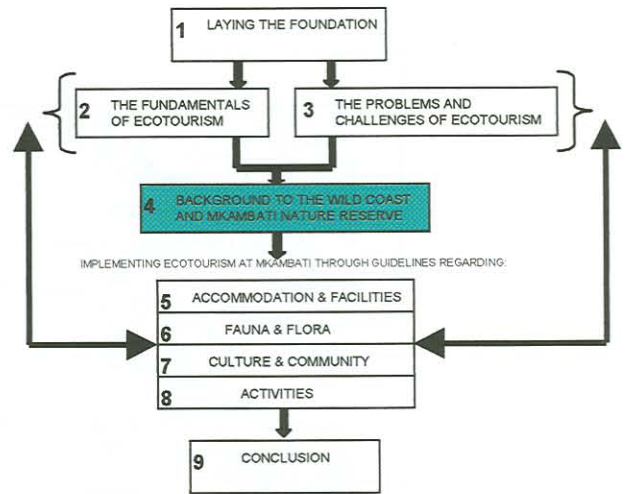


Chapter 4

Background to the Wild Coast and Mkambati Nature Reserve



4.1 Introduction to the Wild Coast

"Any paradise worth its salt inevitably lies a little off the beaten track – and Transkei's Wild Coast, with its pothole punctuated roads, is no exception. Here, only adventure is guaranteed. Whether you opt to hike down the rugged 254 km coast or savour unspoilt beaches and fishing from the comfort of a reasonably priced hotel, the chances are you'll soon be back for more"

(Oakes, 1991:212).

The Wild Coast on the Indian Ocean is part of the former Transkei. This 254km coast stretches from the mouth of the great Kei River in the south-west to the Mtamvuna River and Port Edward in the north-east. Figure 4.1 indicates the delimitation of the Wild Coast as well as the position of Mkambati Nature Reserve. Specific positioning for the latter is given in Section 4.3. In terms of the previous South African government's policy of separate development, the Transkei was granted autonomy in 1976 as a state for some of the principal Bantu groups (Erasmus, 1995; Mayhew, 1985). Shortly before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the Transkei was reincorporated into the country as part of the Eastern Cape Province (Erasmus, 1995).

The Wild Coast has earned its name because it is truly wild – deep gorges, impenetrable forests, remote white beaches fringed with indigenous vegetation, high cliffs, pristine estuaries, unusual stone sculptures, and huge waves crashing on a rugged coastline. The latter has claimed numerous ships, including the famous treasure ship, The Grosvenor, in 1782. Mkambati Nature Reserve has also had its fair share of shipwrecks, with the São Bento (1554), Weolmi (1968), and The Sensation (1984). Occasionally, coins, trinkets, and fragments of crockery from sunken hulks still wash up on the shores of the Wild Coast (Mayhew, 1985; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburg, 1984).

Figure 4.1 Delimitation of the Wild Coast



Source: Mayhew (1985)

The Wild Coast has relatively unspoilt beauty, with many lagoon-like estuaries and numerous rivers snaking through deep valleys towards the sea. These are interrupted by numerous waterfalls. The highest of these are the Magwa Falls, which are 140m high complete with hanging forests, the Mateku Falls which are 142m high (Erasmus, 1995), and the Mfihlelo Falls of 160m. The latter is unique because it falls directly into the ocean, and is the highest waterfall of this type in the world. Waterfall Bluff with a main fall of 100m also drops into the sea. (Mayhew, 1985; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburgh, 1984). Mkhambathi Nature Reserve also has its share of beautiful waterfalls, which are mentioned in Section 4.3.

At higher altitudes, the vegetation is predominantly tall grasslands dotted with proteas, aloes, and patches of forest (Oakes, 1991; Reynierse, 1988; Wannenburgh, 1984). The coast is washed by the warm Agulhas current which makes bathing possible almost all year round (Erasmus, 1995).

The first people to live in the Transkei were the San and Khoi Khoi. Neither group were numerous and were displaced in medieval times by the ancestors of the Xhosa people who occupy the area today. The Transkei Xhosa are divided into a number of tribes, with rivers forming the natural boundaries between them (Mertens & Broster, 1987). The Transkei is also home to one of the most important political figures of South Africa, former President Nelson Mandela, who was born in 1918 into the Thembu royal family in the tiny village of Qunu near Umtata (Erasmus, 1995).

The traditional Transkei homesteads of hardened mud rondavels with thatched roofs are an enchanting spectacle (Mayhew, 1985). The doorways face east, a practice believed to have been derived from the Khoikhoi belief that the good power lived in the east and the evil in the west. Most huts are incompletely painted, but with good reason. The part facing the rising sun is often painted with a gloss paint or white to deflect heat, thus keeping the hut cool on hot summer days. As the sun continues west, by evening it shines on the unpainted mud which absorbs the heat so that the hut is warm after dark (Mayhew, 1985; Oakes, 1991).

The people of the Wild Coast are probably the poorest in South Africa, with the only permanently employed people being those working for government. The Human Development Index (HDI) (a composite index measuring income, life expectancy, and literacy) of the area is similar to Niger which has the lowest HDI world-wide (LAPC, 1996 cited in Prinsloo, 1999a). Against this backdrop, locals are desperate for development and social upliftment (Bristow, 2000b). This makes the tourism development earmarked for the region so important (Prinsloo, 1999a). However, there is a real concern that the wrong type of tourism development could lead to the Wild Coast being an extension of the already degraded KwaZulu-Natal South Coast (Bristow, 2000b; Derwent, 1998), which would be a terrible loss.

At this point in time, great changes are looming for the Wild Coast, with important decisions on the horizon. Bristow (2000b:5) reports that "*what the Wild Coast needs is not 'seven star' hotels ..., but environmentally appropriate and sustainable ones*". The following section examines the plans for tourism in this region.

4.2 Tourism on the Wild Coast

With this background to the scenic wonders and people of the Wild Coast, the role of tourism in this unique part of South Africa will now be examined. Most of this information comes from the first draft of the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy (Taylor, 2000), released by the Province of the Eastern Cape on 31 July 2000 for comment. At the time of writing, the final draft was not yet available. The policy covers the area between the Kei and Mtamvunu Rivers and a 1000m strip inland of the high tide mark, including the tidal portions of estuaries (Taylor, 2000). The policy applies to all proposed developments and commercial activities within this area whose prime activities relate to tourism. It provides tourism development and management guidelines, environmental policy guidelines, institutional arrangements, and procedures for development applications, right from the conceptualisation stage through to the operational stage (Taylor, 2000).

The Wild Coast has been recognized as a prime tourist destination due to the relatively unspoilt environment along the coast. This valuable and unique asset that warrants protection will be the basis for tourism rather than traditional coastal recreation resorts (Prinsloo, 1999b). If the right type of tourism development occurs, it will impact the environment less than other developments. For this reason, tourism has been identified as the lead economic sector for the region.

Due to the inherent potential of the Wild Coast (which has remained unrealized), it was delineated as a Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) area by government in 1998 (Taylor, 2000). The SDI programmes are strategic initiatives by National Government to unlock the underutilised economic development potential of certain areas in South Africa (Prinsloo, 1999a). For the Wild Coast, the SDI has determined that all other proposed developments must be measured in terms of their impact on tourism. The objectives of the SDI are to:

- generate sustainable economic growth and development in relatively underdeveloped areas;
- generate long term and sustainable employment for locals; and
- enable locals to exploit spin-off opportunities arising from public and private sector investments (Taylor, 2000).

However, Gray (2000) reports that the SDI is being criticized for its slow delivery on providing impoverished communities with economic opportunities through tourism. A further criticism is that the SDI *“appears to favour glitzy, capital-intensive bids that seem inappropriate in a region which draws visitors simply because of its unique rural beauty”* (Gray, 2000:37).

In contrast to this, however, the policy has determined that tourism on the Wild Coast must be sustainable, private-sector driven, equitable, and provide a special quality experience to all visitors (Taylor, 2000). It needs to have its own distinct identity, which is then used in promotion. In order to ensure that development is environmentally sustainable, various environmental funders such as Nedbank's Green Trust, TOTAL, and the WWF South Africa, have supported initiatives that include and train local people in environmental and tourism projects, for example, helping to set up information centres (Derwent, 1998). The European Union (EU) has also set aside R80 million for responsible community-driven tourism initiatives. The EU has appointed the Triple Trust Organisation to develop and build the capacity of local Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in the Wild Coast region to enable them to take advantage of tourism development initiatives. One of these is Pondocrop (Pondo Community Resource Optimisation Programme) which has identified 300 small-scale, low impact projects for local communities. The Amadiba Adventures Horse Trail (mentioned in Section 8.3.2.2) is one of these (Gray, 2000).

Along the coast there are important and environmentally sensitive areas, for example: nature and marine reserves; the Pondo Centre of Diversity along the Pondoland Coast, with high levels of endemism and biodiversity; indigenous coastal forests; muti/ethnobotanical plants; marine and estuarine resources; and rich archaeological and cultural heritage (Taylor, 2000). Despite this, the Wild Coast region together with the inland areas of the former Transkei, has less than 1% of land formally protected within nature reserves. This is in comparison to international norms of approximately 10%. This makes reserves like Mkambati extremely important (Prinsloo, 1999b).

It is clear that the area is unique and valuable. However, being in a developing country, and part of a previously neglected homeland, there are several constraints to long-term sustainable development through ecotourism. The following have been singled out, predominantly from Taylor (2000).

Tourism constraints

- There is little incentive for private sector developers to enter into arrangements that facilitate local community participation, benefit, and empowerment.
- Derwent (1998) points to the so-called 'ecotour' operators who have little concern for the environment and local people. There are no mechanisms in place to regulate or stop unscrupulous operators.
- SMME development is not realised due to a lack of support mechanisms and information.
- Lack of education, training, and awareness exists regarding tourism.
- The poor physical infrastructure results in limited communication and access to facilities.

- Marketing and promotion are limited by funding constraints.
- A negative perception exists with regard to the safety of tourists in the region.
- Tourism standards and services are low, with little incentive for improvement.
- Institutional arrangements within the industry are not clear (Taylor, 2000).

Environmental constraints

- Access to natural resources on which people depend must be ensured. Where access is denied, compensation must exceed the benefits of being able to use those resources.
- Maintenance of biodiversity must receive attention due to its national and international importance.
- There is heavy exploitation of marine resources.
- Agriculture and forestry activities can negatively impact the environment.
- The uncontrolled spread of illegal holiday cottages damages the environment and tourism development potential.
- With increasing tourism development, effective waste management and pollution control must be ensured.
- Alien plant invasions must receive attention (Taylor, 2000).
- There is low environmental management capacity due to a lack in skilled personnel and financial resources. Many reserves are understaffed and conservation staff lack financing, training, and resources (Derwent, 1998).
- Management of the cultural resources of the Wild Coast has received little attention (Taylor, 2000).

Institutional constraints

- Too many institutions are involved, resulting in confusion and lack of clear decisive decision making.
- No specific development policy for the region exists, which has resulted in ad hoc developments and investor insecurity.
- Limited uncoordinated government capacity results in lengthy procedures and a poor response time to development applications.
- Land tenure and restitution has not been finalised.
- Too many pieces of legislation are in force, some of which are contradictory and could limit development (Taylor, 2000).

Local community constraints

- It is not clear who comprises the local community⁵.
- It is difficult to move locals beyond passive beneficiation to active involvement in the core activity as well as in related SMMEs.
- Locals and other interested and affected parties must be able to access information on the proposed development for the sake of transparency.
- Appropriate local development institutions do not exist at community level. Community trusts, which enter into joint ventures with investors, are one solution, with benefits being channeled to the local community.
- Tourism development plans should clearly outline a training and capacity-building programme to ensure active community involvement.
- Local people should be better off than previously due to the development.
- A two-tier benefit system may be required since immediate local community members may feel they have more right to benefit from resources than people further afield.
- Some tourism developments require exclusivity. This must be carefully negotiated at local community level and sensitively introduced.
- Tourism enterprises must offer some form of immediate return. Deferred gratification is not sufficient.
- For joint ventures, there must be a clear contract between local communities and investors (Taylor, 2000).

A positive note is that roads will be built far from the coast with coastal access roads perpendicular to the shoreline in order to minimise impact on drainage patterns (Derwent, 1998). This was not the initial intention. In fact, the Wild Coast SDI, in an attempt to fast-track development, had planned a major tarred toll road along the coast. This was a highly controversial proposal, with many convinced that it would be environmentally and socially problematic (Derwent, 1998). The SDI policy also bans vehicles on beaches, and jet skis and powerboats, except in demarcated rivers (Taylor, 2000).

The zoning of the Wild Coast proposes that tourism will be concentrated in first and second order nodes followed by ecotourism zones/special control environments. Each of the three have their own specific parameters laid down in the policy.

5. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, manager of Mkambati Nature Reserve, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

1. **First order nodes** will be extensively developed with large hotels and cluster developments, for example, in Port St Johns and Coffee Bay. The main focus here will be on recreation.
2. **Second order nodes** will be family holiday resorts/cottages, cluster developments, and family hotels. They will be less developed and less urban in nature, for example, Msikaba, The Haven, and Hole in the Wall. The current proposal for The Haven is a Mauritian-style luxury resort (Bristow, 2000b). This is regrettable since it does not fit with the proposals of the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy in terms of being appropriate to the surrounding environment and communities.
3. **Ecotourism zones**, of which Mkambati Nature Reserve is one, will allow for low impact environmental and cultural tourism developments to capitalise on the special qualities of the environment. Development here will be subject to Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures and must comply with ecological guidelines. In these areas where remote locations and seclusion are the prime attractions, the number of visitors must be limited in accordance with carrying capacity or LAC. Accommodation will be in the form of camps, small clusters, or specialised lodge facilities, with some of an up-market standard. Accessory supportive tourism developments, for example, free standing shops, petrol stations, and laundries will not be located in the ecotourism zone but in first and second order nodes. If absolutely essential in an ecotourism zone, they must be on the landward side.

Compatible mix of tourism uses will be permitted within each node. In all zones there should be buffer areas of 1km between permanent shoreline residences and coastal waters (Derwent, 1998; Taylor, 2000). No development will be permitted without permission from the local government authority. Outside of these three zones, no permanent tourism development will be allowed, except for certain tourist activities. These minimal development areas contain special biological communities; great ecological sensitivity; special breeding, nursery or migratory stop-overs; great archaeological interest; special historical, social or cultural value; special or traditional resource use; or outstanding natural scenery (Taylor, 2000).

Within the above zoning, a range of accommodation types, facilities, and intensities will be offered to accommodate a wide range of people. The various use areas must be separated from each other where different recreational activities and behaviours may clash. The spatial environmental

guidelines will prescribe the various zones according to outstanding scenery, cultural-historical value, or biological conservation importance (Taylor, 2000).

Regarding siting and design, cluster development has been chosen for first and second order nodes since it maximises open space. Developments must blend into the natural indigenous landscape and be inobtrusive, for example, no development will be allowed in undeveloped areas, on the skyline, or prominent open hillsides. The maximum height of hotel buildings will be three storeys. The policy entails a 'minimum development footprint', incorporating existing groundform into project design, and disrupting it as little as possible during site preparation. Rehabilitation is also an integral component of development. There should be a sense of privacy, seclusion, and refuge. Development must not exceed the carrying capacity and must be sensitive to, and reflect local heritage, architecture and land use, using natural and local materials where possible. The policy has set out aesthetic design principles in this regard. These apply more stringently to the lower intensity ecotourism zones than to the highest intensity first order zones. Accessory infrastructure will also be subject to the above guidelines. Regarding camping and caravanning sites, natural topography and vegetation should be used for layout. Individual sites should be separated by natural vegetation, with as much as possible of the original vegetation remaining. Cottages may be a maximum of two storeys high, no walls or fences will be allowed (except with special permission), and no alien plants may be introduced (Taylor, 2000).

Concerning the spatial planning, the policy mentions that traffic flow should be minimised while pedestrian flow will be encouraged. Both of these will steer away from environmentally-sensitive areas. There is a particular focus on the landscape as an important tourism commodity which must be protected and managed in its natural form. Special landscape features or symbols can be tourism attractions. These must be used sensitively, allowing access to local people and respecting traditions and beliefs relating to them (Taylor, 2000).

Sewage and solid waste disposal must comply with specific requirements set out in the policy, while the impact of water extraction practices on coastal waters must be minimised and carefully assessed. The policy also mentions provision of sustainable energy practices and efficient and non-wasteful use of water. Solar panels and 'other measures' are mentioned, particularly for implementation in the ecotourism zones. This part of the policy is somewhat vague, and unless a developer has a firm personal commitment to sustainable development, non-compliance could be possible. Guidelines are also given for resource consumption, such as a prohibition on felling indigenous timber, and controlled use (monitored by a committee) of local materials such as

environmental hazard is the building of illegal cottages (Taylor, 2000). Approximately

stone and thatch. Regulations are also given regarding the use of plant and animal resources (Taylor, 2000).

Community participation and beneficiation emerge strongly in the policy. Community awareness is important. Locals should be informed of the possibilities of being involved in ventures, as well as of the costs and benefits. This can be done through workshops, pilot programmes, school modules, and short courses. The policy refers to consultation occurring right from the beginning and maximum benefit accruing as desired by the community. There is a detailed description of the methods and time constraints whereby local communities should be informed of meetings. Small-scale enterprises are also encouraged. The idea is that the Wild Coast Development Organisation (which will coordinate the implementation of the policy) will facilitate training, while the provincial government will provide funds for these enterprises. In areas outside of the three zone types, communities should be encouraged to start their own activities such as guided trails. Furthermore, legal entities should be established to protect local communities. The issue of access to resources has already been mentioned. The policy is adamant on retaining access to resources, since most locals depend on it, to a certain extent, for their livelihood. Quality of life will decrease if access is denied (Taylor, 2000).

The extent of community participation, benefit, and empowerment will be evaluated in terms of the following:

- contribution to economic growth in the community;
- community equity;
- encouraging conservation by the community;
- allowing community empowerment and decision-making powers;
- skills development;
- income generation;
- local sourcing of skills, inputs, and materials; and
- employing locals (Taylor, 2000).

With South Africa's ratification of the Biodiversity Convention, the country has taken on global responsibility for the conservation of biodiversity. This is particularly important along the Pondoland Coast where a large number of endemic species found nowhere else in the world occur in a relatively small biome (Taylor, 2000). Mkambati is the largest reserve in the Pondo Centre of Diversity (described in Section 4.3), and must therefore be managed wisely (Prinsloo, 1999a). The policy also gives attention to the overexploitation of resources, particularly marine. A further environmental hazard is the building of illegal cottages (Taylor, 2000). Approximately

250 of these have been erected, mainly by white holiday makers. This has severely impacted the environment because roads are graded and trees indiscriminately chopped down. Estuaries and pristine mangrove swamps have also been damaged in this process (Derwent, 1998). The Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) has taken the matter to court. Although winning the first round, little has been done to remove the cottages or prevent more from being built (Derwent, 1998). Derwent (1998) & Prinsloo (1999a) mention that the Heath Commission, which has been appointed by parliament to examine the illegal occupation and allocation of state land, will attempt to determine how outsiders have 'acquired' the land on which these houses are built. Most of the cottages are close to the coast, despite the law clearly stating that no permanent structure may be erected along the Wild Coast within one kilometre of the coastline (Derwent, 1998).

Tourism services on the Wild Coast must be of international standard. This will be attained by regular inspection. However, small basic facilities will be allowed to increase their standards gradually (Taylor, 2000). Derwent (1998) mentions that, despite low standards, tourism is doing well along the Wild Coast. Port St Johns, for example, is a popular destination for foreign backpackers. Operators such as Hilihili Hikes and 'Lekker-like-a-cracker' have started trails into the hills to overnight at local homesteads, and visit traditional healers. A drawback is that backpackers are inherently content to accept inferior service and facilities. Operators consequently have little incentive to develop and improve facilities, do regular refuse removal, repair potholes, and ensure that telephone and water systems function effectively.

The policy recognises tourism operators as part of the coastal community who therefore have a role to play in the protection and effective management of coastal ecosystems (Taylor, 2000). Regular inspection and monitoring is vital to ensure implementation of this policy, and to identify the impacts of tourism developments and activities on the natural environment and on the culture of local people. Ameliorative measures will be proposed and implemented where necessary (Taylor, 2000).

With this bold and thorough policy in mind, the constraints to sustainable development along the Wild Coast (described previously) must be taken into account. This policy will be difficult to implement in the current situation. An enormous amount of training is required to bring local people to a point where they can understand and implement tourism. Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, has expressed concern over the future of the Wild

Coast, saying that whatever happens in the next two years will be crucial. Particular concerns are the illegal cottages, and the rapid destruction of forests⁶.

Besides the policy, another idea with major consequences to the Wild Coast is the proposed Wild Coast National Park/ Biosphere Reserve from the Mtamvuna River in the north (the northeast boundary of the Wild Coast) to the boundary of the municipal area of Port St Johns in the south. This is close to the north bank of the Umzimvubu River (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). The area is approximately 30 000 Ha and has been identified by WESSA as one of South Africa's four unconserved biodiversity 'hotspots' (Gray, 2000). Most of this land is already under some form of legal protection, for example, state forest reserves and nature reserves. It is proposed that the park be bordered by buffers of appropriate intensity land use (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, has endorsed the idea. The plan is still in its early stages as discussions are being held with Eastern Cape Provincial Government, and feasibility studies are being done in conjunction with them, the Department, and South African National Parks. Once this is done, land negotiations will be entered into with the Eastern Cape Government. This could be a complicated procedure, since the land ownership system was fairly complex under the former Transkei government (Mackenzie, 2000b). Population densities in the area are very low, meaning that nobody will need to be relocated. The cultural landscape and people are seen as valuable resources, and the proposal has stated that there must be participation, beneficiation, and acceptance by all interested and affected parties (Guy Nicolson Consulting, 1997). A further note of interest is that Mkambati Nature Reserve is expected to form the keystone of the biosphere reserve (Gray, 2000). It is strange that the Wild Coast Tourism Development Policy made no mention of this proposed park, which would enormously influence the area.

Tourism can certainly provide the Wild Coast with a much-needed impetus for development. However, it is not a pollution-free industry and can cause severe environmental, social, and cultural damage. This has already been seen in many of the coastal towns littering South Africa. Places like the Wild Coast with such spectacular unspoilt beauty are rare and must be developed in the right manner (Derwent, 1998). The policy described in the above section is a sustainable option for the Wild Coast. It fits well with the concept of ecotourism and its four fundamentals. The challenge remains, with the constraints of this region in mind, to implement this policy in a strict controlled manner.

6. Personal communication, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

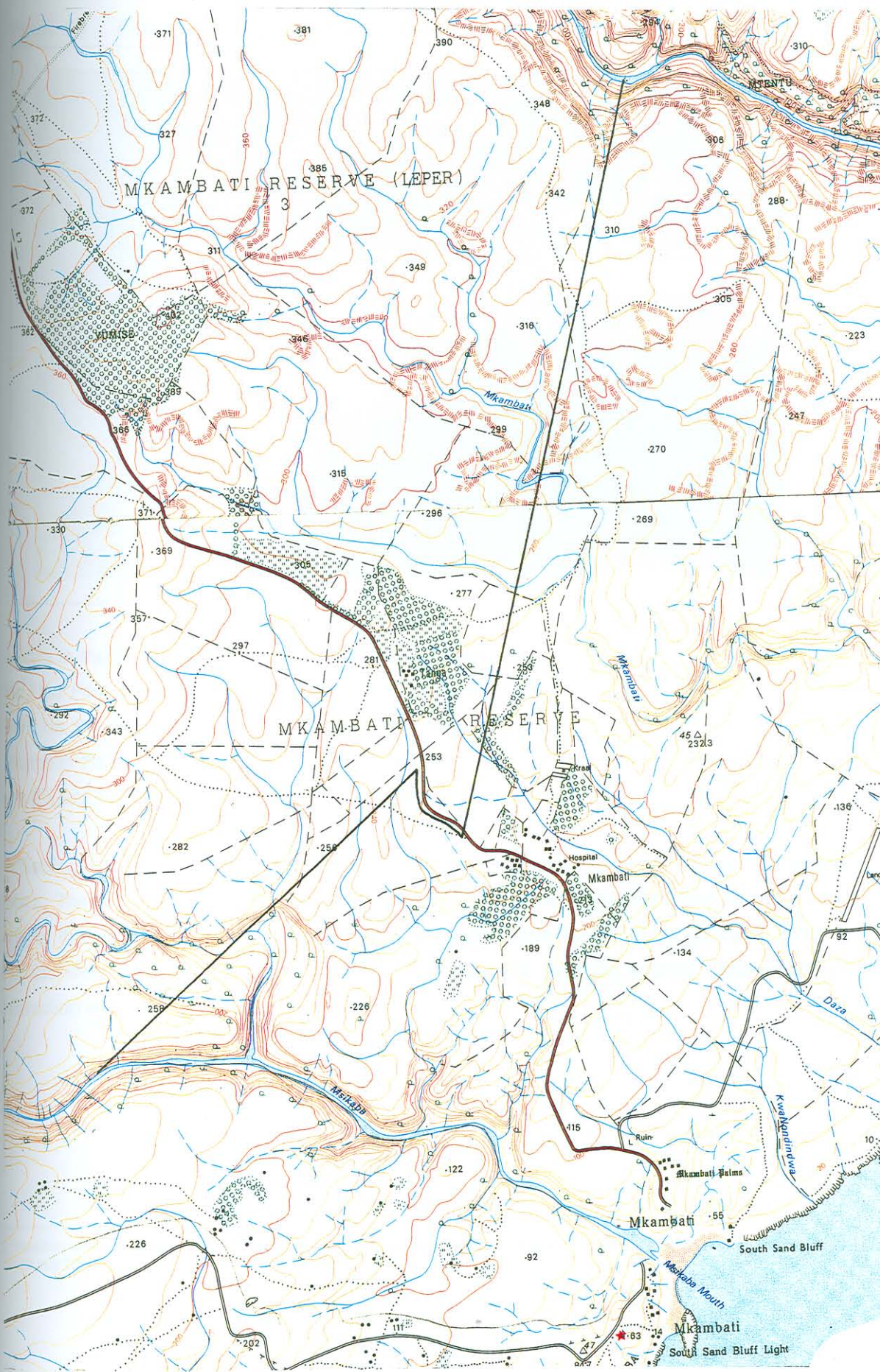
4.3 Introduction to Mkambati Nature Reserve

Mkambati Nature Reserve is on the north-eastern Pondoland coast of the Eastern Cape - the heart of what many regard as the real Wild Coast (Erasmus, 1995; Prinsloo, 1999a). It is situated between the Msikaba River on its western side and the Mtentu River on its eastern side. These two rivers are approximately 12km apart (Janse van Rensburg, 1995; Prinsloo, 1999b). The inland fence to the west is the only human-made boundary, with the width ranging from 5.5 to 8.2 km (Prinsloo, 1999b). A topographical map of the reserve is shown in Figure 4.2. Mkambati is the largest reserve in the Transkei (7720 Ha) and contains (among other species) eland, blue wildebeest, kudu, red hartebeest, impala, springbuck, gemsbok, blesbok, southern reedbuck, Burchells and Hartmans zebra, baboon, and vervet (Prinsloo, 1999b). Animals being considered for reintroduction are Cape buffalo, oribi, and klipspringer (Prinsloo, 1999b). Being able to view wildlife against the backdrop of the ocean is just one of the aspects that makes Mkambati unique (Figure 4.3).

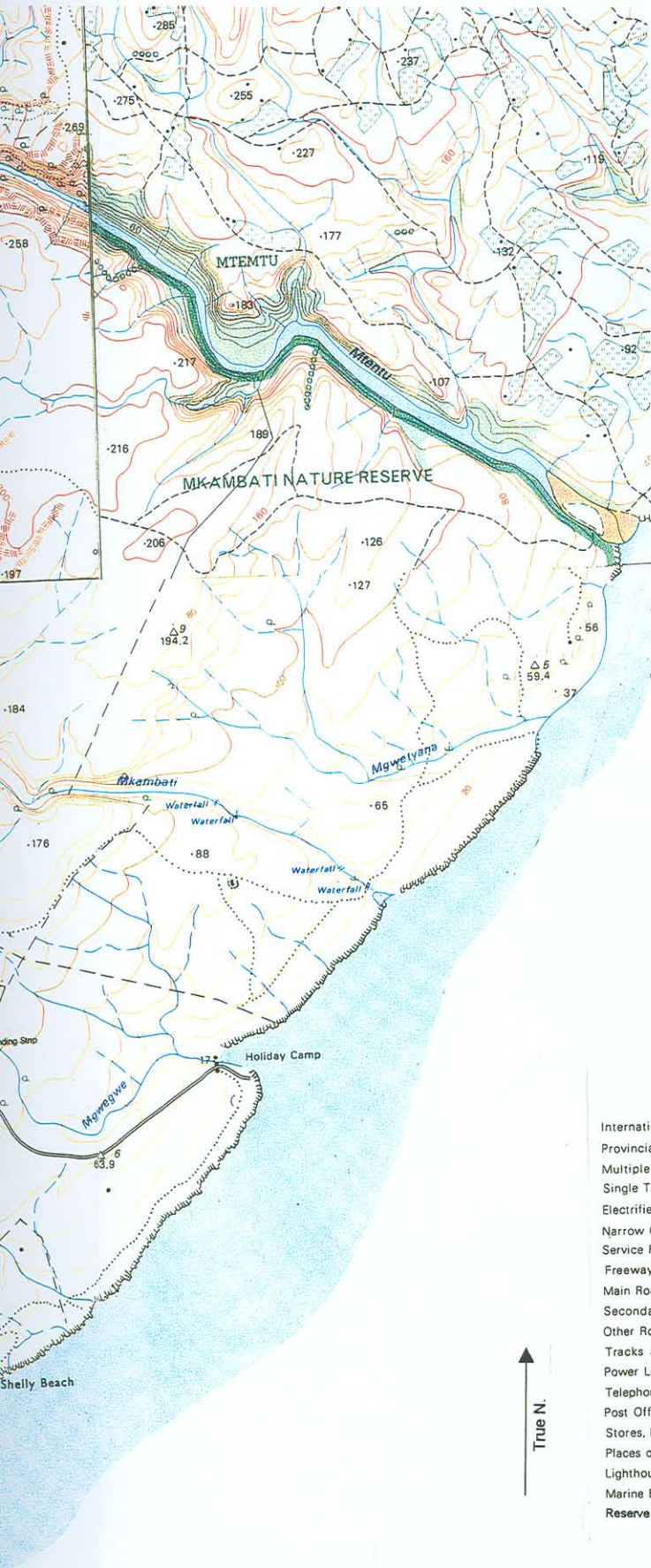
The Msikaba estuary is the deepest in South Africa. This one and possibly the other estuaries in the reserve contain the only endemic fish species in the Pondoland region. The Msikaba and Mtentu estuaries are particularly wide, with thick indigenous forests extending to the waters edge. Other smaller estuaries within the reserve include the Gwe Gwe, Butsha, and Mgwetyana Rivers. All are important for biodiversity conservation as they act as nursery areas for marine fish. They also enhance the scenic beauty and variety of the coast (Prinsloo, 1999b).

On the southern bank of the Msikaba lies South Sand Bluff which has a camping ground and a few holiday shacks. On the northern banks of the Msikaba and Mtentu Rivers are clusters of the rare Pondo coconut palm or Mkambati palm, (*Jubaeopsis caffra*), from which the reserve derives its name. These trees bear miniature coconuts only 2cm in diameter (Oakes, 1991; Wannenburg, 1984). This is the only place in the world where this palm occurs naturally (Prinsloo, 1999a).

Figure 4.2 Topographical map of Mkambati Nature Reserve



Source: South Africa (1998a, b, and c)



REFERENCE

VERKLARING

International Boundaries		Internasionale Grense
Provincial Boundaries		Provinsiale Grense
Multiple Track Railways		Veelvoudige Spoorlyne
Single Track Railways		Enkelspoorlyne
Electrified Railways		Geëlektrifiseerde Spoorlyne
Narrow Gauge Railways		Smalspoorlyne
Service Railways		Diensspoorlyne
Freeways and Arterial Roads		Deurpaaië en Hoofverkeerspaaië
Main Roads		Hoofpaaië
Secondary Roads		Sekondêre Paaië
Other Roads		Ander Paaië
Tracks and Hiking Trails		Dowwe Paaië en Voetslaanpaaië
Power Lines		Kraglyne
Telephone Lines		Telefoonlyne
Post Offices, Police Stations and Posts.		Poskantore, Polisieostasies en -poste.
Stores, Hotels, Schools and		Winkels, Hotelle, Skole en
Places of Worship		Plekke van Aanbidding
Lighthouses and Marine Lights		Vuurtorings en Seevaartligte
Marine Beacons		Seevaartbakens
Reserve boundary		Reservaat grens

1:50 000

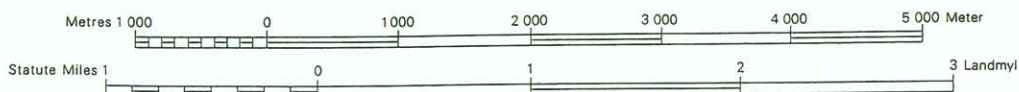


Figure 4.3 A rare sight: eland against the sea



Adding to the beauty of this area are the numerous waterfalls within the reserve. One can view the Four Falls in the Mtentu River and its tributaries; the Strandloper, Horseshoe, and Mkambati Falls on the Mkambati River; the Icicici Falls; and numerous other smaller cascades. The Mkambati Falls are the third unique waterfall on this stretch of coastline that fall directly into the sea (Figure 4.4).

In Section 4.1 it was mentioned that the Xhosa people of the Transkei are divided into different tribes. The reserve falls within the Pondo tribal land, and is therefore called 'Pondoland'. This is one of the most under-developed regions of the Wild Coast, which is no accident, since the Pondos were traditionally known as a difficult people and previous colonial regimes avoided interaction with the tribe⁷.

7. Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

Figure 4.4 The Mkambati Falls cascades into the ocean



As mentioned in Section 4.2, the reserve falls within the Pondo Centre of Diversity, which is 1880km², and is one of only 235 sites identified world-wide as having important global diversity (Prinsloo, 1999a). Over 80% of the reserve is grassland (Prinsloo, 1999a), containing one of the largest coastal grassland communities in Southern Africa (Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations, 2000). Besides grassland, Mkambati also has indigenous forests – afromontane, swamp, dune and mangrove forests, as well as approximately 490 Ha of wetlands (Prinsloo, 1999b). With regard to its marine area, the reserve is part of a Marine Protected Area (described in Section 4.6.4). This is necessary, since there has been over-harvesting of sea resources and ecosystem productivity is low (Prinsloo, 1999b). A further point of note is that Mkambati has more endemic tree species than the Kruger National Park which is far larger (Pooley, 1993 cited in Prinsloo, 1999b).

The concept of the Wild Coast SDI was introduced in Section 4.2. Mkambati Nature Reserve forms one of the anchor nodes of this development initiative, aimed at injecting private sector investment into underdeveloped areas (Prinsloo, 1999b). The mission of Mkambati is to:

- conserve biodiversity and sound environmental management in the terrestrial and marine environment as well as on communal land associated with the reserve;

- sustainably use the reserve for local and regional economic benefit by means of **ecotourism** and direct utilisation of natural resources; and
- have the participation, on an equal partnership basis, of the local community in the planning and management of the reserve. Regarding the latter, there will be a legal framework and institutional arrangements to formalise the relationship between the community and nature conservation. Local culture will also be integrated into the planning, development, and management.

Flowing from the mission statement, the following goals have been set:

- Conservation management for biodiversity and sustainable use.
- Tourism development for local and regional economic benefit.
- Community participation and capacity building.
- Administrative management (Prinsloo, 1999b).

A recent study conducted by Kepe (2000b) shows that the majority of Mkambati's guests come from Kwazulu/Natal (74,5%), while just over 10% come from Gauteng. One fifth of the respondents had visited the reserve on more than ten occasions, with about 45% spending more than five nights in the reserve. School holidays and other special holidays, such as Christmas, New Year, and Easter, were the most frequently visited times. The busiest time is from the end of November to the end of January. Approximately 90% of visitors came to Mkambati due to a recommendation from a family member or a friend. This indicates the limited role that advertising has played with respect to promoting Mkambati thus far (Kepe, 2000b).

Virtually no marketing is done, but the reserve is always full in season. Bookings for December are full within three hours of the booking office (Keval Travel in Kokstad) opening on the first business day of each year⁸.

4.4 History of Mkambati Nature Reserve

Shackleton (1989 cited in Prinsloo, 1999a) reports signs of hunter-gatherers in the area over the last 150 000 to 500 000 years. The first European people to make use of Mkambati were missionaries, who built the stone cottages near today's Reception which are approximately 100 years old (De Villiers, 1995; ⁹). In 1922 the government expropriated approximately 18 000 Ha of

⁸ Personal communication with Mr. D. De Villiers, Regional Manager, Eastern Cape Nature Conservation, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 19 July 2000.

⁹ Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

land to be used as a leper colony (Kepe, 2000b). The beautiful sandstone homestead, termed 'The Lodge', was the superintendent's home (De Villiers, 1995). When leprosy decreased in the 1950s, the hospital began to cater for people with tuberculosis. In 1976 the hospital was closed and handed over to the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the Transkei. The following year, 7720 Ha became a reserve, with the remaining 10 000 Ha being run by a para-statal, TRACOR (Transkei Agricultural Corporation) as an agricultural concern. The reserve was run by two private companies as a hunting concern (De Villiers, 1995; Kepe, 2000b; Prinsloo, 1999a), with animals being brought in and an airstrip laid out. In 1982, Mkambati was taken over by the government, offering full-scale services. Those were the heydays of the reserve, with The Lodge as a tastefully refurbished guest house, self-catering holiday units, a shop and Clubhouse (De Villiers, 1995).

During 1988 and 1989, funds were misappropriated and the government decided to place it under conservation, to curb, amongst other things, illegal hunting. In the early 1990s, buildings and facilities began deteriorating. It was then that the shop and Clubhouse closed, and The Lodge ceased to function as a hotel. Only the self-catering units continued to be operated, with The Lodge also being hired out as a self-catering establishment. The community lamented its downfall demanding to know who owned it and asking for the hospital back¹⁰.

4.5 Primary constraints at Mkambati Nature Reserve

According to reserve manager, Mr. Vuyani Mapiya, one of the greatest problems is that the reserve is state run. The reserve's budget has been drastically cut. In addition to this, the reserve has to apply for funds from their budget through Eastern Cape Nature Conservation. This was done in the past because of misappropriation of funds at other reserves. However, in practice, this ties the hands of personnel at the reserve in their day-to-day operations. For example, if a window pane is broken or a small tool is needed, the necessary items must be applied for, which means it can be a few weeks before the matter receives attention. Moreover, new purchases must be made on a tender system, which is highly time-consuming. Such bureaucratic procedures decrease the motivation of personnel and make it difficult to manage tourism at the reserve. Furthermore, there have been no promotions for several years¹⁰. Looking to the future, Bristow (2000b) reports that the biggest stumbling block for the Wild Coast as a whole appears to be the lack of direction from the Eastern Cape Government.

¹⁰. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

A further reason why the tourism side of the reserve has also been a burden to management is that their core interest is conservation. This is why outsourcing is such a viable option (Section 4.6.3).

Besides being responsible for the running of the reserve, Mkambati personnel are also responsible for patrolling the coastal region up to Port St Johns. A boat or additional vehicle is essential for this, but the reserve has been unable to obtain either¹⁰.

The bad roads leading to Mkambati are a further major constraint, as well as the poor condition of the reserve's internal roads. These deter tourists from visiting Mkambati, and deter private sector investors from investing in the area. The internal roads are the responsibility of the Public Works Department, but it is a struggle to get them to repair the roads¹⁰.

Community involvement has been very complex and problematic¹⁰. Six large communities (falling under the Thaweni Tribal Authority) stretching as far as Holy Cross, 50km from the reserve property, consider themselves as the local community due to expectations set by the SDI, and are expecting to be involved and to benefit (Prinsloo, 1999a). They are also politically divided, with some supporting the African National Congress and others the United Democratic Movement¹⁰.

Prinsloo (1999a) believes that the complex conflict in the area has not been identified and managed correctly. There has also been a delay in identifying the legal landowners of the reserve. This obviously hampers the security of potential investors, and therefore the future of the reserve (Prinsloo, 1999a).

Some of these constraints are repetition of those identified for the Wild Coast as a whole (Section 4.2). Further constraints from Section 4.2 that are applicable to Mkambati, but are not mentioned above, are that:

- SMME development lacks support mechanisms and information;
- education, training, and awareness regarding tourism are lacking;
- tourism standards and services are low with little incentive for improvement;
- alien plant invasions are a problem;
- the management of cultural resources has received little attention; and
- too many institutions are involved resulting in confusion and lack of clear decision making.

¹⁰. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

4.6 Introduction to the ecotourism planning guidelines for Mkambati Nature Reserve

4.6.1 *Modus operandi*

From the 17th to the 23rd of July 2000, the Ecotourism Honours students in the Department of Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria visited the Mkambati Nature Reserve to formulate guidelines for ecotourism development at the reserve as part of their practical. The author acted as leader and facilitator, selecting and defining tasks, allocating students to groups and suggesting resources. She coordinated the activities while at the reserve and during the following weeks, while the students developed their products. She assessed the students' deliverables, which were moderated by a co-lecturer. The author then refined them and integrated them into a cohesive report, which was presented to Eastern Cape Nature Conservation. The guidelines that were formulated by both the author and students are used in the following sections as a base. Numerous additions, changes, and refinements were made by the author in the process of converting the original versions into the present document.

The students were allocated tasks based on MacGregor & Jarvie's (1994, cited in McPherson, 2000) groupings of natural or environmental, community, heritage or historical, cultural, outdoor recreation, tourism services, special events, and information/interpretive services. Adapting these to suit the nature of Mkambati, the author used the following four groups:

- accommodation and facilities (Chapter 5).
- fauna and flora (Chapter 6);
- culture and community (Chapter 7); and
- activities (Chapter 8).

Information and interpretation are so vital to ecotourism that each group examined this in the context of their topic. A general introduction to codes of conduct and interpretation follows as it applies to all four of the ensuing chapters. Outsourcing is also examined in Section 4.6.4, as this is the departure point from which the guidelines in Chapters 5 to 8 are developed. Section 4.6.3 describes the proposed zoning for Mkambati Nature Reserve up front, as an important base for the following four chapters.

4.6.2 Codes of conduct and interpretation

A code of conduct for Mkambati Nature Reserve needs to be formulated, and should be adhered to by tourists, as well as staff. It will form part of what has been termed the 'Mkambati guide booklet', which is an all-encompassing guide to the reserve. The code of conduct would include the general rules of the reserve. There may be separate rules for various activities, but these can be dealt with in the section of the booklet regarding that activity. Examples of basic rules include: staying on designated roads and paths; not removing objects from the reserve; behaving appropriately when near wild animals; staying off the sand dunes, etc. All these should be communicated using soft management techniques. Information on Mkambati is currently communicated to visitors by means of a black and white photocopied map that is provided in the booklet 'Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations'. This booklet makes use of hard management; for example, "No fires may be made in the reserve" and "No boats or any vessel on Mtentu River". These same rules should rather be communicated via soft management. For example, to keep tourists off the majestic dunes on Main Beach, a sign could be erected: "Please preserve our beautiful sand dunes by staying off them". In the guide booklet, information can be given on why it is important to stay off the dunes. Alternatively, a large sign could be erected supplying brief points on the ecology of sand dunes, thus helping tourists understand why they should not clamber on them. If tourists are informed and enlightened, they will help to maintain the beauty of the reserve.

The current regulations booklet provides a map which indicates most sites of interest. However, certain sites could easily be missed. Some tourists are entirely unaware of the Strandloper Falls and the huge pool below them, as well as all the wonders of the Wilderness Area. The proposed booklet will replace the existing one and should package and theme all the attractions. It should include colour maps and illustrations.

In Section 2.4 the various stages of interpretation were given. A visit to Mkambati should be enhanced by interpretation during the anticipation (pre-contact) phase and for the time that the tourist is at the reserve. Attempting interpretation during the other stages mentioned in Section 2.4 would be unrealistic for Mkambati due to the fact that reserves have minimal contact with guests after they have departed. Interpretation during the visit is addressed throughout the next four chapters. For the anticipation stage, it is suggested that the tourist receive a simple leaflet, notifying him/her on what is available at the reserve, and providing the code of conduct. The comprehensive guide booklet can be disseminated once the visitor arrives. It is suggested that the guide booklet be included in the admission fee, as this lowers the perception of cost to

the tourist, and ensures that every tourist receives one. The booklet would also serve as a superb marketing tool.

Other creative ways of enlightening tourists could be via:

- information on the back of menu cards in restaurants;
- attractive notices in the accommodation establishments and at Reception;
- informal presentations at announced times on the natural and cultural history of the area by a local or ranger;
- the Environmental Education Centre/Games Room proposed for the Loft where slide and video presentations, as well as group discussions can be held (Section 5.3.9); and
- signage throughout the reserve explaining reserve regulations to tourists, as well as the reasons for these rules.

Mkambati has a special and unique environment. Rich diversity is to be found among the flora and fauna, and tourists should contribute towards the preservation of this uniqueness. The reserve management and all staff must therefore encourage tourists to abide by the code of conduct and encourage compliance by providing adequate interpretation. Providing more interpretation at the reserve also creates job opportunities for locals as guides, presenters, and information specialists.

4.6.3 Outsourcing as a departure point

In order to formulate meaningful guidelines, it is important to know the future direction of Mkambati Nature Reserve. The most feasible option for Eastern Cape Nature Conservation regarding the reserve, and the one which they have opted for, would be to outsource the tourism related activities and facilities to a private concession, and for Nature Conservation to focus on conservation alone. Under the Transkei Environmental Conservation Decree No. 9 of 1992, applying to Mkambati, the leasing of land to private investors is not expressly prohibited or allowed. It therefore appears that private investors would be allowed to develop tourism facilities and provide services (Prinsloo, 1999a). Furthermore, the Wild Coast SDI plans to put reserves such as Silaka and Mount Thesiger out to tender, in order to draw investors (Derwent, 1998). This move would, therefore, be in line with the plans of the SDI.

There is a clear current trend towards outsourcing in other parks. In August 2000, South African National Parks announced that 12 lodge sites in the Kruger, Addo Elephant, and Kalahari Gemsbok Parks have been identified for outsourcing to the private sector as part of their 'Commercialisation as Conservation' strategy. They believe that it will improve efficiency and

customer service, and enable them to concentrate on what they do best – conservation (Hattingh, 2000). However, Derwent (1998) expresses concern that locals do not have the skills needed to fill any of the positions that may be offered by developers. Without additional funds for training, unemployment and the related social and economic problems will continue to prevail. Investors will have to be committed to developing local communities.

The fact that the accommodation, activities, and facilities at Mkambati will ultimately be run by the private sector has been used as a departure point for the guidelines formulated. The fact that this process may be prolonged has also been considered, with some of the suggestions made being viable for the interim period, taking the financial constraints of Eastern Cape Nature Conservation into consideration. Eastern Cape Nature Conservation has already asked the private sector to tender for the development and management of tourism at Mkambati. The winning bidder was Khulani Ma-Africa, a business consortium that includes the leading Independent Hotels of Southern Africa group (Gray, 2000). The author has studied the development plan of Khulani Ma-Africa, and does not believe it is the best option for Mkambati. The plan appears to be similar to the up-market Umngazi River Bungalows, including a safari-style beach lodge aiming at international tourists. Among others, tennis courts, squash courts, and a television games room are mentioned. Khulani Ma-Africa is clearly aiming for the traditional stereotyped resort development, which will not capitalize on the unique environment of Mkambati. This reserve needs something different, something in harmony with its natural surroundings.

To date (end of 2000) no changes have occurred at Mkambati because the consortium are currently struggling to clinch an investment deal (Gray, 2000). Furthermore, the surrounding communities were reportedly not effectively involved in the tender process, and therefore do not support the winning bidder¹¹

4.6.4 Zoning at Mkambati

The approach of Wallace (1993), described in Section 2.4 was followed, namely, determining zones within Mkambati based on the proposed guidelines developed for the reserve, which are related in Chapters 5 to 8. Although the zoning and guidelines are integrated, and were worked out together, it is important to give the proposed zoning at this stage in order to set the scene for the next four chapters.

11. Personal communication with Mr. V. Mapiya, Manager of Mkambati, Mkambati Nature Reserve, 18 July 2000.

The **existing zoning** at Mkambati consists of:

- A Wilderness Area where no fishing and vehicles are allowed.
- A Marine Protected Area (MPA) and open shore angling zone - the MPA extends six nautical miles seawards between the eastern bank of the mouth of the Mtentu River and the western bank of the mouth of the Msikaba River, including the inter-tidal portions of the two rivers (Mkambati Nature Reserve Regulations, 2000).
- The rest of the reserve where visitors can enjoy a wide variety of activities within reserve regulations. Within the latter, there are areas specifically set aside for accommodation and woodlots.

The **proposed zoning** (Figure 4.5) consists of a:

- Wilderness Area – no vehicles and consumptive activities allowed.
- Primary tourism zone – this is in the area with most of the roads, accommodation units, favourite beaches, and a concentration of trails.
- Secondary tourism zones – these are allocated to areas that are further afield in the reserve, but covered by trails. Fewer visitors will be in these areas as one must either hike, cycle, or ride a horse there.
- Accommodation zones.
- Administration zone.
- Woodlot zones.
- Hunting zone – this does not penetrate the Wilderness Area because vehicles will not be allowed in to remove carcasses.
- Marine Protected Area and open shore angling zone.

The trails recommended in Chapter 8 that do not cover the road network are shown on the map as dotted lines, to explain the choice of secondary tourism zones.



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Key

- Mkambati Nature Reserve border
- Major roads
- Trails
- Rivers
- Waterfalls
- Swimming
- Shipwreck
- Airstrip
- Mkambati Palms

Zonation

- Primary Tourism
- Secondary Tourism
- Accommodation
- Administration
- Woodlots
- Wilderness
- Marine Protected Area (MPA)
- Hunting