

## CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

<b>Organization Legal Name:</b>	Wilderness Foundation
<b>Project Title:</b>	The Mountain Zebra Wilderness Corridor Partnership
<b>Date of Report:</b>	May 2014
<b>Report Author and Contact Information</b>	Matthew Norval matthew@sa.wild.org

**CEPF Region: Maputaland Pondoland Albany Hotspot**

**Strategic Direction: 4: Expand conservation areas and improve land use in 19 key biodiversity areas through innovative approaches.**

**Grant Amount: \$219 780**

**Project Dates: 1 March 2012 - 28 February 2014**

**Implementation Partners for this Project (please explain the level of involvement for each partner):**

South African National Parks (SANParks)

SANParks was the key partner for this project as the project focus area falls within the expansion corridor of two National Parks of which they have the management jurisdiction. Senior SANParks staff provided legal and land negotiation input as well as contributed to spatial planning requirements of the project.

GIS support was provided by the locally based GIS expert. A core SANParks team also helped with the development and managing of the work programmes, and played an important role in the management assistance and oversight of the project.

However the Wilderness Foundation was responsible for the overall management including the financial management of the project.

## **Conservation Impacts**

***Please explain/describe how your project has contributed to the implementation of the CEPF ecosystem profile.***

The main contribution of the project has been in securing 284 627.88 Hectares of privately owned land within the Mountain Zebra/Camdeboo Corridor. This not only lays the basis for further opportunities to add land parcels in the future but also provides a vehicle for collaboration between the landowners and the two anchor national parks.

The area between the Mountain Zebra and Camdeboo National Parks in the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany biodiversity hotspot is identified as a conservation priority in the National Protected Areas Expansion Strategy. The Protected Environment component of the corridor will support the consolidation of the Sneeuberg grasslands linking Mountain Zebra and Camdeboo National Parks through partnerships with private landowners.

The ecosystem profile describes the Albany Centre as being characterized by ecotones between the thicket, Fynbos (from the Cape Floristic Region Hotspot) and the Succulent and Nama Karoo habitats, demonstrating the importance of this region as an area where climatic impacts on habitat shifts are most likely to be evidenced. The corridor certainly contributes towards this. The ecosystem profile further states how conservation outcomes can be defined at three scales – species, site and landscape –reflecting a simplification of a complex hierarchical continuum of ecological scales. Again the contribution of the corridor in this respect is clear.

***Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.***

This project has produced a number of results and impacts, some more difficult to quantify than others.

Extensive consultation with landowners and other stakeholders in the region has resulted in an improved perception of conservation in general and SANParks in particular and a solid foundation has been laid for the further development of relationships and an enduring conservation ethic.

Conservation is now seen as both a legitimate land use as well as an approach that is compatible and beneficial to the extensive rangeland grazing practices being the most common agricultural practice in the region.

Results that are easier to quantify are the number of landowners involved in the corridor and the hectares that comprise the main tools that have been used to develop the corridor.

- Number of landowners directly involved in the corridor: **69**
- Area in hectares making up the Protected Environment: **268 428 Ha**
- Area in hectares making up Contractual National Parks: 12000 Ha (Property known as Samara);1271Ha (Property known as Shepherds Tree): **13271 Ha**
- Area in hectares Proud Partners: **2928.88 Ha**

**Total area in hectares of privately owned land included in the corridor:  
284 627.88 Ha**

### **Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):**

The development of a bioregional mosaic of land with improved conservation management within the complex comprising a suite of partnerships enabling range expansion for charismatic species including mountain zebra and cheetah; the delivery of ecosystem services; ecotourism activities and job creation opportunities.

The long-term impacts will arise once the corridor has been established and landowners are thus in a position to interact with each other and the conservation agencies around issues of conservation management, tourism, job creation, knowledge transfers and capacity building.

### **Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:**

The foundation for the achievement of the long-term impacts have been laid. The project made considerable progress in developing the planned bioregional mosaic and conservation management has no doubt improved as a result of the project and will continue to improve in the long term. Once the Protected Environment has been declared the secure provision of ecosystem services will have been promoted and ecotourism activities and job creation opportunities are being developed through associated activities. The fact that the corridor has been positioned around the established national parks and the host of activities associated (tourism, job creation, knowledge transfers and capacity building) the impacts are very likely to become evident in the long-term.

The Protected Environment legislation specifies the criteria for declaration as such and states that this may occur in order to meet a number of objectives including:

- to regulate the area as a buffer zone for the protection of a national park.
- to enable owners of land to take collective action to conserve biodiversity on their land and to seek legal recognition therefore; to protect the area if the area is sensitive to development due to its biological diversity, natural

characteristics, scenic and landscape value; or provision of environmental goods and services.

This again shows the declaration as a critical step in ensuring the desired outcome for the project area in the long-term.

**Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):**

Improved awareness of the benefits of an expanded conservation estate locally.  
Improved support of the existing national parks and recognition of the important role they play in the regional economies by local stakeholders.

The development of a common conservation goal for the corridor.

The identification of areas for collaboration regarding opportunities for the creation of benefits.

**Actual Progress Toward Short-term Impacts at Completion:**

The project activities have achieved the planned short-term impacts particularly through the interaction with the individual landowners in the effort to establish the corridor. Channels of communication (some closed for many years) have been reopened and there is improved communication with the national park managers as well as between landowners now united around a common vision and proposed outcome. The establishment of the landowner management committee to manage the Protected Environment component of the corridor specifically will also promote the pursuit of a common vision beneficial for conservation.

There is also now improved awareness and recognition regarding the expansion of conservation activities in the area and the vital role that the two anchor national parks play in the regional economy. With regard to benefits the project area has already been involved in the development of enterprise development and job creation initiatives in particular the one driven by SANParks and the Development Bank of South Africa.

**Please provide the following information where relevant:**

**Hectares Protected:** 284 627.88 Ha

**Species Conserved:** While this is not a species specific project the establishment of the corridor will be beneficial to a wide range of species as one of the project objectives is to conserve the Sneeuberg centre of endemism.

**Corridors Created:** One corridor

***Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.***

It is felt that the project has been largely successful in achieving these objectives when considering the description of the actual achievements to date described above. Challenges are numerous in such an extensive landscape especially one facing challenges of poverty and unemployment coupled with the prospect of fracking becoming a real possibility in the near future. These factors will continue to put unrealistic pressure on initiatives perceived to be land hungry or not able to provide for short term benefits. Ongoing success will also be coupled to the drive and will of individuals within the two anchor national parks as well as the landowner structures put in place to drive the corridor in the future.

***Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?***

The obvious unexpected success has been the overwhelming reaction from landowners against fracking in favour of a low environmental impact conservation/rangeland grazing land use for the region. As the Protected Environment legislation provides some modicum of protection against prospecting it was always expected that this would encourage landowners to be involved in the corridor but the land ethic found amongst local landowners went far beyond this expectation. Again the level of interest and enthusiasm amongst landowners and other role-players bodes well in the ultimate achievement of the objectives.

## **Project Components**

**Project Components:** *Please report on results by project component. Reporting should reference specific products/deliverables from the approved project design and other relevant information.*

**Component 1 Planned:** Project governance and institutional mechanisms established

**Component 1 Actual at Completion:**

The mechanisms proposed were all established and functioned as planned. This included the formation of the project management team comprising SANParks and Wilderness Foundation staff to take responsibility for decision making during the implementation of the project. A key task was the appointment of a project manager for the duration of the project and to develop and oversee the implementation approach and activity plan.

A project steering committee was established as planned in the initial phase of the project comprising representatives of farmers associations, tourism and municipalities but this was later incorporated into the two national park forums to

ensure continuity and to keep the corridor relevant after the initial establishment phase was completed.

As the project progressed a landowner management committee (a management authority being a legal requirement) was also established to manage the Protected Environment component of the corridor and assistance was given in establishing a constitution and advice on the practical workings of the committee. The Wilderness Foundation has also committed to providing ongoing support to this group as required in an effort to ensure that the Protected Environment is given the best chance of succeeding in the long term.

**Component 2 Planned:** Planning for project implementation carried out

**Component 2 Actual at Completion:**

As planned the activities planned for this component were completed in their entirety. These included the compilation of project information documents for communication purposes as well as the all important biodiversity assessment which was the main motivation tool used to propose the declaration of a Protected Environment.

In order to assist in the management of the project an operational plan was developed and implemented including the determination of priority sites and landowner willingness.

**Component 3 Planned:** Conservation corridor established. Signed contractual agreements; the number of which will be determined based on landowner willingness. Two agreements and or 25 000ha is the initial target. The agreement signatories will be SANParks and the landowner

Signed voluntary agreements; the number of which will be determined based on landowner willingness and the capacity of the provincial conservation authorities. One agreement and or 5 000 ha is the initial target. The agreement signatories could be the provincial conservation agency (facilitated by SANParks) and the landowner or the most appropriate mechanism which will be explored as part of this project

**Component 3 Actual at Completion:**

The approach and methodology was adapted during the actual implementation of the project in order to maximise the high levels of willingness expressed by the landowners.

Contractual agreements: When the project was developed this category was seen to be the one offering the highest level of protection and the figures were based on privately owned conservation land thought likely to formally enter into contractual arrangements with SANParks. Discussions are ongoing that will see 13271 Ha making up contractual national parks and a further 10 000 Ha (Plains

of Camdeboo Private Nature Reserve) is likely to become part of the discussion shortly.

**Voluntary agreements:** The voluntary agreements were initially planned to include typical stewardship agreements as well as Proud Partner agreements (only one landowner/2928.88Ha chose to become a Proud Partner and not to become part of the Protected Environment) for the landowners not yet willing to commit to a long term agreement. The overwhelming response from landowners negated the need for this category and the focus was then placed on establishing a Protected Environment as the backbone of the developing corridor. The application process is onerous and with significant administrative burden involving documentation signed by each of the 66 landowners involved and motivations lead by a biodiversity assessment for the area. The application process has been completed and extensive consultation with the Department of Environmental Affairs has taken place bearing in mind that the declaration is signed by the national minister. In developing the project it was accepted that the completion of this process (and the negotiations for contractual parks) were unlikely to be completed within the project timeline but that the aim was to ensure that the administrative steps are at such an advanced stage that they can continue after the project has been completed and will hopefully reach fruition before the end of 2014.

**Component 4 Planned:** Regional conservation and ecotourism cooperation promoted

**Component 4 Actual at Completion:**

During the initial phase of the project a regional conservation and ecotourism forum was established for the corridor. As many of the representatives on this group were involved in the national park forums which meet quarterly it was decided that it was more efficient to incorporate the corridor function within the two national park forums. This was also done to ensure that the corridor remains clearly on the agenda and will benefit by the association with the two parks and SANParks in general on an ongoing basis.

An effort was also made to position the corridor regionally, nationally and even internationally and the project was presented as part of the Karoo Development conference as well as at the World Wilderness Congress in Salamanca, Spain 2013.

Partnerships were also pursued and nurtured with Karoo based journalists Chris Marais and Julie du Toit ([www.karoospace.co.za](http://www.karoospace.co.za)) and with the anti-fracking lobby

group, Treasure the Karoo Action Group ([www.treasurethekaroo.co.za](http://www.treasurethekaroo.co.za)). This has ensured that conservation in general and corridors in particular are presented as viable land-use options within the arid Karoo landscape.

***Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?***

All component-level targets planned for this period have been achieved.

***Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.***

The project resulted in the production of a number of products including a biodiversity assessment stating the case for the corridor; articles and high quality images that were used to promote and position the corridor as an appropriate land use and development option in the arid Karoo landscape. These products will be submitted as requested.

### **Lessons Learned**

***Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.***

***Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)***

The project design was intentionally kept relatively simple with clear objectives and realistic timeframes and this definitely contributed to its success. It was predicted that aspects concerned with communication and consultation with landowners would be time consuming so this was factored into the project design.

***Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)***

Bearing in mind the ambitious project objectives it was felt that implementation would be best carried out with a small management team with the necessary technical competence to provide guidance to the project manager on the ground. This allowed for rapid decision making and evaluation of scenarios as they arose. The excellent cooperation between the team members from SANParks, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and Wilderness Foundation was an important factor in the project's success.

***Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:***

- Project management teams can be an effective means to ensure that the views and input from a number of different sources are captured and provide valuable guidance for the project manager on the ground.
- Local knowledge of the area and its people provided by park managers and staff of the anchor national parks is invaluable for implementing a project of this nature.
- It is critical that all members of the project team have a similar understanding of all aspects of the project so that the message that goes out to stakeholders and landowners is consistent.
- In the project focus area many of the landowners are third generation stock farmers and they have a well developed sense of conservation and matters likely to impact on future generations. This is definitely a very positive aspect of the project and the approach has been to nurture the understanding that we are doing the corridor work in partnership with them, respecting their knowledge and for the long term good of the area as our goal. We have made it clear that we are there to learn as much as we hope we can influence behavior that will be positive for conservation in the region. This willingness to work and learn together with local stakeholders was demonstrated when two Wilderness Foundation staff members attended a Holistic Grazing course alongside local farmers. The amount of goodwill generated by this was enormous. The key is to be seen to be conserving 'with' local people rather than 'for' them.
- As the project is based on relationships with landowners on one side and a very specific declaration process on the other, care is required to ensure that while the legal compliance side of the project makes progress the landowners and broader stakeholders receive the attention required.

- As the landowner willingness in the project area has been high it has been important to set limits spatially on incorporation within the corridor and to adhere to them. Also as the declaration process can be lengthy and tedious it has been important to set a cut off with the first phase of declaration to ensure that initial targets are achieved.
- The ongoing input and support of the two SANParks Park Managers has been vital to ensure that the corridor is seen as a priority both for them and the conservation potential of the parks they manage and for the greater good of the region including social and economic benefits.
- The management team agreed that a project delegation would personally take all the Protected Environment paperwork to the Department Of Environmental Affairs office in Pretoria and spend time with them to ensure that the process was as streamlined as possible and was given the best chance of being approved.
- The project was launched at an appropriate venue within the corridor area and the transparent manner in which this was done allowed stakeholders to raise concerns and interact directly with the project team. The involvement and commitment of the two anchor National Park managers was always seen as important to ensure local buy in and to enhance the sustainability of the corridor after the initial implementation period. Regular updates were provided to the landowners involved and this went a long way to provide a sense of cohesion and understanding of the lengthy proclamation process.

### Additional Funding

***Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.***

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Type of Funding*</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Wilderness Foundation:</b>	In Kind	<b>\$25 580.00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office space for project coordinator (Port Elizabeth): \$215.00 per month x 24=<b>\$ 5160.00</b></li> <li>• Use of meeting facilities: 4 meetings @ \$70.00 x 2 years=<b>\$420.00</b></li> <li>• Use Wilderness</li> </ul>

			Foundation vehicle for project management and oversight = <b>\$20 000.00</b>
<b>SANParks:</b>	In Kind	<b>\$68 634.00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office space for project coordinator(Graaff-reinet): \$215.00 per month x 24=<b>\$ 5160.00</b></li> <li>• Professional oversight (park management) coordination, planning and GIS expertise (conservation services): 3 managers @ \$ 428.00 per day x 2days x 24 months= \$ 2571.00X 24=<b>\$61704.00</b></li> <li>• Accommodation for coordination staff: 5 x staff x 3 visits per year @ \$45.00 per night x 2 years= <b>\$1350.00</b></li> <li>• Use of park facilities for meetings:3 meetings @ \$70.00 x 2 years= <b>\$420.00</b></li> </ul>

***\*Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:***

***A Project co-financing (Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project)***

- B Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project.)*
- C Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)*

### **Sustainability/Replicability**

***Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.***

Much of the corridor planning domain has been identified as potential sites for the exploration of shale gas using the highly controversial hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") technique. This factor was known during the project planning phase and was thought to have an influence on landowners as some of the options pursued for inclusion in the corridor provide protection against both exploration (prospecting) and extraction (mining). Exactly how this scenario will play itself out remains to be seen. Initial interactions with landowners show that most of them object to fracking but there could be political pressure brought to bear regionally. As part of another initiative the Wilderness Foundation has established an alliance of non-governmental organisations to oppose fracking which will also promote conservation and tourism as a sustainable alternative.

No new risks have arisen. In fact the factors expected to enhance sustainability have increased. These include the possibility of using GEF 5 funding to support project activities once the CEPF funded intervention has been concluded. SANParks is also working in partnership with the Development Bank of South Africa to identify potential 'green' projects within the corridor that would give the initial efforts additional environmental, social and economic benefits.

During the project planning phase we were aware that the relationship between SANParks and some landowners were problematic based on historic interactions and largely poor communication. Initial meetings have in certain cases been challenging but these issues have mostly been resolved and should not negatively affect the progress of the project.

The role and influence of exploration for natural gas reserves ('fracking') remains a concern but in many cases this threat (of which we were aware) is working in our favour by giving the process a sense of urgency and some landowners are anxious to secure their land. By declaring land as a Protected Environment one gives a reasonably high level of protection against prospecting and mining.

Partnerships were developed with two groups active in the Karoo as part of the initiative taken to promote the sustainability of corridor activities post project. The first group, Karoo Space ([www.karoospace.co.za](http://www.karoospace.co.za)) comprises well known Karoo based journalists Chris Marais and Julie du Toit, best known for their Karoo travel books and ongoing promotion of tourism as an activity most appropriate to this arid area. Popular articles that positions the corridor as an important component of the conservation/tourism mix of activities have and will continue to be produced to ensure that the corridor remains front of mind.

An active partnership has also been pursued with the Treasure the Karoo Action Group (TKAG; [www.treasurethekaroo.co.za](http://www.treasurethekaroo.co.za)) who have amongst other activities promoted community education and awareness of both human and environmental rights associated with fracking.

The methodology and approach followed in the implementation of this project is believed to have strong elements of replicability and the project team would be more than willing to contribute to the development or implementation where this could be beneficial.

***Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.***

The obvious risk in a large landscape level project of this nature is the continuity of the management team post the initially funded phase and the ongoing nurturing of relationships that have been built up. There has been an awareness of this concern by the project team and attention has been given to ensure that the functions created are absorbed within the local SANParks structures to ensure that activities and relationships receive the necessary attention.

<b>Safeguard Policy Assessment</b>
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***Provide a summary of the implementation of any required action toward the environmental and social safeguard policies within the project.***

No environmental or social safeguard issues arose during the course of this project.

### **Additional Comments/Recommendations**

The Wilderness Foundation and the project management team would like to acknowledge the support of CEPF that made the implementation of this project possible.

## Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.

### **Please include your full contact details below:**

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**\*\*\*If your grant has an end date other than JUNE 30, please complete the tables on the following pages\*\*\***

**Performance Tracking Report Addendum**

**CEPF Global Targets**

**(Enter Grant Term)**

**Provide a numerical amount and brief description of the results achieved by your grant.**

**Please respond to only those questions that are relevant to your project.**

<b>Project Results</b>	<b>Is this question relevant?</b>	<b>If yes, provide your numerical response for results achieved during the annual period.</b>	<b>Provide your numerical response for project from inception of CEPF support to date.</b>	<b>Describe the principal results achieved from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. (Attach annexes if necessary)</b>
1. Did your project strengthen management of a protected area guided by a sustainable management plan? Please indicate number of hectares improved.	n/a			Please also include name of the protected area(s). If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one.
2. How many hectares of new and/or expanded protected areas did your project help establish through a legal declaration or community agreement?	Yes	268 428	268 428	Please also include name of the protected area. If more than one, please include the number of hectares strengthened for each one. Mountain Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environment
3. Did your project strengthen biodiversity conservation and/or natural resources management inside a key biodiversity area identified in the CEPF ecosystem profile? If so, please indicate how many	Yes	268 428	268 428	

hectares.				
4. Did your project effectively introduce or strengthen biodiversity conservation in management practices outside protected areas? If so, please indicate how many hectares.	Yes	268 428	268 428	
5. If your project promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, how many local communities accrued tangible socioeconomic benefits? Please complete Table 1 below.	N/A			

**If you answered yes to question 5, please complete the following table**



<b>Total</b>																			

**If you marked "Other", please provide detail on the nature of the Community Characteristic and Socioeconomic Benefit:**