

Government identifies land for previously disadvantaged

The Department of Environmental Affairs and stakeholder within the environmental sector are identifying 10 million hectares of suitable land for previously disadvantaged individuals and communities to participate as owners of sustainable wildlife-based business ventures.

“Support programmes such as infrastructural development (game fence, ecotourism facilities etc), game donation/loaning, skills development and training, access to markets and funding will be facilitated to ensure sustainable businesses,” the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Barbara Thompson, said.

She said the environmental sector is ideally placed to increase the ownership percentage of black women, youth and communities in the country’s economy. The Deputy Minister was addressing the launch of the Mayibuye Game Reserve Wildlife Economy Pilot Project in the Umkhambathini Local Municipality on Thursday.

“To give you some perspective of the enormous potential of the South African wildlife sector, I have been informed that the sector currently employs approximately 100 000 people across the value chain,” Deputy Minister Thompson said.

The sector’s value chain is centred on game and wildlife farming/ranching activities that relate to the stocking, trading, breeding and hunting of game, and all the services and goods required to support this value chain.

The key drivers of this value chain include domestic hunters, international hunters and a growing retail market demand for wildlife products.

“It is believed that the domestic hunting market was approximately R6.4 billion, while the international hunting market

was approximately R1.4 billion in 2013. In addition to hunting, game farmers can generate income from the sale of game meat, wildlife products and live game,” she said.

The retail and export game meat market was estimated at R230 million in 2013.

Deputy Minister Thompson said the sector also has little domestic and international market multiplier effect and the job creation characteristics of the tourism industry, making it a sector with large economic transformation potential.

“Unfortunately, the structural inequalities characterising our economy has placed several barriers, including insufficient access, ownership and inefficient utilisation of land and lack of infrastructure development support for entrepreneurs on black South Africans.

“In particular, the high capital costs for acquiring land, fencing and game species are major barriers to entry and transformation. Overcoming these barriers to entry or challenges requires coordinated efforts from the government, private sector and communities,” she said.

Mayibuye Game Reserve received R10 million funding from the Department of Environmental Affairs.

Deputy Minister Thompson said the game reserve has made significant progress since the R10 million funding, as a 35-kilometre wildlife fence has been erected, a gate house and offices are being built, two houses have been refurbished, 15 field rangers have been trained and employed while a commercial “Business for Good” site has been refurbished and wildlife introductions (zebra and wildebeest) have been initiated.

“In terms of employment, 76 temporary



Environmental-Affairs-deputy-minister-Barbara-Thomson

I have been informed that the sector currently employs approximately 100 000 people across the value chain,” Deputy Minister Thompson said.

Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) jobs have been created through erection of the fence. This has unlocked a further R100 million private investment for the development of the eco-estate,” she said.

The local community, the Ximba people, were awarded a land restitution claim in terms of a settlement agreement in April 2007.

The Mayibuye Community Trust formed by the community entered into a 99-year lease with the developer and the strategic development partner, whereby the land would be developed into a game reserve with a component of residential property, commercial sites and hotels.