Specifics of industry-led transformation of the wildlife economy and embedded challenges
“A community development perspective”

PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, CAPE TOWN – 27 FEBRUARY 2018
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HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- Since the advent of democracy in South Africa, the transformation agenda brought significant changes in many sectors except for the wildlife industry.
- The wildlife industry is part of a multibillion biodiversity conservation sector for which the economy remains in the hands of the white minority.
- The ANC government and its public entities have since 1994 tried to transform the biodiversity sector with limited success.
- Success has been limited to achieving employment equity targets through the recruitment of black senior managers and scientists within the public sector.
- Calls for employment equity and meaningful transformation within the private sector of the wildlife industry have triggered formidable resistance by white authorities who monopolise this economy.
RENEWED INTEREST IN TRANSFORMING THE WILDLIFE ECONOMY

- The Department of Environmental Affairs has renewed the interest of the black majority to be active role players in this industry.

- Black people will be owners and managers of game farms, game hunting outfits, tourism facilities, game meat processing and bioprospecting factories with immense socio-economic benefits to the nation.

- Transformation challenges such as lack of finance and qualified personnel, inadequate infrastructure such as game holding facilities including fencing and tourism facilities will now be addressed.

- The South African National Parks (SanParks) has commenced with a ground-breaking program to donate wild species of high commercial value such as buffalos to deserving communities and black businesses.
RURAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE ACTIVE ROLE PLAYERS IN WILDLIFE ECONOMY

During his state of the nation address, President Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa has stroke a right cord and emphasised the need to grow and nurture the tourism industry in rural areas.

It would be important that biodiversity stewardship programs are introduced as a catalyst for tourism and economic development in rural areas.

The transformation initiatives should encourage communities to farm more with wild animals instead of cattle and goats.

This strategy could also reduce human and wildlife conflict in communal areas which are adjacent to protected areas.

Traditional leaders set aside enough land to be used for biodiversity conservation through the creation of community game reserves, environmental centres and tourism facilities.
RURAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE ACTIVE ROLE PLAYERS IN WILDLIFE ECONOMY

- Communities in the rural areas will not be able to access government support and play an active role in the wildlife economy if there are no relevant institutional mechanisms for good governance at local levels.

- It will be important that community entities such as trusts, non-profit organisations, co-operatives and small businesses are established for good governance and compliance with the laws of this country.

- Governance issues can make or break community initiatives and the Community Property Associations are a classic example of a great concept gone so wrong as many remain dysfunctional and paralysed by lack of capacity as well as corruption.
THE MATSILA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

- Established in 2007 by the Matsila Royal Family in Consultation with the community.
- Established in terms of Section 6(1) of the Trust Property Control Act, 1998.
- To Facilitate socio-economic development initiatives to fight poverty, create jobs and contribute to economic development.
- Areas of focus include Rural Development, Environmental Management, Arts and Culture, Tourism, Agriculture and Social Development.
- Integrated Rural Development Model.
THE STATE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN COMMUNAL LAND

- Over-grazing, bush encroachment, invasive alien species and soil erosion including illegal mining of soil and sand.
- Weak enforcement of environmental laws and bylaws.
- High levels of pollution and littering.
- The price of land is very cheap, meaning there is little or no value in biodiversity and natural resources.
- Indigenous vegetation is often regarded as bush that should be cleared for agriculture or massive infrastructure development.
- No sufficient appreciation for ecosystem services and benefits.
SOME OF THE REASONS BEHIND THE POOR STATE OF NRM IN RURAL AREAS

• Very little or no campaigns to promote best practice in NRM/EM in rural areas.
• General environmental illiteracy.
• Lack of environmental awareness and education amongst traditional leaders and key decision-makers in communal land.
• Lack of capacity to conceptualise, develop and implement NRM programs and projects.
• No accountability regarding decisions and actions with negative impact on the environment and natural resources.
• Very little or no job creation, skills development, economic development opportunities for local people through NRM projects, programs and initiatives.
• Power struggles and conflicts for resources amongst traditional leaders, civic leaders, NGOs, CBOs, councillors, traditional healers and religious leaders.

• No Commitment and No Incentives to NRM
MATSILA LAND USER INCENTIVE AND ADOPT A RIVER PROJECT – Tshikali River

• Started a volunteer program support to mobilise communities to clean the Tshikali River.

• Developed into a fully-fledged Land User Incentive Program funded by the DEA for 3 years employing 220 local people from 8 different villages belonging to Venda and Tsonga Tribes.

• Eradication of invasive and alien plants. 4000 ha mapped out for clearing.

• Erosion control and prevention.

• Rehabilitation & restoration of degraded and over-grazed land.

• Germination and propagation of indigenous trees and grass through nursery in tunnel.

• Value added benefits include collection of wood of which the proceeds from sales will be channelled back into the project to employ more people.
Sickle Bush Invasion
MATSILA COMMUNITY WILDLIFE ECONOMY PROJECT

• Disease free Buffalo, Eland, Impala
• Donated by SanParks and Phala Phala Wildlife
• Conservation of fauna and flora within the local community
• Biodiversity stewardship within the local community
• Environmental education and awareness
• Investment in ecosystem services
• Sustainable employment, skills development and economic opportunities
• Responsible and sustainable tourism within the community
MATSILA COMMUNITY WILDLIFE ECONOMY PROJECT
MATSILA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Joe Matsila Gust House & Abraham Matsila Cultural Centre

- Using local labour employing mainly women and youth.
- Sourcing material and services from the local community.
- Contracting of local artisans and electricians.
- Training local people on brick-making and construction.
• Use of thatch for environmental reasons to reduce use of heaters and air cons. Promoting harvesting of grass as part of maintaining the ecosystem.

• Promoting the use of indigenous knowledge in construction.

• Use of indigenous trees and non-invasive species for gardening thereby greening the environment and promoting environmental awareness.

• Securing and preserving indigenous trees during and after construction.
Labour Intensive Construction

- Job creation and poverty eradication.
- Harvesting of sand for construction with minimal impact on rivers and ecosystems.
- Rehabilitation of land where sand for construction is collected.
PROPOSED FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

• Creating an Eco-Village through greening and eco-parks with environmentally friendly recreational facilities.
• Introducing few species of game especially antelopes such as Impala to promote local conservation and environmental awareness. Game fencing will be required.
• Suppression of growth of *D. Cinerea* through farming browsers.
• Use of solar energy and biogas to minimise electricity costs.
• Planting of indigenous grass and trees to rehabilitate the land using the current hectare-based approach.
• Reviving indigenous knowledge to support organic farming.
• Medicinal plant project for the traditional healers and herbalists. This should be preceded by ecological and botanical research, followed by building capacity for sustainable use of medicinal plants.
• Research on indigenous knowledge and environmental management including sustainable use medicinal plants and environmental services.
• CBNRM should be actively supported in rural areas.
• Active and vibrant environmental awareness programs should be implemented on an continuous basis. Budget for celebration of environmental days should be set aside.
PROPOSED FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

• Multinational Land User Incentive Programs for Investment Watershed Services but integrated within broader environmental management programs.

• Capacity building programs for decision-makers, especially traditional leaders and civil society leaders who are often not afforded an opportunity to participate and lead on water issues and related environmental challenges.

• Addressing political issues in the sector

• Racism

• Tribalism and Ethnicity

• Gender and Youth equality and equity

• Marginalised and impoverished communities

• Class-based approach in the sector and Corruption

• People with disabilities

• Xenophorbia

• Fragmentation of interrelated and interdependent programs

• Everybody must pay, government, private sector, communities and those using the resources.
CONCLUSION

- Freedom Charter “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.”