddling, jet skiing, boating, sailing, snorkeling and diving. A recent study on the Knysna estuary also pointed to the fact that the estuary is visited for its ‘sense of place’.
Once upon a time, there was a huge and untouched forest that stretched in its vastness from towering mountains to deep blue ocean waters. In this forest, there were many plants and animals, but there were also humans. The humans’ responses to the forest were varied: some became navigators of the rivers and used the stars and the moon to find their way through the dense undergrowth, others became farmers who used the land for food and produce, while others took advantage of the forests for their own ambitious uses. All lived in the forest, with the forest, and because of the forest, and even when the forest was feared, it always remained at the center of the lives of its humans.

The deep and mysterious forests of the Garden Route National Park hold many untold stories of the interactions between humans and forests. Some stories are scary, some joyful, yet others are unbelievable when first told. It is our job, as protectors and interpreters of this magnificent ecosystem to share these stories with those who choose to adventure into the depths of green which we proudly protect.

The People and Conservation Department is responsible for ensuring that our visitors and locals experience true discovery when entering the natural areas within our National Parks. We are there to make sure that they walk away a little richer, a little wiser a little more inclined to respect and to cherish our cultural as well as natural heritage.

This year P&C Knysna aims to do just that with the “10 Places Self-Drive Route” which is set to be launched during heritage month this year. The route which starts off along the R339, just outside of Knysna, takes the visitor on a half-day meander through Diepwalle and Gouna. It exposes the traveller to old forester’s houses to more modern looking museums, from the biggest trees in the forest to the highest mountain tops.

As the name suggests, the route was originally designed around 10 places of cultural interest and significance in the area. Each “place” can be explored and experienced along with guidance from a newly designed route map and well placed interpretive boards.

Work on this route started in early 2014 and the research portion is extensive. “We’ve interviewed old foresters, consulted with heritage bodies, worked with local historians, each piece of the puzzle is revealed in bite size chunks from such a wide variety of stakeholders that. A mammoth task – exciting but gruelling!” says Melaney Barrath, P&C for the Knysna Section. “We hope that our visitors will enjoy taking a drive through time and a dive into the rich history of the forest. We also hope that the route encourages visitors to adventure a little deeper into the forest and that they discover just how magical and delightful this area really is.”

**The 10 Places Route**

- Templeman Station: Where the old timber steam engine collected timber between 1907 – 1949
- Forest Legends Museum
- Old Suzy steam engine
- Old Foresters House
- King Edward Bog Tree
- Veldbroeks draai
- Spitskop view point
- Dal Van Vaarings
- Kom se Pad
- San Ambroso Chapel Monument (Gouna)
A group of SANParks scientists from the Cape Research Centre recently visited the Garden Route to spend a week knowledge sharing with their counterparts based in Knysna and Rondevlei. The aim of the exercise was to gain insight into the diverse research and monitoring projects conducted by the Garden Route team in the park’s aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

The week kicked off with a full day of introductions and presentations on the numerous projects in both the Cape and Garden Route nodes. The rest of the week’s activities took place in field looking at the practical aspects of research. This gave everyone a good opportunity to interact with each other, ask questions and learn from each other. Sites visited included fern and forest monitoring plots in Diépwalle, through to fynbos and fire research areas in Ysternek and Gouna. Plant species of special concern were visited near Sedgefield along with medicinal bark harvesting monitoring sites in Tsitsikamma. Prawn and fish sampling methods were demonstrated and discussed at Swartvlei wrapping up with bait monitoring in Natures Valley. The week would have been incomplete without a trip on the water so thanks to the staff and management in Knysna and Tsitsikamma, the group was given the opportunity to go up the Knysna Estuary and brave the surf at Storms.

Late last year the Garden Route scientists spent time in Mokala participating in a similar experience with their colleagues at the Savanna and Arid Research Unit. These knowledge exchanges prove very useful in terms of exposing SANParks scientists to the various avenues of research on the go.

As the week drew to a close in the Garden Route all agreed that it had been a brilliant opportunity to meet and discuss new ideas and share valuable knowledge and lessons learnt whilst promoting collaboration and synergy within the department.
Brent Whittington is the new Senior Section Ranger in the Tsitsikamma section of the GRNP. He is responsible for the management of Conservation services within the Tsitsikamma. He also manages law enforcement teams as well as the management of trails, sections budget and assets.

He previously worked in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park as a Senior Section ranger for the Nossob section which is approximately +330 hectares.

Brent’s hobbies include woodwork, fishing, boating, off road riding and hunting.

We welcome Brent to the ‘place of many waters’.

What rangers got up to on Rangers Day

‘Game rangers association of Africa and the Survival Training of South Africa were present for various demonstrations during the GRNP’s event to commemorate World Rangers Day. So says the campaign’s Regional coordinator, Owen Govender ‘as rangers gathered around the globe to commemorate International Rangers Day, we spent our time rekindling our love for nature.’ Govender adds that it is nature that underpins tourism in the Park.’

Knysna soccer champs

Billy Tala of the Knysna section says the recently held Old mutual soccer challenge was tough but worthwhile. The Knysna section of the GRNP team (11 players), played against Landswood (from George) and thrashed them (3-2). They proceeded to the next round to play the SANDF and also won against that team (3-2).
Tourism

The Otter trail has a new look

‘We are the Otter trail’

The Otter trail hike turns 46 this year. This brainchild of the Park is a world famous hiking trail starting and ending in the Storms River Rest Camp, part of the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park. As part of celebrating this milestone, the Garden Route National Park is rebranding this world famous hike to encourage more people to take nature hikes in the Tsitsikamma section of the Park. It was declared by the Hiking Organisation of Southern Africa (HOSA) as deserving green flag status. Green Flag status is a system that ensures hiking trails in South Africa meet standards in terms of ‘trail outlay, accommodation, facilities and service, as well as the conservation of natural resources.’ In turn, hikers are guaranteed that their expectations will be met and that they also receive value for money.

The Otter trail hike was named after an animal found in freshwater and in the sea called the Otter. It was launched in 1968, four years after the declaration of the Park. It was not big news then until the establishment of the Fanie Botha Hiking Trail in 1973 and the establishment of the National Hiking Way Board in 1975. These early trails were developed on state land and used the Department of Forestry’s staff to do the construction work.

On target and on budget

The entrance road leading to Ebb & Flow is now officially opened. The 650-meter sub-base of the paved road was both damaged and uneven. Construction work mainly included the removal of the current paving to re-stabilize the base of the road. Visitors can now enjoy the Wilderness section of the GRNP for its various activities such as canoeing, bird-watching and others. For further enquiries on accommodation and using the Loeries Nest (mini-conference center), contact Grant Grootboom, Hospitality Manager for the Wilderness section of the Garden Route National Park on 044 877 1197.

Back in March 2014, The successful bidders for the job were publicly announced as Robcon Civils who won a tender process (CI-WM-0016) which closed in December 2013. Aurecon Engineers organised a site handover meeting during the week of the 10th March 2014. Construction work commenced on the 25th March 2014. Due process regarding environmental processes was followed. The project is not an extension of the road, but a rehabilitation of it, utilizing the same footprint.
The 2014 Otter Trail run presented by Salomon and Gu, delivered yet another world-class showcase of trail running along the pristine coastline of the Tsitsikamma forest. Now in its sixth year of existence, the Otter Trail Run has established itself as the premier trail running event on the African continent. South Africa’s leading trail athletes descended on race headquarters at Storm’s River Mouth, the setting for what proved to be a beautiful finish to the trail beginning at Nature’s Valley, 42km west of the finishing point. A race that alternates in direction every year, 2014 was the year of the Retto (Otter spelled backwards), the west-to-east run and opposite of the typical Otter Trail route.

On the morning of 22 September, conditions for a fast paced race could not have been better. The Abangeni (the top 24 men and top 8 women, those of whom finished top of prologue the day before) set off first, followed by 200 elite trail runners, all chasing what is commonly referred to as ‘The Grail of Trail’.

Both the men’s and women’s races quickly turned into three-horse affairs. In the men’s section, two-time winner Iain Don-Wauchope, SA Cross Country champion Thabang Madiba (who was fastest in the prologue), and AJ Calitz broke away to battle it out for the podium placings. In the women’s section, international trail superstar and overwhelming pre-race favourite Landie Greyling, as well as previous winner Su Don-Wauchope and prologue winner Nicolette Griffioen raced ahead early on.

Both leading groups set blistering paces along the way and looked on course to challenging for the R100 000 bonus that race organisers had put on offer for a sub 4-hour (men’s) and sub 4h30min (women’s) finish. Leading athletes hopes of achieving those bonuses were scuppered when about halfway into the race, a strong headwind developed and slowed the pace down considerably.

The final kilometers of the men’s race proved to be one of the most exciting finishes to date, with Madiba breaking away with 4km to go. He was to be caught by Don-Wauchope on the rocks with 2km to go. Once going past Madiba, the wise Don-Wauchope was never going to be caught, and raced home to beat his previous Retto record in a time of 4h21min30sec. Madiba was a close second at 4h24min27sec, followed by Calitz in 4h31min17.

In the ladies race, Greyling managed to break away from her competitors, admittedly later than she expected, to race home in 5h11min46sec. Griffioen followed in second (5h14min32sec), and Don-Wauchope completed the podium, coming home in 5h17min35sec.

In addition to the main race, ex-Protea cricketer Mark Boucher and trail legend Ryan Sandes led a team of four runners over the trail to raise awareness for the Castle Lager Boucher Legacy, a foundation created to fight rhino poaching. With an 8-hour cutoff, the team left themselves very little margin, coming home with just 7 minutes to spare. Speaking after the finish, Boucher commented that the Otter was “the hardest thing he has ever done”, it shows that the event is up there with the toughest test’s of physical ability the country has to offer. Magnetic South, pictures by Jacques Marais.

Magnetic South praises the Tsitsikamma section after this year’s event: ‘I just would like to thank you for the support we received from you and your SANParks team in the Tsitsikamma Section this Otter African Trail Run. We have always received great support on the Otter Event from the team in the Tsitsikamma but this year was taken to another level. The trail was in better condition than at any time during our past five events and all the areas of concern that we highlighted from our report compiled from our scout runs had been addressed by the event. I received so many complements on the enthusiasm expressed by your field rangers both from participants and from our field crew stationed with them on the trail. That encouragement makes a huge difference to the experience of the participant. We were also particularly impressed with the professionalism, enthusiasm and attentiveness of Brent and think he will be an asset to your team in all regards. From a personal point of view; I consider every minute spent in the Tsitsikamma a soul enriching privilege and this year was especially so. Thank you.’
Business Workshop for entrepreneurs

Plans for SA National Parks Week in the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park attracted small, medium and micro businesses in the area to its business workshop during SA National Parks Week 2014. ‘This section of the Park has the most concessionaires’ says Andile Namntu, Business Development Manager for the GRNP. The line up of speakers included those from the National Treasury, the National Empowerment Fund, SANParks and others. Organizations exhibited relevant material to practically assist entrepreneurs. ‘This is the first of various planned workshops for the GRNP. We intend to host at least 1 per section before the end of this Financial Year’ said Namntu.

‘Adventure is in our nature’

Of the 9 188 368 international tourists who arrived in SA in 2012, an estimated 558, 014 headed to the Western Cape during peak seasons (Quarter 1 and 4). Popular tourist destinations are Cape Town, the Garden Route and the Winelands, according to the 2012 Western Cape Tourism Trends report (WESGRO).

More domestic travellers visited the Western Cape, making up 57, 4% of the total number of visitors. Visits were recorded during off-peak seasons (winter months, Quarter 2 and 3).

‘For sport lovers and adrenalin junkies, the Garden Route offers a wide selection of activities, ranging from gentle and moderate to fast-paced and extreme...’ A study conducted on the future state of National Parks identified ‘activity development’ as a priority for the Garden Route National Park (GRNP). The study included various other tourism attractions relevant to other Parks such as ‘tourism development projects, accommodation’ and others.

Management in the Garden Route National Park identified ‘adventure activities’ that could meet both the conservation mandate and also stimulate tourism in the Region. This will include opening up business opportunities to private companies. Andile Namntu, Business Development Manager (BDU) for the Garden Route National Park says the GRNP is guided by the tourism and commercial strategies of SANParks. ‘We are guided by the Public, Private Partnership (PPP) as defined in the National Treasury Regulations, promulgated under the Public Finance Management Act of 1999.’ Namntu says an expression of interest for interested parties or companies with extensive experience in events management and adventure activities is now officially opened.

‘Expression of Interest (EOI) is to test the market to see if companies are interested and also assess concepts. The information from the EOI will be used to complete a feasibility study’ he elaborates.
Thumbs Up!

Sylvia de Vos writes

‘We really really really enjoyed our stay. Everything was perfect!! However, I would suggest that you put something in front of the bathroom windows perhaps, something like mesh, to keep the baboons and monkeys out, so that you can at least open one window in the charlet. That is all that I would suggest. Thank you for the lovely stay, we’ll surely visit again.’

Nathan Booysen writes

‘Excellent service... Friendly, helping and caring staff. I really would recommend ebb and flow wilderness to anyone... I had two problems and they solved it almost instantly... If you want to relax your mind or want adventure, come to ebb and flow... 2 nights in a rondawel and I loved it...’

Debbie Barrie writes

‘I would like to congratulate you on a wonderful otter trail and accommodation. I have recently completed the otter trail and was so impressed by the maintenance on the trail and the cleanliness of the camp areas. The steps, bridges and stairs throughout the route were very sturdy and a great help (especially those petrified of heights like myself). I was very impressed with the cleanliness of all the huts and areas at the camps. The reception staff were very friendly and gave a useful safety advise. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole route and will definitely be back to do it again (once these blisters have healed that is). Thanks once again for a memorable week!’

Mrs C Schwarze writes

‘Very impressed with SANParks, well organised and proudly South African! Lovely to see government-run parks and facilities in mint condition and good service, especially being a SA tourist, was well worth the stay. Please keep your excellent service/standards and we’ll keep coming back!’

Mr J Fick writes

‘We had a wonderful time at Storms River and everyone must be congratulated on their professionalism and friendly attitude. We were very impressed and will definitely come again...’

Mr John Ricketts writes

‘We recently spent a night in one of your log cabins at Natures Valley. Your manager and staff there are congratulated on the superb condition in which they maintain the campsite, ablution blocks and living areas. Absolutely magnificent and that includes the professional manner in which the manager communicates with guests. The downside was to see this magnificent site so underutilised. Perhaps you could consider discounting by say 40% during the winter months to attract more visitors.’
Meet Sandra Taljaard

Sandra was born and bred in Piet Retief. She studied at the University of Pretoria where she obtained a B Sc Degree, majoring in Botany and Zoology. She started working as botanist in the SANDF’s Survival Unit where she qualified as a Land Survival and Sea Survival Instructor and managed the research component of the unit. When her husband, Johan, who is the current Park Manager of Marakele was appointed as the Information Officer in Tsitsikamma National Park, she got her first orientation to SANParks, then Parks Board. ‘We only spent 10 months there and then relocated to West Coast National Park’ she adds.

Between 1991 and 1995 she worked as the Tourism Officer at the Geelbek Environmental Education Centre on a fixed term contract basis. ‘This exposed me to the general functions of an overnight facility including the operation of a tea garden and a restaurant.’ This later opened doors because in 1999 she was appointed as a Senior Social Ecologist in the Richtersveld National Park.

In 2001 she was appointed as the Senior People and Conservation Officer in Golden Gate Highlands National Park, the rest as they say, is history.

Meet Marks Mofokeng, new technical person in Tsitsikamma

Marks Mofokeng started formal work in 2001 as an employee for Concor Engineering. He then moved to Kiara Lodge as technical supervisor between 2004 to 2006. He joined SANParks in Golden Gate as a senior technical supervisor in 2007. In 2012 he moved to the Tankwa Karoo National Park where he worked as a technical officer. Marks is now Tsitsikamma’s Assistant Technical Manager and started in August this year.

We wish all our new staff a happy and fruitful working life in the GRNP. Welcome to the place of many waters.
GRNP Regional Awards 2014

What makes Regional Awards such a pleasure is that everyone has a say and the evaluation committee has the final say!

80 people attended the event including winners 30 winners and 2 representatives to collect the Camp of the Year and Division of the Year Awards. 1 winner was recorded absent due to his recent relocation to another Region. Members of GREXCO (Garden Route National Park EXCO) were also in attendance as well as a guest speaker (from the Eden District Municipality), Honorary Rangers and Professor Fabricius from the NMMU.

Popular local speaker and Disc Jockey (DJ) for Eden FM, Metro Tom was the MC for the day.
More ….GRNP Regional Awards 2014

Winner for the research and innovation award is Professor Christo Fabricius of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). The Business Partner of the Year Award went to the Honorary Rangers from Tsitsikamma. Recipients of the ‘Excellence in the workplace Award include Alfred Champion, Thea Lucas, Billie Tala, Geneve Lupacchini (all from the Knysna section of the Park. Winners from Tsitsikamma include Mpumelelo Mbanzi, Nomonde Bembe, the Tsitsikamma Terrain Team (Kerneels Felix, Stoffel Jafra and Dail Witbooi), Victor Cunningham, Pearle Joseph, Paul London, and Marion Mabie. Winners from the Wilderness section include the Wilderness Lakes team (Ursula Joseph, Jonathan Lottering, Petrus Mitchell and Nelson Tyhali). Julia Visser, Marionette Scholtz and Michelle Jones. Winners from the BSP include Mulalo Muelelwana and Frans Lesoka.

The General Manager’s Awards: Patricia Koli and Peter Roman
Leadership Awards: (Derec Giles and Nandi Mgwadlamba)

Doris Nyler of the Eden District Municipality, guest speaker for the day
GRNP Ladies honoured with a poem from Maya Angelou during the ceremony
Oom Tok retires

Oom Tok of the Tsitsikamma section has retired. The team from the Park gathered around him to give final well-wishes and to congratulate him for a job well done over his 38 years as a SANParks employee.

‘Yes it is time to say goodbye after 38 years of service! I was fortunate to work in a very special environment and enjoyed it, and even more, I feel proud about the contribution that I have made’ wrote Oom Tok Knox in an email to staff in the GRNP.

‘Thanks to everybody who always went the extra bit to support me. I am going to miss the place and the people but will hopefully be around at times to say hello’ he added.

Farewell to Mzwandile Mjadu ‘Zwai’

GREXCO members and the team from the Development Programme gathered to bid Mzwandile Mjadu, affectionately referred to as ‘bhut Zwai’. He is now the new Area Manager for the Addo Elephant National Park. ‘Although we are sad in losing a member of our team, we are at the same time very proud of his achievement’ said General Manager for the GRNP, Jill Bunding-Venter in wishing him well in his new endeavour.

The PE Herald reported that he must be the only Area Manager to have started working in a Park and end up there. His responds ‘home is only a stones throw away and I am delighted to be back home’ says a radiant Zwai.

Stakeholders in the Wilderness section of the Park commend him for his excellent conflict resolution skills and approachable, open-door style of management.

Farewell to Shamley Titus

Shamley Titus, the Marine Ranger Sergeant for the Knysna section left the GRNP for the Department of Agriculture in Mosselbay in June. ‘I would like to thank everyone that I have worked with for the past six years. Here at SANParks I had the opportunity to grow as a person. I have learned new skills and gained a tremendous amount of experience that will come in handy in my new position’ he said.

Shamley was always commended by citizens living around the Knysna estuary for his promptness in delivering a service. One citizen went so far as to write a positive comment about him in the popular weekly freebie newspaper, the Action Ads in June last year. Shamley has been a recipient of the Regional Awards for 3 years in succession.

Farewell to Sive Mphapha

Sive Mphapha of the Knysna section (finance) also recently left the GRNP for the Northern Region. Colleague and confidant, Phelisa Casa gave a moving tribute to Mphapha whom she referred to as ‘a hard worker, a strong person and a friendly somebody.’

Sive will be missed for her raucous laughter and charismatic personality coupled with her affectionate love for the isiXhosa.
BIRTHDAYS

13 September
Andre Riley
Ria May

14 September
Jill Bunding-Venter
Johnathan Kivietts

15 September
Annie Makalane
Nobulumko Gantsho
Nelis Bekker

19 September
Reinette August
Cynthia Ketelo

21 September
Bulelani Qotoyi

23 September
Tersia Oktober

24 September
Meagan Bosman
Willem Koopman

25 September
Frans Douglas
William Makombe

26 September
Johan Busakwe

27 September
Louis Camphor
Anthony Innes

28 September
Tyrone Boesak

30 September
Magdalene Munnik

3 October
Larry Wentzel

5 October
Mitchell Draai

6 October
Adam De Vos
Rosy Van Straden

7 October
Elroy Gentles

8 October
Girshvon Krige

10 October
Paul Olivier

11 October
Catherine Coetzee

14 October
Mauricha Meshaka

16 October
Marie Baard

17 October
Billy Tala

19 October
Owen Govender

20 October
Alida Mabhula
Lusindiso Lande

24 October
Patricia Koli

28 October
Magdalene Munnik