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SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL PARKS ARE THE BASIS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

South African National Parks (hereinafter SANParks) is a state conservation authority responsible for the protection of the natural environment within the framework of the National Environment Agency (Conservation Areas Act 57 of 2003). Its mandate is to preserve, protect, monitor and manage national parks and other designated conservation areas and their biological diversity (biodiversity).

SANParks manages a system of 20 functional national parks in seven of South Africa's nine provinces, totaling more than 4 million hectares, representing 67% of

nationally managed conservation areas. SANParks falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE).

The main mission of SANParks is to develop, protect, expand, manage and promote a system of sustainable national parks representing natural and cultural heritage through innovation, excellence, responsible tourism and equitable socio-economic benefit for present and future generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a particularly devastating impact on SANParks and its interests, significantly limiting the flow of tourists - the company's lifeblood. A look ahead, with increased investment in tourism and conservation in the country's national parks, suggests that the sector, which has been hit so hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, will recover and surpass all previous indicators.

In terms of employment impact, SANParks directly employs over 4,000 people and its concessionaires provide a further 2,100 jobs, with 80% of the workforce coming from communities adjacent to the country's national parks. In rural areas where most of the country's national parks are located, this can sometimes be the only source of meaningful economic activity for a family and community. As South Africa works to reduce its unemployment rate to 34.5% by the end of March 2022, it is good to know that the biodiversity economy is expected to create an additional 110,000 jobs by 2030, as well as make an additional contribution to GDP of 47 billion rand [1]. Currently, more than 418,000 people work in areas directly related to biodiversity and its conservation. It must be remembered that the economic boom caused by the recovery of the tourism sector is inextricably linked to the success of the main mission of national natural parks: the preservation and protection of biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Tourism figures are showing green shoots of recovery, although volumes are still 50% below 2019 levels. The Department of Tourism Research, which has closely monitored factors affecting the recovery of international and domestic tourism since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, attributes the recovery to the domestic market, which has renewed interest in nature tourism and personal well-being. International data shows that overall, travelers are spending more on travel than before the pandemic,

thanks to a significant amount of deferred savings, longer stays, and higher costs for transportation and accommodation. The recovery of the international tourism market is slower than expected due to travel restrictions imposed by key supplier markets for South Africa in 2021-2022 [1].

In 2021-2022, a total of 16,729 people participated in environmental educational and educational programs in national natural parks and their territories.

In 2021-2022, data was collected that was used to determine maintenance and recapitalization budgets based on the condition index, current replacement cost and remaining useful life of each asset, resulting in a Fleet Maintenance and Recapitalization Plan, with summarized consequences for the next five years.

Literature:

1. Tourism investment opportunities 2022. South African National parks. URL : <https://www.sanparks.org/assets/docs/events/tourism-investment-summit/2022/ppp-investment-catalogue.pdf>