

CHAPTER 4: ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE WATERBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

4.1 FULFILMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT FUNCTION IN THE WATERBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Each biosphere reserve is intended to fulfil three complementary functions as discussed in Chapter 1. Its conservation function is to protect those genetic resources, species, ecosystems and landscapes that require protection. Its development function is to foster sustainable economic and human development compatible with the first function while its logistic function is to facilitate demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring in support of the first two functions (UNESCO, 2002).

Since Chapter 3 specifically addressed the application of the seven criteria of a biosphere reserve in the Waterberg, it touched on the three functions within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. This chapter will thus specifically deal with the development function within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, which is mainly based on tourism. It is further argued that the type of tourism within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve is ecotourism, which enhances sustainable development and community participation.

4.2 WHAT IS ECOTOURISM?

As the evolution of ecotourism has provided new potential for conservation initiatives, careful attention should be paid to a number of important details. Valentine (1997) mentions that the term “ecotourism” refers to tourism based on the natural environment and conducted in an ecologically sustainable manner. The idea of ecotourism is to develop a form of tourism, which is based on enjoying nature but while simultaneously, helping to protect the environment.

As the world's largest industry with an average annual growth rate of 7% (World Tourism Organization, 2002) ecotourism naturally forms a major part of this growing tendency. Wood (2002) in turn defines ecotourism as a form of nature-based tourism, which is a rapidly growing industry working within a niche market.

It is known that various debates have been published in defining ecotourism. However, for describing tourism in the Waterberg and the evaluation of tourism activities in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, the following definition as by the IUCN (now called the World Conservation Union) will suffice:

Ecotourism is environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low negative visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations.

This definition has been published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in collaboration with the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in the 2002 publication, *Ecotourism: Principles, Practices and Policies for sustainability*. This was the latest publication with regard to defining ecotourism that could be found while completing this study.

4.3 DESCRIBING AN ECO-DESTINATION

Market research shows that ecotourists are particularly interested in wilderness settings and pristine areas (Wood, 2002). According to the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, ecotourism furthermore has a unique role to play in educating travellers about the value of a healthy environment and biological diversity. Ecotourists, therefore, expect that eco-destinations will represent areas where natural resources are protected and utilized in a sustainable way.

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The process of establishing a biosphere reserve in the Waterberg has direct linkages with the creation of the Waterberg as an unique ecotourism destination. The planning of an eco-destination depends on baseline data of social and environmental factors, zoning strategies, regulations that can prevent the deliberate abuse of fragile ecosystems, local participation in developing a set of standards for limits of acceptable change, and long-term monitoring (Wood, 2002).

Wood (2002) further indicates that any destination that seeks to attract tourists must protect its resources while facilitating a sense of integration with the local community. The Biosphere reserve concept includes the above aspect within criterium 6 of the Statutory Framework, that is referred to in point 4.5.2 of this chapter.

To illustrate the clear relationships between the criteria of setting up a biosphere reserve according to article 4 of the Statutory Framework of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (UNESCO, 1996) and an eco-destination as characterized in the UNEP publication (Wood, 2002), Table 1 was compiled. The principles were then summarized from the relationships that depict the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve as an ecotourism destination.

Table 1: Relationships between the seven criteria of UNESCO in designating a biosphere reserve, planning guidelines for eco-destinations and eco-destination characteristics as compiled by UNEP

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR AN AREA TO QUALIFY FOR DESIGNATION AS A BIOSPHERE RESERVE (UNESCO, 1996)	ECO-DESTINATION PLANNING GUIDELINES (UNEP, 2002) INCLUDING THE ECO-DESTINATION CHARACTERISTICS (CHARACTERISTICS REFERRED TO AS ©)	RELATIONSHIPS IDENTIFIED BETWEEN COLUMN 1 AND 2
1. It should encompass a mosaic of ecological systems representative of major biogeographic regions, including a gradation of human interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural features conserved within a protected landscape © • Low density development, where natural areas are abundant and the built landscape does not dominate. © 	The natural features and the human dimensions of an area must be integrated with an emphasis on limited human interventions.
2. It should be of significance for biological diversity conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that tourism is not harming natural systems such as waterways, coastal areas, wetlands and wildlife areas. © 	The protection of the unique natural features of an area must be evident.
3. It should provide an opportunity to explore and demonstrate approaches to sustainable development on a regional scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated natural resource planning should offer residents a variety of sustainable economic development alternatives beyond ecotourism. 	Promotion of sustainable development.
<p>4. It should have an appropriate size to serve the three functions of biosphere reserves.</p> <p>a) Conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems.</p> <p>b) To foster sustainable economic and human development.</p> <p>c) To facilitate demonstration projects, environmental education and training, research and monitoring in support of the first two functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving small community businesses, including food stands and other types of craft enterprises owned by local people. © • Thriving, locally owned lodges, hotels, restaurants and businesses that provide genuine hospitality with friendly, motivated staff. © • A variety of local festivals and events that demonstrate an on-going sense of pride in the local community's natural environment and cultural heritage. © • Clean and basic public facilities for tourists and locals to share, such as public showers and toilets. © • Friendly interaction between local people and visitors in natural meeting places, such as 	Logistic and training support to enhance, conserve and promote the sense of place and quality services.

	local shops or benches by the sea. ©	
5. It should include these functions, through appropriate zonation, recognizing a core, buffer and transition zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zones for tourism use should be clearly designated, as are zones inappropriate for tourism use. • Plenty of designated outdoor recreation zones that are designated to protect fragile resources, including bike paths, trails or boardwalk that are shared by locals and visitors alike.© 	Proper zonation plans must be in place on a macro and micro scale for all types of development
6. Organizational arrangements should be provided for the involvement and participation of a suitable range of <i>inter alia</i> public authorities, local communities and private interests in the design and carrying out of a biosphere reserve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full stakeholder consultation should take place on the type of tourism development (if any) desired by local communities, utilizing local neutral intermediaries who understand the communities viewpoints and will not advocate a particular development approach. This process must give the community adequate time to consider its options, with outside counsel and representation available on request. 	Stakeholder involvement and community empowerment are essential.
7. In addition, provisions should be made for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Mechanisms to manage human use and activities in the buffer zone/zones. b) A management policy or plan for the area as a biosphere reserve. c) A designated authority or mechanism to implement this policy or plan. d) Programmes for research, monitoring, education and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master plans for the entire tourism development region should specify green zones, trails, walking paths, public access areas, and clear rules on the density of development allowed in residential and commercial zones. • Visitor management plans and procedures should incorporate public comment during design and implementation phases, with monitoring programmes that allow for regular discussion of tourism use and the correction of problems when they occur. 	Management plans with long and medium-monitoring mechanisms must be in place.

Table 1 clearly illustrates that direct relationships can be found between an area registered as a biosphere reserve under UNESCO’s MaB programme and an eco-destination as characterized by UNEP and TIES.

4.4 THE CURRENT TOURISM SCENARIO IN THE WATERBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Information was gathered from the five core areas consisting of a total of 121 249 hectares, and the buffer zone in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve consisting of 28 private landowners. Twenty-four landowners responded which represents 146 157 hectares. The information does, however, not reflect the current tourism scenario in the whole Waterberg District area, which has been dealt with in Chapter 2, but specifically refers to the scenario within the core and buffer zones of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve area.

4.4.1 Land Ownership and expansion

Core areas:

All five core areas are state (government) owned land but differ in types of state land e.g. Marakele National Park was proclaimed a National Park and therefore under National Government control while Mokolo Dam, Wonderkop and the Moepel farms are provincial government properties and Masebe Nature Reserve is so called communal land. The only core area currently expanding is Marakele National Park.

Buffer zone:

Land in the buffer zone is primarily privately owned. Ownership varies from individual landowners to corporate companies or a collective group of landowners owing property. The majority, however, are individual owners. Current land ownership in the buffer zone dates from 3 years to 112 years ago with the Baber family owning land in the Waterberg since 1886. On average the landowners in the Waterberg (particularly the buffer zone) had been staying their for ten years.

4.4.1 Current land use

Core areas:

The majority land use prior to the proclamation of the core areas was cattle farming. Mokolo Dam Nature Reserve was established in 1978 and Masebe Nature Reserve in 1984, while Wonderkop Nature Reserve and Marakele National Park were proclaimed in 1994, although Wonderkop has been developed as a nature reserve since 1989. The Moepel farms are not proclaimed as a nature reserve yet.

Buffer zone:

The major land use within the buffer zone is wildlife orientated. This differs from consumptive e.g hunting to non-consumptive utilization such as ecotourism activities. Eight private landowners in the buffer zone indicated that they had purchased their farms as already established game farms with the other sixteen landowners indicating that they had changed the land use from cattle or mixed farming practices to mainly game farming. One could, therefore, assume that 67% of the land within the buffer zone has changed to mainly game farming over an average period of ten years. Nine landowners (37,5%) in the buffer zone also indicated that they had recently expanded their properties.

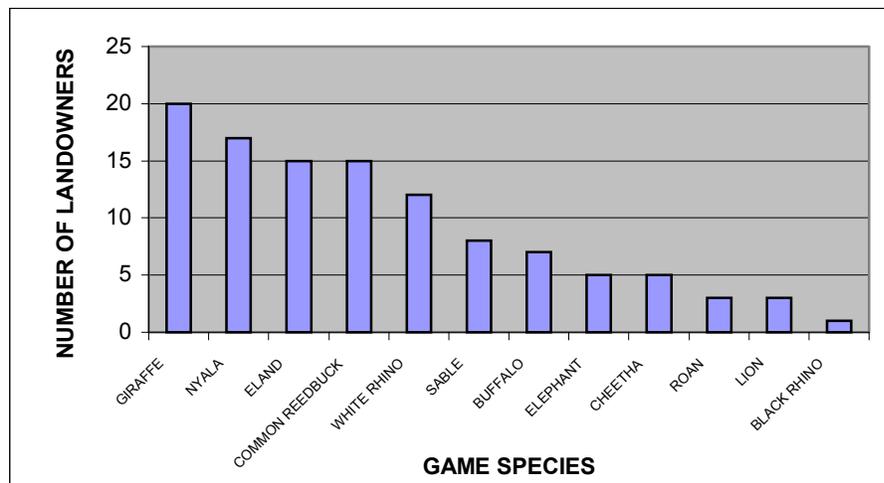


Figure 8: Reintroduced game species since the establishment of game farming in the buffer zone

As Figure 8 indicates, the majority of game introduced are Giraffe, Eland, Nyala, Common Reedbuck and Rhinoceros. The big five game and scarce species e.g. the Black Rhinoceros and Roan antelope also occur on some of the properties.

4.4.2 Tourism activities and facilities

Core areas:

Facilities: The core areas are in general terms underdeveloped. Marakele National Park is still expanding with a tented camp and bushcamp that cater for 58 beds in total. The other core area, Masebe Nature Reserve has 29 beds with the current lodge facilities not up to standard due to a lack of maintenance over the last few years. However, a ten bed Ivory Route tent camp is also available which links Masebe Nature Reserve with the African Ivory Route along the Golden Horse Shoe of the Province. Wonderkop has six beds that are mainly occupied when hunters visit the Reserve while Mokolo Dam only caters for campers and day visitors. In total 103 beds are currently available for tourist accommodation in the core areas. No “up market” lodge accommodation exists within any core area at present.

Activities: The activities are restricted in the core areas as one can expect. The main activities are overnight accommodation, self-game drives, bird watching and day visitors. Masebe, however, offers some conference facilities that are occasionally used for training courses and team building.

Hunting is offered in some of the provincial nature reserves as part of the provincial game reduction programme. Wonderkop and Masebe are sometimes included in this programme when determined by the provincial authorities. No hunting is conducted in Marakele National Park.

Buffer zone:

Facilities: The facilities in the buffer zone can be extremely rustic or very luxurious. The facilities are mainly low impact type of bush camps, general game

lodges or corporate lodge accommodation and are mostly owner operated. In total there are 1340 tourist beds catered for in the buffer zone. With eight landowners in the buffer zone that do not cater for any tourists, only the data of the remaining sixteen landowners were used. Currently an average of 101 hectares per bed is available in the buffer zone with two landowners (Number 1 and Number 21) catering for 856 (64%) of the beds (Table 2). When excluding landowner Number 1 and Number 21 from the calculations, the average number of hectares per bed is 211,86 ha, which double the size of hectares available per bed. This clearly reflects that the majority of landowners are seeking low impact tourism. It must, however, be mentioned that although landowner Number 1 caters for 460 beds, it has still got 75 hectares per bed available due to the size of the property.

Activities: Five landowners (21%) in the buffer zone indicated that they did not cater for tourists since these properties are mainly for private use. Eleven landowners (46%) catered for hunters and saw hunting as an important part of their tourism activities, while the remaining eight (33%) of landowners just concentrated on non consumptive related ecotourism activities and did not cater for the hunting industry at all.

Figure 9 indicates the type of tourism activities offered in the buffer zone. The five main activities offered are: overnight facilities, game drives, bird watching, photo safaris, and night drives. Cultural tours are not yet offered as a main attraction in the buffer zone although the landowners in close proximity to the Bakenberg area currently offers cultural experiences to their visitors. When implementing the zonation map, it becomes clear that cultural experiences within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve are limited to the eastern boundary where one finds unique cultural features and landscapes. Although archaeological sites are seen as cultural features, and found on various properties, the questionnaire did not specify archaeological aspects, but rather referred to the traditional cultural experiences one usually finds in rural communal areas. To enhance the cultural

experiences within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, Boonzaaier (2001) recommends an integrated tourism approach as prerequisite. The lack of knowledge and available information in regard to the cultural aspects in the rural areas contributes to the fact that limited tours or activities are currently being offered in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. Other specific activities offered are boat trips (restricted to the buffer zone area adjacent to Mokolo Dam) and horse trails that are linked with wildlife and agricultural experiences.

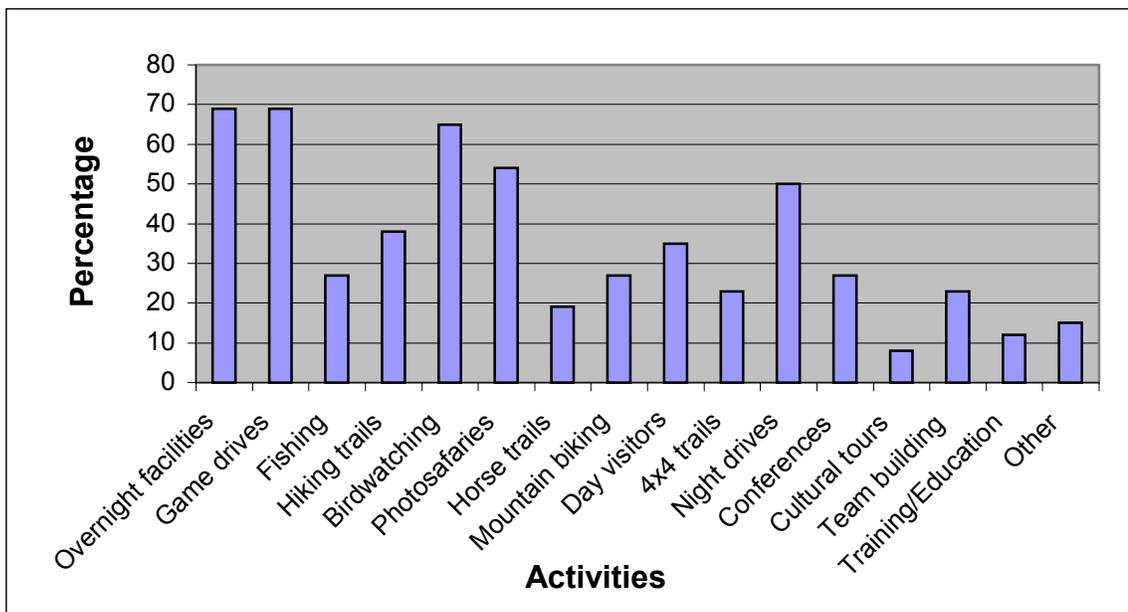


Figure 9: Tourism activities currently being offered within the buffer zone of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve

Table 2: Number of beds, hectares and hunting activities in the Buffer zone (Waterberg Nature Conservancy) of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

BUFFER ZONE MEMBERS (CONSERVANCY)	FARMS SIZE IN HECTARES	NUMBER OF BEDS	HECTARE/BED	HUNTING ON THE FARM?
MEMBER 1	33 000ha	460	72	NO
MEMBER 2	2 000ha	-	-	-
MEMBER 3	550ha	-	-	-
MEMBER 4	251ha	10	25	YES
MEMBER 5	1 850ha	-	-	YES
MEMBER 6	3 600ha	31	116	NO
MEMBER 7	7 000ha	12	583	NO
MEMBER 8	1 112ha	-	-	YES
MEMBER 9	3 000ha	20	150	NO
MEMBER 10	1 300ha	8	163	YES
MEMBER 11	2 800ha	10	280	YES
MEMBER 12	1 500ha	-	-	YES
MEMBER 13	51ha	-	-	-
MEMBER 14	10 000ha	16	625	YES

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MEMBER 15	8 897ha	50	178	NO
MEMBER 16	2 300ha	-	-	-
MEMBER 17	1 374ha	28	49	YES
MEMBER 18	14 000ha	22	636	YES
MEMBER 19	860ha	-	-	-
MEMBER 20	9 000ha	150	60	NO
MEMBER 21	390ha	396	0.9	NO
MEMBER 22	2 270ha	20	114	YES
MEMBER 23	35 382ha	92	385	NO
MEMBER 24	3 670ha	15	244	YES
TOTAL:	146 157ha	1340 beds 21% (members) do not cater for tourists or hunters.		46% YES 33% NO

4.4.4 Marketing

Core areas:

Since Marakele National Park is marketed as one of the South African National Parks, it has been incorporated into a network of destination opportunities. As one of the more recently established Parks, Marakele has not yet been optimally developed for tourism. It is believed that Marakele in future is going to play a major role in the destination building programmes of the Limpopo Province in particular and South Africa as a whole. Its close proximity to Botswana and the North West Provinces Heritage Park concept, which includes Pilansberg and Madikwe, will add substantial value in developing a Marakele tourism cluster. The provincial nature reserves (remaining core areas) have never been marketed intensively while a marketing strategy does not exist for these nature reserves. Established in May 2002, the provincial Tourism and Parks Board is mainly responsible for the marketing and development of provincial reserves. It is believed that after the current tourist facilities have been upgraded, an intensive and very needed marketing strategy will be compiled for each reserve. In the meantime these reserves draw attention due to their role as core areas within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve as well as their potential as investment opportunities in the tourism sector.

Buffer zone:

Sixteen of the twenty-four landowners in the buffer zone actively cater for the tourism market while eleven (68,75%) of the sixteen cater for both local and international tourists and only two landowners cater specifically for the international market and three for the local market. All the landowners indicated that they market their own products directly.

4.4.5 Socio-economic aspects

Core areas:

There currently exist 230 direct job opportunities in the core areas which amounts to one job opportunity on 527 hectares. These jobs are mainly conservation

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related such as game guards, general assistants and reserve managers. This indicates that the activities offered in the core areas are not yet focused on tourism activities and economic related programmes and development. This might change when the core areas are developed to their full potential and where specific types of tourist services need to be rendered.

The Park Manager of Marakele, Mr Norman Johnson, nevertheless indicated in the questionnaire that several services are sourced out to local contractors, for instance construction work, alien control, technical services, bush encroachment, tour guiding, and entertainment.

Buffer zone

Job opportunities: Table 3 refers to the current job opportunities in the buffer zone. Each landowner was requested to tick off the current job opportunities offered on his property. In total 1015 job opportunities are currently provided within the buffer zone of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which calculates to one job opportunity per 144 hectares.

Recruitment of labour: The fact that nineteen landowners (79%) in the buffer zone indicated that they sourced their labour from local communities in the Waterberg area already indicates a sense of economic responsibility to the local needs. In addition, Five (21%) indicated that they sourced their labour from local communities and from neighboring provinces.

Outsourcing of support services: In answering the question if whether they outsourced support services to local communities, for instance for the control of alien vegetation, bush encroachment, tour guiding, cultural dance entertainment, thatching of roofs and building. Thirteen (54%) indicated that they did while eleven (46%) responded negative. In verbal conversations with some of the landowners they all indicated that they were more than willing to support local contractors, especially within the spirit of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. It

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became clear that the main constraints in this regard are that the type of work required by a contractor is of such a nature that the local community contractors are usually too small to complete the work within a certain time frame. They also find it difficult to identify local contractors due to the lack of organization or marketing in the rural areas, which deal with these aspects. They reported that they did not know where to start looking for them. If the biosphere reserve could find a way of dealing with these aspects, it is believed that the outsourcing of services to the local communities could double and therefore have a direct influence on the local economic opportunities.

Training: In providing training opportunities to their staff, seven (29%) indicated that they rendered training courses to their staff, four (17%) that they provided training opportunities on an *ad hoc* basis and thirteen (54%) that they did not render training opportunities other than in-service training. The majority, however, reported that they required such a service to be rendered. In addition training currently being conducted on properties within the buffer zone are: game scout training, tracking courses, shooting proficiency, welding, first aid, driver licenses, cooking, technical services and hospitality. With the current proposal to transform the old Melkrivier School into a training while serving as an ecological institute in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, organized and accessible training opportunities for all parties in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve will be available. This initiative is far advanced and it is believed that it will contribute to the awareness of training.

Table 3: Current job opportunities in the buffer zone or conservancy of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve

JOB DESCRIPTION	NUMBER
1. Farm/Project Manager	26
2. Tourism Manager	25
3. Technical Manager	11
4. Administrative support	46
5. Game Guards	95
6. Tour guides and trackers	87
7. Professional Hunters	9
8. Cook/Chefs	70
9. Barman	17
10. Waiters	71
11. Cleaners	101
12. Gardeners	95
13. Other Permanent Staff	278
14. Temporary Staff	66
15 Other personnel	18
TOTAL:	1015

4.5 OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN THE WATERBERG BIOSPHERE RESERVE

4.5.1 Introduction

The socio-economic involvement of local communities in the ecotourism development of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve could best be illustrated by the inclusion of the Masebe Nature Reserve and the Moepel farms that have been earmarked for community based ecotourism. When looking at the spatial configuration, it is evident that economic benefits need to be developed in these areas.

The highest concentration of people in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve is found to the eastern side (the Bakenberg area) of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve area. As referred to in Chapter 2, the population density in this area is high. The area, however, lacks basic infrastructure, such as the supply of electricity and water.

The poverty level is high with an average of R500 per household per month (Statomet, 1999).

Map 3 clearly indicates that game farming is currently the dominant land use in the Waterberg area. It is therefore important to link the industry with the current socio-economic aspects found in the Bakenberg area.

Apart from economic benefits, landownership is of great importance for the future development of the area.. The majority of landownership in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve area is private. It has become virtually impossible for communities to participate actively in the game and tourism industry as such, proactive facilitation in this regard must be a priority within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. Without tangible economic benefits and landownership, the partnership that has been established between private landowners and the communities in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve will not hold in the long run.

It is, therefore, important to actively facilitate community owned projects within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. It is within **this** context that the Masebe/Moepel community tourism initiative will be discussed.

4.5.2 The Moepel/Masebe Community Based Tourism Development

4.5.2.1 General: Community Based Tourism Development

Many years of experience in development and conservation initiatives have shown that conservation and the needs of local people cannot be addressed independently of one another (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1997). Combining the two – by pursuing conservation and providing for local needs through the same initiatives and activities calls for great ingenuity, socio-cultural sensitivity, sound economic judgment and sufficient time to develop the optimum solutions that work in unique contexts. Only local people, in fact can effectively identify both

their needs and specific compromises that would satisfy them while safeguarding conservation (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1997).

One approach in coupling the interests of the local communities with conservation objectives is to stimulate community ecotourism initiatives because ecotourism generates revenues as long as the local environment is well preserved and well visited. Selling game trophies to hunters is viable and lucrative only as long as the local habitat is capable of sustaining an abundant wildlife population and medicinal plants can be collected in the wild and sold as long this practice is not over-exploited. One could also include initiatives such as game-ranching or wildlife-raising projects. The raising of a population of a wild and possibly endangered species in captivity may be a positive contribution to maintaining that species in the wild (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1997).

Although there are promising possibilities of involving local communities in ecotourism ventures, it is no easy task to identify ways in which conservation initiatives can produce benefits and economic returns. A constraining factor is that rural communities have never been actively part of the wildlife and ecotourism industry with local communities usually absorbed in service providing jobs such as porters or food and souvenir vendors. In addition, they are not assured of year-round employment since workers may be laid down in the off-season. In addition, most money in this industry made by foreign airlines, tourism operators, and developers who repatriate profit to their own more economically advanced countries (Valentine, 1997).

The challenge thus is to get community owned tourism projects from the ground that will change the face of tourism as described above. Wood (2002) refers to Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) as a concept, which implies that the community has substantial control over and involvement in the ecotourism project, and that the majority of benefits remain in the community. Three following main types of CBE enterprises have been identified.

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- The purest model suggests that the community owns and manages the enterprise and that all community members are employed by the project using a rotation system, while profits are allocated to community projects.
- The second type of CBE enterprise involves family or group initiatives within communities.
- The third type of CBE is a joint venture between a community or family and an outside business partner.

It is within the development role of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve and the above discussion on Community-Based -Ecotourism that the Masebe Nature Reserve and Moepel farms will be dealt with.

4.5.2.2 Background: Masebe Nature Reserve and the Moepel development

Masebe Nature Reserve and the Moepel farms were zoned as core areas within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve for the following reasons:

- The area is predominantly mountainous which offers diverse habitats for various fauna and flora species and archaeological sites.
- The mountain serves as an important water catchment for the known dry lowland and rural area of Bakenberg.
- It forms an important physical and mental link between the poor rural component in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve and the rich established wildlife industry.
- It provides an ideal Community-Based Ecotourism project, which could be an important monitoring site under the MaB programme for sustainable development.
- It is a large area in comparison with other areas, earmarked for conservation and ecotourism development.

4.5.2.2.1 The Moepel farms:

The Moepel farms comprise an area of 28 330 hectares state land, and consist of steep hills that grade into plains below the escarpment. Large portions of this area

are inaccessible for vehicles. The area is rich in biodiversity, and forms an integral part of the Waterberg catchment area. These state-owned Moepel farms were reserved for development as a nature reserve, to be handed over to the former Lebowa Government. This, however, never materialised (due to the new dispensation that came into place in 1994, and the lack of adequate government funding). The farms are currently administered by the provincial department of Agriculture. The Moepel farms are mostly underdeveloped, with infrastructure limited to old farmhouses and cattle fences. Unspoilt wilderness areas exist which enhance the tourism potential of the area. The Moepel farms further lie in a malaria-free zone. The area is large enough to accommodate the “ Big Five” game. Moepel includes a significantly higher than average diversity of habitat types and lies amid an area where game farming and tourism are the most important land use form. It is a three-hour drive from the central areas of Gauteng to Moepel on comfortable tarred road surfaces. It further lies along one of the main routes from Gauteng to Botswana, a very popular tourist destination.

4.5.2.2.2 Masebe Nature Reserve:

Adjacent to the Moepel farms in the north lies Masebe Nature Reserve. The reserve consists of 4 500 hectares of communal land, which were donated by seven villages for tourism and wildlife development in 1984. Masebe is known for its cultural and archaeological features and was established with the agreement that the provincial government (the then Lebowa administration) would contribute to the infrastructure development and all the profits will be shared on a 50-50 basis. This arrangement was honored until 1994, when new departments were created. Due to various administrative constraints, these communities involved did not receive their 50% share that has impacted negatively on the communities' attitude towards tourism. It must, however, be mentioned that the situation is currently under serious review.

4.5.2.2.3 Communal area adjacent to Moepel and Masebe:

Twenty-six villages are involved in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve and specifically the Masebe/Moepel ecotourism project. They are represented on various forums and play an active role in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve management committee. Map 7 clearly delineates the area as described above for further reference. In 2001 a survey was conducted by Boonzaaier (2001) in the Mabetha village of Bakenberg. This survey revealed that there are quite a number of very interesting traditional products and activities that could be presented as well as cultural products that could be sold. However, it is the opinion that tourism in the rural areas will only come off the ground if it could be approached within the broader context of the Waterberg region and the history of the North Ndebele. Boonzaaier (2001) therefore proposed that an old North Ndebele archaeological site be identified and excavated to serve as an example for the construction of a living museum where local North Ndebele people can display the life of a North Ndebele family during their time of arrival in the Limpopo Province. The large number of rock paintings in the near vicinity is impressive and of great significance for tourism. It is, therefore, believed that with the commercial development of the Masebe/Moepel complex in addition to the cultural attractiveness in Bakenberg, the area could become an exciting tourism destination within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. This could further add to the emerging trend that overseas tourists visiting South Africa are expressing interest in combining game viewing with a cultural experience (SATOUR, 1997).

4.5.2.3 Current strengths and weaknesses of the Moepel/Masebe CBE initiative

Strengths:

- The Moepel/Masebe complex has scenic beauty, offers a wilderness experience while containing a unique cultural component as well.
- It serves as the eastern gateway to the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

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- Communities are already part of the broader Waterberg Biosphere Reserve initiative and are actively participating.
- An important communication channel and trust relationship has been established between the rural community structures in Bakenberg and private landowners involved in an established tourism and wildlife industry.
- Communities in the area have already indicated their willingness to participate in tourism and wildlife through donating their land for the establishment of Masebe Nature Reserve. Although under pressure, this land use practice is still intact.
- The Moepel farms are totally underdeveloped and thus offers an opportunity to involve the adjacent communities from the initial stages. They could, therefore, be equal partners in both planning and implementation (Queiros and Wilson, 2001).
- The potential exist to develop the cultural attractiveness of the area that is currently not well known.
- An aspect of major importance is the fact that the local communities could own land in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve (in total 32830 hectares) on which they can run their own ecotourism enterprise. This will also be a first in its kind for the area that is predominantly developed as a wildlife and ecotourism destination.
- The area's unemployment rate is high. Economic development initiatives such as the proposed Masebe/Moepel development is of utmost importance to assist in the area's economic growth.
- Support structures already exist in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve while the establishment of a Community-Based Ecotourism venture is well encouraged by all the stakeholders in the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.
- The establishment of a Community-Based Ecotourism project on Masebe and Moepel is supported by government authorities as well since it fits in with policy programmes of the provincial department and is supported by the Public Management Finance Act, which caters for the creation of Community-private-public partnerships in section 16.

Weaknesses:

- The situation on Masebe, where government is currently not complying with the 50/50 agreement, can hamper the process of developing Masebe and Moepel as prime Community-Based Ecotourism projects.
- The land transfer process to empower communities with landownership is extremely time constraining. This could dampen the enthusiasm that currently exists.
- Moepel has three land claims registered on two farms. The Land Claims process is known to be very time constraining a factor that could have a negative effect on the project.
- Moepel has never been developed due to the costs involved. As much the area has not been identified as a priority nature reserve so that no permanent staff have been appointed to manage Moepel. Law enforcement officers and agriculture personnel are only visiting the area on an *ad hoc* basis. This could lead to the uncontrolled invasion of people.
- Overgrazing and erosion problems are expanding day by day due to the lack of efficient management. This adds to the ultimate costs involved to rehabilitate the area to be utilized as a profitable community owned ecotourism project.

4.5.2.4 Proposed development

A study conducted by De Klerk (2002) clearly indicates that the Moepel farms are not suitable for cattle farming or the division of the farms into separate smaller game farm units. It has been proposed that the Moepel farms be developed as a nature reserve, but with specific emphasis on the objective of generating income and creating a development and economic node from which the communities east of Moepel, in particular the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, but also the region and the Province at large, can benefit optimally.

In the initial phases of development the following short term opportunities for jobs and small enterprises exist on Moepel, which could result in the payment of up to R1,6 million in wages:

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- C breaking down the 230 km fences around and inside of Moepel;
- C erecting the perimeter fence;
- C demolishing buildings and ruins;
- C clearing rubbish from the veld;
- C bush clearing;
- C erosion control and rehabilitation;
- C upgrading roads and creating new roads; and
- C eradicating exotic species.

During this initial phases, up to 130 or more short term jobs, mostly for labourers, could be created. Hereafter the creation of infrastructure for the further phases could result in opportunities due to:

- building of offices, housing, stores etc.;
- building of tourism infrastructure;
- construction of roads;
- provision of accommodation;
- provision of other infrastructure e.g. hides, picnic sites etc.

On the long term, an estimated 150 to 200 permanent job opportunities could emanate from the development of Moepel into a game reserve and tourist destination. The salaries and wages involved could be in between R2,5 to R3 million per year, excluding the job opportunities that will be generated by the private sector in developing and managing tourism enterprises within Moepel.

To implement the above proposals a well considered process and representative community structures are needed. De Beer and Eliffe (1997) proposed a number of conceptual models for promoting local participation in tourism development projects, for example community-owned ventures and a partnership between the community and the state; lease agreements between the community, the private sector and the commercial sector; each with its own philosophy and objectives. The ideal is to give total ownership to the community in which they own the land and drive the development process to empower the community, one of the major aims of the current government. However, within the context of the

Moepel/Masebe project it will not be ideal for the community to take total ownership of the process since the local authorities and communities have neither been empowered within the tourism sector nor financially, institutionally and technically, to enable them to drive these types of development processes.

The model - Communal Land – Alternative 4 (De Beer and Eliffe, 1997) has been adapted to identify a suitable model for the Masebe/Moepel scenario.

Figure 10 schematically presents such a model.

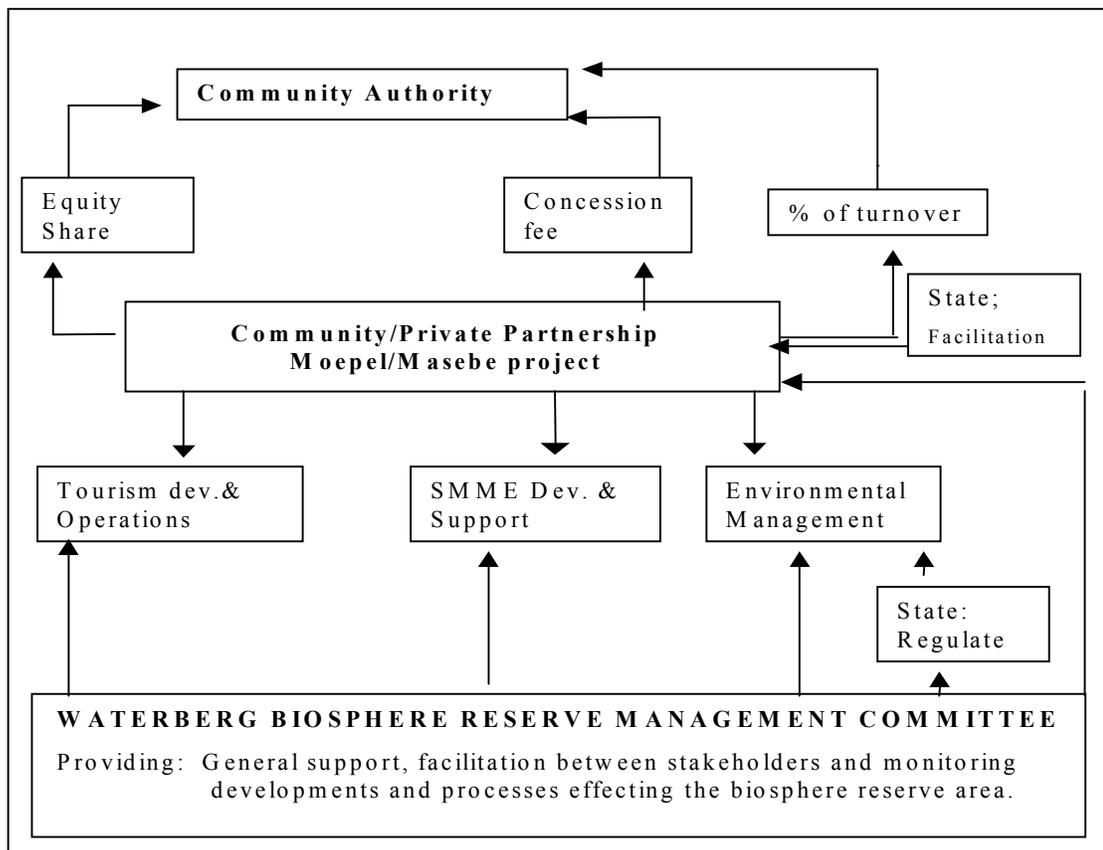


Figure 10: Community development model as proposed for the Masebe/Moepel ecotourism project as adapted from de Beer and Eliffe (1997)

It is proposed that a well represented community structure should be adopted to drive the process of mobilizing assistance from the private sector by going into partnership with them to develop the tourism potential of the project. Because this will be a first for the

community it is further proposed that the government should assist in the facilitation of setting up such a partnership. It will be of great advantage to include the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Management Committee to assist with the facilitation. As mentioned before, the success of the project will be of the utmost importance for the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve as well since the latter will bring in a variety of expertise to the tourism business by using that expertise of the people who know the area and kind of venture. The assistance from government and the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve will further protect the community against exploitation.

In 1996 the Cabinet of the Limpopo Province adopted a process of commercialization of provincial nature reserves (Limpopo Province, Department of Finance, Economic Affairs and Tourism, 2000). A large number of lessons were learned that could be of value for communities involved with nature reserves. Moreover the transferring of land from the state to a recognized community structure will need the assistance of appropriate government departments such as the department of Land Affairs and the Land Claims Commissioner. Within the Request for Proposal (RFP) document for the Manyeleti Game Reserve, financial empowerment for the communities involved with the commercialization process was identified as: equity shareholding, concession fees payable by the investor plus a percentage of turnover that will ensure that in good years the community and government (if the land remains government owned) will still benefit from the profits, and not only the investor (Limpopo Province, Department of Finance, Economic Affairs and Tourism, 2000). This financial structure has also been adopted and approved by the National Treasury who plays a significant role in monitoring and regulating the commercialization processes pertaining to government (state) land. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Management Committee could, therefore, assist the community in requesting government to speed up the commercialization processes of provincial nature reserves, in particular Moepel and Masebe, so that the community can start benefiting from its commercial potential.

Another important aspect within the biosphere reserve context is environmental management. With the depletion of government budgets for conservation and

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environmental programmes, the main role of government departments has shifted from being an implementer to being a regulator. The partnership will, therefore, be responsible for environmental management with government regulating their actions. The advantage of the Masebe/Moepel project is that it has been zoned as a core area within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. As such, it is situated in a support base of private sector in the environmental field, tourism business in the Waterberg and the Man and Biosphere Programme of UNESCO.

The fact that the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve could serve as an entity to facilitate the process on behalf of the community, strengthens the proposed model. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve as an independent stakeholder could also serve as a monitoring agent to ensure that the principles involved be adhered to by all parties involved. Within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve a pool of expertise exists that could serve as a basis to assist the newly established community/private partnership, hereby reinforcing and utilizing local knowledge.