

# Media Release – 4 May 2000

## South African National Parks And The University Of Port Elizabeth To Collaborate To Turn Greater Addo National Park Into Reality

The offices of the Scientific Services Section of the South African National Parks (SANP) in Port Elizabeth were officially launched today at a ceremony at UPE. The establishment of an office of the Scientific Services Section of the South African National Parks (SANP) in Port Elizabeth arises from the organisation's commitment to the Greater Addo National Park project as discussed at a Stakeholder Workshop held in February 1999 at the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE). In this regard the SANP relocated three scientists (Dr M Knight, Dr G Castley and Mr T Simelane), a game capture veterinarian (Dr P Morkel); and a support staff member (Mr R Williams) from the Kimberley Scientific Services office in December 1999 to the new Port Elizabeth office. They bring ecological and veterinary expertise gained in managing ten other national parks in diverse systems such as the Karoo to Richtersveld, and Kalahari to Limpopo.

UPE has generously made available office space in close proximity to the Biological Science building thus creating a unique synergistic working environment between the SANP and UPE academic staff, particularly the Terrestrial Ecology Research Unit (TERU) headed by Prof. G Kerley. This relationship between a university and a conservation organisation is the first of its kind in South Africa. It is a means by which different expertise can be pooled in tackling diverse environmental/conservation projects, as well as helping in academic training. With the appointment of the renowned scientist, Prof. R Cowling from the University of Cape Town, in TERU in June and relocation of TERU's offices adjacent the new SANP offices, a centre of ecological excellence is in the making at UPE.

SANP's vision of developing Addo into one of South Africa's premier conservation areas remains a top priority for the organisation. TERU has played a pivotal role in developing this concept and vision. The proposed Greater Addo National Park, with representation of six (Thicket, Fynbos, Savanna, Forest, Nama Karoo and Grasslands) of the country's seven biomes, as well a marine component with off-shore islands makes it the most biologically and scenically diverse park in Africa. It also offers a viable economic alternative to ecologically unsustainable agricultural practices being undertaken in the area. Owing to the greater Addo projects conservation merits, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), represented by the World Bank, has thrown its support behind the project. GEF support will come in two phases. The first phase would include a 12 - 18 month long project development phase during which all biological, social and economic information will be consolidated towards motivating for a full project proposal. The second phase which could last up to five years will concentrate specifically on actual conservation and developmental issues associated within the expanding park. In developing this project proposal the SANP is expected to draw heavily upon expertise at the University.

This SANP development will not only have a significant impact on conservation in the Eastern Cape, but also serve as a role model for constructive interaction between an academic institution and an applied conservation agency.

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