



MAPUTALAND-PONDOLAND-ALBANY HOTSPOT

MPAH Newsletter

Issue 1

Autumn 2013

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot (MPAH) learning network! This quarterly newsletter will share with you the stories, news, updates and interesting developments of projects awarded grants through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the MPAH.

The newsletter is compiled by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) as one of the ways in which knowledge and lessons learned will be produced and disseminated across the MPAH and elsewhere.

Anyone may sign up to receive this newsletter by emailing Kennedy Nemutamvuni (Learning Network Officer, SANBI; K.Nemutamvuni@sanbi.org.za). If you are interested in contributing to this newsletter or would just like to find out more please contact Kennedy or Tammy Smith (Deputy Director: Biodiversity Planning and Policy Advice, SANBI; T.Smith@sanbi.org.za).

We look forward to interacting with you and hope that you enjoy reading!

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First forum of the MPAH – Guiding the way forward

The first Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany-Hotspot (MPAH) Forum is being held next week in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The forum is organized by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in close collaboration with the Wildlands Conservation Trust and funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The forum will be held over 3 days with a special focus on progress of projects being funded through the CEPF investment in the MPAH to: support civil society in applying innovative approaches to conservation in under-capacitated protected areas, key biodiversity areas, and corridors, thereby enabling changes in policy and building resilience in the region's ecosystems and economy to sustain biodiversity in the long term.

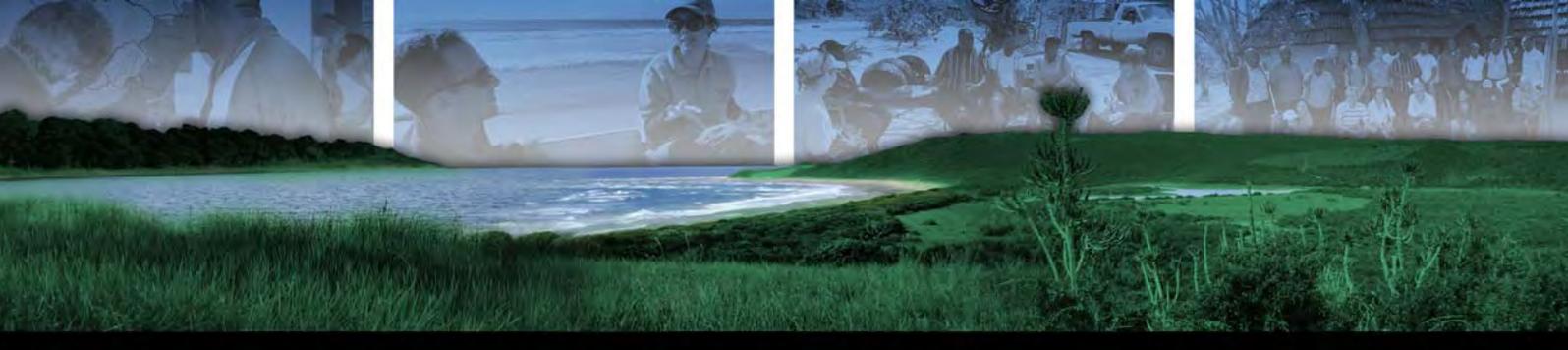
Importantly, this will form part of the mid-term assessment of the CEPF investment, which began in late 2010. This is a primary aim of the forum and will be focused on assessing each strategic direction and the overall investment. So the second day of the Forum will focus on showcasing a selection of projects from Strategic Directions 1-4, which are:

- Strengthen protection and management in under-capacitated and emerging protected areas in three priority key biodiversity areas.
- Expand conservation areas and improve land use in 19 key biodiversity areas through innovative approaches.
- Maintain and restore ecosystem function and integrity in the Highland Grasslands and Pondoland corridors.
- Create an enabling environment to improve conservation and management of Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany priority sites.

The forum also provides an opportunity for project implementers and facilitators from three different countries - Mozambique, South Africa, and Swaziland - to come together and share their experiences and lessons learnt. This is important to building a learning network in the hotspot that can help to strengthen relationships, increase awareness and facilitate learning and lessons sharing.

Additional aims of the Forum are to identify future learning exchanges and capacity development requirements in the hotspot and agree on the strategic focus of the remaining CEPF investment in the hotspot. Both of these will be important to strengthening the enabling environment for sustaining gains being made in the MPAH over the long-term and discussing the long-term goals for the hotspot with a view to sustaining CEPF's investment in the region and will be the focus on the last afternoon of the Forum.

The first MPAH Forum is certain to be successful in achieving its aims and is thus an important process of guiding further capacity development and investment in the MPAH in a meaningful way. More than 75 people are expected to attend the Forum. Further information about the Forum is available from Tammy Smith at T.Smith@sanbi.org.za.



Taking lessons from projects in the MPAH

The Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the MPAH began in September 2010 with the Wildlands Conservation Trust as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the investment. In the subsequent two years, four calls for proposals have been released and 60 individual grants have been awarded, thus obligating 89 percent of the investment portfolio. It was decided by the RIT and CEPF Secretariat in October 2012 to purposefully limit further awarding of grants in advance of the mid-term assessment, which is taking place at the moment. This was to ensure that remaining funds respond to priorities for the remainder of the five year investment that will be discussed at the upcoming MPAH forum.

Discussions regarding the long-term goals for the hotspot and the strategic focus of the remaining CEPF investment in the hotspot will take place following a report back from implementers and facilitators of projects that have been awarded grants. Grants have been awarded in all three countries that are spanned by the MPAH – Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland – and in 20 of the 22 key biodiversity areas identified and prioritized during the ecosystem profiling.

Although many projects are still on the go, some projects have already closed and show meaningful results in terms of biodiversity management and conservation as well as benefits for people. There is a lot that can be learnt from closed and ongoing projects at this stage of the mid-term assessment. As part of the mid-term assessment, project implementers and facilitators have completed surveys on project progress. And the initial review of these surveys indicates several highlights from projects across the MPAH, such as:

- Significant co-financing to promote sustainable tourism and private sector employment in Mozambique;
- Expected proclamation of 25,000 ha protected area in Lubombo Conservancy, Swaziland;
- Biodiversity stewardship helping to secure 75,000 ha of threatened grasslands in South Africa;
- Innovative initiatives for investment in restoration of wetlands, alien plant removal, and biodiversity stewardship that have multiple benefits, such as water supply and job creation; and
- Capacity building through training, learning exchanges, knowledge-capture and sharing.

A cross-section of projects will be showcased at the MPAH Forum and will form the basis for sharing lessons learnt, assessing performance, and discussing future learning exchanges and capacity development requirements as well as the strategic focus of the remaining CEPF investment in the hotspot.

The results of these discussions will be shared in the next newsletter along with further news, stories and interesting developments in projects from across the MPAH. This is part of the responsibility of SANBI, which was awarded a grant to promote a learning network and capacity development in the hotspot. The soon to be activated MPAH website will also provide a knowledge archive of projects, implementers, reports, news and lessons learnt documents (as they are developed).



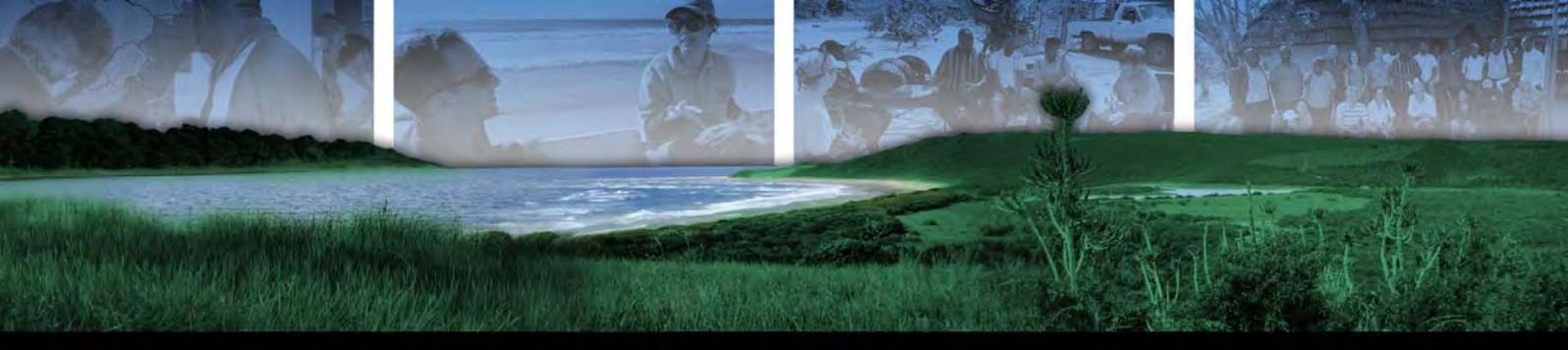
Useful information

Brief overview of the MPAH

MPAH is a region stretching along roughly 1300 km of the Indian Ocean coast and 300 km inland to the Great Escarpment, from Port Elizabeth in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province, north through KwaZulu-Natal, further covering much of Swaziland and southern Mozambique, the MPAH is characterized by an endemic vegetation type called subtropical thicket. Subtropical thicket – a condensed forest of thorny trees, shrubs, and vines – is an ecosystem driven by elephants, black rhino, and Cape buffalo that trample down paths and disperse seeds through their digestive tracks. There are 1900 endemic plant species in the hotspot, of which 534 are Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered per the IUCN Red List. The region is home to approximately 18 million people scattered across the portions of the three countries that fall within hotspot boundaries.

What is the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund?

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint program of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. Founded in 2000, the CEPF is a global leader in enabling civil society to participate in and benefit from conserving some of the world's most critical ecosystems by providing grants for nongovernmental and private sector organizations to help protect biodiversity hotspots, Earth's most biologically rich yet threatened areas. Grants target biodiversity hotspots in developing and transitional countries are guided by regional investment strategies developed with stakeholders and go directly to civil society groups to build this vital constituency for conservation alongside governmental partners. Grant recipients range from small farming cooperatives and community associations to private sector partners and international organizations. In this way, the CEPF grants help to create working alliances among diverse groups, combining unique capacities and eliminating duplication of efforts; towards achieving results through an ever-expanding network of partners working together toward shared goals. Read more at www.cepf.net



Useful information

Who is the Wildlands Conservation Trust?

The Wildlands Conservation Trust (Wildlands) holds the \$700,000 grant to serve as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the CEPF investment in the MPAH. Wildlands is a 13-year old South African NGO with operations based in 5 of the 9 Provinces in South Africa. Its headquarters are in Hilton, a suburb of the provincial capital, Pietermaritzburg, and in the heart of the hotspot. Wildlands' growing footprint focuses on Ecosystem Service Areas (catchments, forests) and the communities that depend on these areas and the services they deliver. Working at a community level, Wildlands partners with communities to develop the tools that enable them to strengthen their ecosystems; making them more robust through activities such as the removal of waste from rivers and other natural systems, reforestation of degraded forests, maintenance of healthy grasslands and the management of conservation areas as vital links in adaptation and mitigation corridors. As the RIT, Wildlands is also responsible for managing the small grants fund, which the CEPF Secretariat issues as a separate grant. The current ceiling is \$550,000, from which Wildlands can issue grants of up to \$20,000. Find out more at www.wildlands.co.za

Who is the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)?

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) was awarded a grant by CEPF to promote the development of a network of conservation organizations and institute a knowledge-capture and lesson sharing system within the hotspot modelled on its similar programs for the Cape Floristic and Succulent Karoo regions. It will also hold annual capacity building sessions and be responsible for managing the mid-term assessment workshop. As an organisation, SANBI leads and carries out a range of research, planning, mapping and management model development programmes for biodiversity - both flora and fauna, and at species and ecosystem levels. In addition, SANBI is mandated - by the Biodiversity Act - to provide information and knowledge, and monitor and report on the state of biodiversity of South Africa. SANBI is also the proud custodian of the National Botanical Gardens system. Visit: www.sanbi.org