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**The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve:
A land use model for ecotourism development**

by

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**“ THE WATERBERG IS LIKE INDELIBLE INK -
ONCE EXPERIENCED, NEVER TO BE ERASED”**

- CLIVE WALKER -

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HIERDIE STUDIE WORD OPGEDRA AAN MY PA!

MEI 2003

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ABSTRACT

South Africa became part of the international world in 1994, an event that led to its involvement in UNESCO's Man and Biosphere (MaB) in 1995. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve in the Limpopo Province in turn received international recognition in March 2001. With its diverse natural and cultural features, low development impact and clear land use zonation pattern, the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve forms an ideal eco-destination as defined by the IUCN.

The Limpopo Province is one of the poorest provinces in the country. As such one of its main objectives is economic growth aim at combating poverty. Tourism has been identified as one of the economic pillars in the Province. To achieve economic growth in the tourism field it must thus be ensured that the tourist destinations are well planned and protected. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve strategically and physically links the poorer rural communities of Bakenberg in the west to the existing wildlife/game industry on private land, an aspect that provides excellent opportunities to enhance community tourism development initiatives supported by private industry and government. With its large representation of stakeholders on the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Management Committee, it serves as an ideal forum for discussing the integrated development plan of the Waterberg and devise means to meet the challenges posed by the unique features of the area.

One of the identified challenges is to ensure that the land use zonation pattern in the Waterberg (on which the eco-destination depends) be protected by means of appropriate legislation and land use management practices. Despite the fact that biosphere reserves have not yet been described as a protected area category within the South African legislative framework, a number of prescriptions have been promulgated which directly influence the protection of land uses occurring in a biosphere reserve. These are: the Municipal System Act (South Africa, 2000), the proposed Land Use Management Bill (South Africa, Department of Land Affairs, 2001) and portions of the new National Environmental Management: Protected Area Bill (South Africa, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2002) which provide for the protection of "buffer zones".

The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve links the economic strategy of the Limpopo Province with the conservation of its unique conservation features. It further endorses the current zonation

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pattern in the Waterberg District where the major developments e.g. mining and large industries, take place on the periphery of the district with the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve forming a natural wilderness zone in the centre. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, therefore, serves as an ideal land use model for ecotourism development in the Waterberg.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity (UN)
CBE	Community-Based Ecotourism (UNEP)
CHASA	Confederation of Hunters Association of South Africa.
GGP	Gross Geographic Product
GIS	Geographical Information System
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IEM	Integrated Environmental Management
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LDO	Land Development Objectives
MaB	Man and Biosphere Programme (UNESCO)
NEMA	National Environment Management Act
PHASA	Professional Hunters Association of South Africa
RFP	Request for Proposals
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBR	Waterberg Biosphere Reserve
WBRMC	Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Management Committee
WTO	World Tourism Organization