

■ BUSINESS

SANParks networking lunch for women

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WOMEN involved in tourism, conservation and farming were at the centre of discussion at a long table networking lunch in Bontebok National Park near Swellendam on Thursday.

The discussion – hosted by South African National Parks (SANParks) in the lead up to SA National Parks week from September 8 and as part of the Women's Month celebration – was held to assist women in unlocking opportunities within the tourism sector, and discussed the research that impacts them and their business.

West Coast National Park manager Patricia Bopape said SANParks was committed to advancing its mandate to “drive inclusive and responsible tourism growth while contributing to socio-economic transformation of our neighbouring communities”.

Bopape said a significant element

of SANParks's responsible tourism approach was reflected in its strategic plan for commercialisation implemented through public-private partnerships, which have the objective of improving tourism service levels by focusing on core business and leveraging private capital and expertise.

She said their commercialisation strategy has yielded more than 40 contractual agreements and has provided about 2 000 decent sustainable jobs to local communities of national parks. “A good example is a community project called Duinepos, in the Western Cape National Park, a rest camp consisting of 11 units managed by three women from the local community of Langebaan,” she said.

“SANParks is playing an active role in local economic development through the implementation of a number of socio-economic development programmes, through the implementation of the Expanded Public Works

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I have made contacts among other farmers and business people

Adelina Keepman

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: AVACLARK FARMING PROJECT

Programme. In the previous five years, an average of 740 SMMEs were supported through the implementation of a range of EPWP, mostly targeting a beneficiary group of over 8 000 individuals,” she said.

Adelina Keepmen, of the AvaClark farming project, said she started her farming in February last year and is looking forward to being in contact

with SANParks.

Keepmen said she did not know that there were many opportunities for them in SANParks. “I have made contacts among other farmers and business people who were willing to help and motivate me,” she said.

Bontebok National Park is at the foot of Langeberg Mountains and is bordered by the Breede River. Lauren Howard-Clayton, SANParks regional spokesperson, said the park is home to over 200 bontebok and many other animals, “including the Cape mountain zebra, red hartebeest and grey rhebok”.

She said the women's discussion was in line with their vision of: “A world-class system of sustainable national parks reconnecting and inspiring society”, and was functioning on the three core pillars the business of SANParks was founded on – conservation, responsible tourism and socio-economic development.