

provincial entities and the three national entities (SANBI, SANParks, and DFFE).

The committee is co-chaired by SANBI and SANParks and technical support is provided by the SANBI Scientific Authority Technical Unit. Members are nominated by their respective agencies, but they are expected to provide their own, independent scientific input, rather than the official policy perspective of their agencies, into collective decisions, advice and recommendations to the Minister. Though there are twelve voting parties, the aim is to reach agreement through consensus; understanding that decisions taken are important, and therefore need to be backed-up by good science, and

supported by the members.

Whereas most Scientific Authorities focus on CITES-listed species, South Africa's Scientific Authority is mandated by legislation to advise the Minister on all issues related to threatened and protected species (TOPS). Therefore, in addition to the CITES functions of monitoring and assessing impacts of trade on CITES-listed species, the TOPS responsibilities include monitoring population status, determining impacts of restricted activities, advising on regulation of activities for threatened species, and determining new and ongoing threats and impacts on biodiversity.

# Policies and White Papers

Text by Danny Govender & Sam Ferreira

The process to bring about changes in legislation is never simple. This is more so in the conservation sector in South Africa, where both national departments and provincial authorities have dual responsibility as management authority, while state and private individuals can own wildlife. In this complex social environment, it is an achievement for South Africa to have relatively comprehensive conservation and environmental management legislation, with a high degree of buy-in from the public.

The report has led to the development of two policy instruments: i) a policy position document on conservation of these five iconic species and ii) a draft white paper on conservation and sustainable use of biological resources more generally.

The policy position focused on (1) improving governance of trade in the five species, (2) finding ways to dispose of legal stockpiles of rhino horn and elephant ivory, (3) preventing intensive captive

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More recently, SANParks scientists took part in national conservation policy review processes emanating from the report from the High Level Panel (HLP) of experts appointed by the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment. The HLP reviewed the conservation and sustainable use practices of five iconic species of wildlife (elephant, black rhino, white rhino, leopard and lion).

breeding of these species, and (4) embarking on large-scale rewilding initiatives. Although the goal of the policy position is to expand and establish extensive wildlife systems that benefit these and other co-occurring species of wild animals, while improving the lives of people, many stakeholders have highlighted

possible negative and unintended conservation consequences of some proposed actions. Stakeholders have also highlighted that the HLP expert opinion should not negate the need for participative and inclusive policy-making processes, especially with primary affected and interested parties.

SANParks takes lessons from this process to guide the planning and development of the National Elephant Heritage Strategy. One key lesson is early buy-in and participation from all affected stakeholders. Meaningful participation in the process should lead to co-development of policy and co-management of elephants with principally affected stakeholders. Several engagements with multiple stakeholder groups in South Africa, including people living next to parks, highlighted that elephants do not affect all people equally. Thus, people directly affected by new laws and rules should have meaningful opportunities to fully participate in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

Public participation in policy-making is a global standard for democracy. It implies an open, inclusive, transparent

form of planning and policy-making. However, often meaningful public input in practice is difficult as processes do not stipulate the level and stage at which the public gets involved. Some scholars suggest that involvement early on in the strategic and normative levels of planning is important to create policy that is enabling.

South Africa's conservation success resulted from conservation on both state and non-state land. Non-state actors play a major role in species and land conservation. Most non-state actors have chosen wildlife as an economically-competitive land use option displacing less ecologically-desirable land use options. Therefore, changes to legislation that may reduce the viability of non-state wildlife ownership may result in private disinvestment in conservation, and longer-term impact on land under conservation, jobs and livelihoods. These decisions need meaningful and engaged consultation processes, without which stakeholders are likely to contest policy in the courts.

# SANParks projects funded by the Jacob Richard Schramm (JRS) Biodiversity Foundation

Text by Dian Spear, Nicola van Wilgen & Judith Botha  
Photo by Chenay Simms

SANParks has entered into an exciting medium-term funding collaboration with the Jacob Richard Schramm (JRS) Biodiversity Foundation. This foundation is an independent grantmaking foundation based in the United States that awards grants to increase access to and use of biodiversity information in sub-Saharan Africa. The project aims to enhance SANParks' ability to collate and share biodiversity data for use in conservation. The first grant allowed two biotechnicians, based in Mountain Zebra and Golden Gate Highlands

National Parks, Ms Nthabe Munyai and Mr Katlego Mashiane, to continue their employment and their PhD studies with SANParks, while also securing funds for travel and fieldwork for critical long-term monitoring in these parks. Dr Dian Spear was appointed in October 2021 on an one-year contract as bioinformatics officer, based at the Cape Research Centre to assist in developing protocols and standards for data management.