AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONSERVATION EDUCATION TRUST
A RICH HERITAGE

South Africa is the third most biologically diverse country in the world after Indonesia and Brazil. Occupying only about 2% of the global land area, South Africa contains almost 10% of the world's plants and 7% of the reptiles, birds and mammals.

It is widely acknowledged that southern Africa's splendid wildlife and natural areas can play a critical role in the region's - and indeed, the continent's future well-being and development. The diversity of wildlife is the basis of the tourism attraction of Africa and provides the continent with its most important competitive advantage.

Southern Africa is a developing region with a large, diverse and fast-growing population which increasingly puts pressure on its limited natural resources. Our environment and rich natural heritage holds the key to job creation and prosperity. Through initiatives like eco-tourism, agriculture and community development, we create economic growth and build a better life for all.

South African President, Mr Thabo Mbeki recently alluded to the 'abundance of the natural resources of this land' and 'the ingenuity and enterprise of the people' which forms the basic units of production that can be turned into tradable goods, or hold a dream for a better future for all. Many share in this ideal.

This is the vision of the Southern African Conservation Education Trust to conserve our natural resources and to teach others to do the same.

The Southern African Conservation Education Trust (SACET), as an established Trust, is in a unique position to promote conservation in the region and in Africa. Given appropriate funding it can play a commanding role in biodiversity conservation, social and economic empowerment and poverty alleviation on the continent. In defining this role, the Trust is working alongside other organisations and programmes aimed at putting conservation to work in the communities across sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRODUCING THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE

In 1995, WWF South Africa helped establish the Southern African Wildlife College. It was set up as a Section 21 Company and built with a start-up grant provided by the German Development Bank (KfW) and initial funds from WWF-SA supporters. The main purpose of the College, which is situated close to the Kruger National Park's Orpen Gate, is to build much-needed capacity of professionals in the field of conservation and environmental management and to train a new generation of game wardens.
What makes the College different? Most of its students are mature individuals drawn from agencies where they are already involved in conservation management. After all, who better to protect our natural resources than those already working on the land, and living side-by-side with communities who depend on it for their survival? These men and women are ideally placed to teach their communities how to live harmoniously within their environments, how to nurture their natural resources, and how to ensure that these resources support them, today and well into the future.

Today, the College plays a vital role in developing the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable development in rural regions. Training protected area managers to manage their areas and the associated wildlife in those areas in cooperation with local communities is at the core of the College’s courses.

It is important to note that the College educates and trains candidate from countries all over Africa. The College offers a variety of accredited courses targeted at specific audiences within the broader framework of environmental management.

During 2002, 47 students from Botswana, Cameroon, the Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and South Africa registered for the certificate and diploma courses.

Looking to the future, the vision of the Southern African Wildlife College is to become a recognized center of excellence in conservation training.

In providing natural heritage managers, and particularly protected area managers, from Africa with the motivation and relevant skills to manage their areas and associated wildlife populations on a sustainable basis in co-operation with stakeholders in a culturally acceptable manner.

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONSERVATION EDUCATION TRUST

Conservation education and training is not well funded in Southern Africa. Institutions such as the Southern African Wildlife College (particularly at this stage of its development) still depend on external funds. Students receive little or no financial support from government and the majority need their education and training to be subsidised. The advice of a number of studies worldwide is that the best way of securing long-term funding for conservation activities in the developing world is through trust funds and endowments. More than 24 countries worldwide are using such trust funds to support the long-term costs of conservation, this is where SACET will play a role.
The main aim of the Trust is to provide funding for education and training in nature conservation management at the College. Currently the College is improving its income through conservation activities such as conferences and off-site training among others, and while the College is the Trust's primary beneficiary for the moment, the overall aim of SACET is to:

- Subsidise the costs of education and training of natural resource managers in SADC countries;
- Help the SA Wildlife College reduce its dependence on donors;
- Help reduce costs to students, funders and employing agencies;
- Provide bursaries for students.

SACET was set up as an independent capital trust fund by WWF-SA in the year 2000. Overseeing the affairs of the Trust are nominated representatives from WWF-SA (2), the Peace Parks Foundation, and a nominee from IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa and a nominee from WWF Southern African Regional Programme Office.

The Trust provides a means of ensuring at least one permanent income stream for conservation education and environmental management training in the SADC region. This Trust system provides a stable source of financing for the institution it funds, without overwhelming the institution's administration capabilities. Donors are able to invest with minimal overheads, and know that the Trust will be professionally managed.

Attracting funding for the Trust remains a challenging undertaking. In securing funding for SACET, a multi-sectoral approach has been adopted and a variety of individuals and groups have been approached for possible funding. These groups range from appeals to Game Lodges to attracting the support and financial contributions from emerging black business, influential women's groups and hunters.

SACET trustees calculated that, in its initial stages, the Trust will require an amount of R60 million (approximately US$6 million) to provide sufficient interest to subsidise the costs of training the current stream of students at the College. SACET aims to raise R10 million (US$1 million) from the Southern African donor base (Tax benefits are available to SA donors); and R50 million (US$5 million) internationally, in the first three years.

To date we are 80% of the way toward our first phase target of R10 million, as the necessary baseline funding for the additional R50 million we hope to secure from international funding sources. It is critical that we attain this target in the short-term.
SACET is endorsed by: WWF South Africa, IUCN – Regional Office of Southern Africa, South African National Parks and the Peace Parks Foundation

SACET AND THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)

The New Partnership for Africa’s Development is a bold initiative by prominent African leaders to improve the socio-economic outlook for the continent and its people. It is a shared vision aimed at eradicating poverty from the continent in an effort to place Africa on a path of sustainable growth and development.

NEPAD provides an holistic, comprehensive and integrated strategic framework for Africa’s socio-economic development. The framework promotes outcomes which seek to:

- promote economic growth and development and increased employment
- reduce poverty and inequality
- promote the diversification of production opportunities
- enhance international competitiveness and stimulate exports
- increased African integration

SACET is closely aligned with the outcomes of NEPAD and is well positioned to play a contributing role in the realisation of NEPAD’s goals.

PLAYING A PART IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAN-FRONTIER CONSERVATION AREAS (TFCAs) IN AFRICA

SACET is also supports the vision of the Peace Parks Foundation and their current efforts in establishing Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) across
Africa. TFCAs have been established to employ conservation as a land-use option to the benefit of local people.

Without the proper management of resources, TFCAs will not attain their economic potential. It is for this reason that SACET, through the Southern African Wildlife College is training wildlife managers and field guides in effective management of these areas.

There is a clear and direct need for training wildlife managers to effectively manage these vast conservation areas - both existing parks and wildlife areas as well as future conservation areas that will be established.

**SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSERVATION EDUCATION TRUST**

SACET has an extremely important and beneficial role to play in the socio-economic development of both the Southern African region and continent. Acquiring appropriate funding is critical to success of the Trust.

Without initiatives that sustain educational programmes in conservation, there will be no way for Africa to protect and preserve the natural heritage of the continent, nor reap the benefits of the sustained development of its abundant natural resources.

In playing a constructive role in Africa’s conservation, SACET is dependent on the ongoing contributions of its many donors and on funding mechanisms that will assist in financing programmes and initiatives on a sustained basis.

**We would urge countries, companies and individuals across the world to contribute to SACET and help ensure the effective management of Africa's protected areas and the future prosperity of the continent.**

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