

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective custodianship of South Africa's biodiversity heritage is the primary mandate of South African National Parks (SANParks) and the chief purpose of the protected areas it maintains. The McKinsey report of 2003 highlighted SANParks' lack of a formal biodiversity policy, and the absence of management plans for most national parks. In addition, it found poor cohesion across parks and directorates and a lack of co-operative governance and public participation policies or processes. The report concluded that there was a need for three operational emphases within SANParks: biodiversity custodianship, tourism development and constituency building.

Recent policy and legislation has reiterated these priorities. The Biodiversity Act (No. 10 of 2004) calls for integrated and cooperative governance of biodiversity conservation in South Africa. The Protected Areas Act (No. 57 of 2003) stipulates a comprehensive and consultative planning process for the management of National Parks and other protected areas.

In response to these imperatives, SANParks embarked on an initiative to develop and implement a management planning framework, which would meet the requirements of new legislation in the outcome and process of protected area management. This framework was required to "distil consensus on an integrated strategic direction for biodiversity custodianship that is in synergy with other core business of SANParks, and provides the principles needed to defend actions against outside pressures, needs and aspirations."

Development of this framework followed a consultative process, using workshops and eliciting the inputs of a variety of participants across SANParks. This process sought to rationalize and integrate existing policy that was considered to be applicable to management planning under the new legislation.

This manual presents the outcome of this initiative, in the form of a framework to initiate and guide the development of Protected Area management plans. The framework (termed the Protected Area Management Planning Framework) is now the overarching policy and planning tool for directing Protected Area management.

Other tools developed or used by SANParks which interface with this framework are as follows:

Coordinated Policy Framework (CPF):

The NEM: PAA requires a policy framework to give guidelines to the management of all National Parks. To fulfil this requirement SANParks has developed the CPF (SANParks, 2006) which outlines overarching policy standpoints applicable to all national parks under its custodianship.

Balanced Score Card (BSC):

The Balanced Scorecard translates the vision and strategy of SANParks into objectives and performance measures that can gauge the success of SANParks in meeting their overall aims. This is evaluated from 4 perspectives:

- Financial: How do we add value for stakeholders while controlling costs?
- Customer: Who do we define as our customers/stakeholders? How do we create value for them?
- Internal Processes: At which business processes must we excel if we are to satisfy customers?
- Learning and growth: How do we enable ourselves to grow and change, while meeting ongoing demands?

Internal processes include: Conservation, Tourism, Constituency Building, Corporate Governance.

The four perspectives are described in terms of:

- Objectives
- Measures
- Targets
- Initiatives

The BSC is a tool used by SANParks to evaluate/audit whether the strategy outcomes are on track. The Balanced Score Card is based on the organisational objectives (classified into Financial, Customer, Internal Processes, Learning & Growth). Biodiversity custodianship goals for individual national parks form part of the BSC for Internal Processes. This process is not discussed in detail in this document as it is still under development, and needs to be aligned more closely with the adaptive management strategy followed in the management plans.

Systematic conservation planning (SCP):

SCP is an approach to protected area planning that seeks to ensure that the goals of representativeness and persistence of biodiversity are met through the location, expansion and zoning of parks. SCP is used within the SANParks management planning process to define spatially explicit and quantified objectives for the desired state of parks and their surrounding areas, to plan park expansion and to design Conservation Development Frameworks for parks.

1.1 Objectives and structure of this manual

This manual is aimed at conservation scientists, managers and stakeholders who are interested in the management of South African National Parks. It has particular significance to SANParks employees, at both the corporate and protected area level, who need to understand, support and/or apply the management planning process.

However, protected area management is required to be a consultative process and involves a broad range of both government and societal stakeholders, representing the interests of conservation, tourism, neighbouring communities and local economic development. It is hoped that this document will enable such stakeholders to understand their roles, responsibilities and opportunities to participate in the protected area management process.

This manual includes an overview of the contextual and theoretical basis for management planning adopted by SANParks, as well as detailed guidelines to assist those undertaking planning processes in individual National Parks. These guidelines range from the technical aspects of setting goals for ecosystem management, to approaches to engaging stakeholders and integrating their inputs in the planning process.

The manual is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 introduces the higher level policy context informing the content of management plans, and explores the concept of biodiversity conservation and other core components of SANParks' mandate.

Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical concepts underpinning the chosen approach to protected area policy, planning and management - in particular, Adaptive Resource Management, Strategic Adaptive Management.

Chapter 4 provides principles for participatory decision-making within the Strategic Adaptive Management process.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the SANParks policy and planning cycles, including the interface between corporate and park level operations.

Chapter 6 presents detailed guidelines to achieve the outputs of the sequential phases of the protected area planning cycle.

Chapter 7 sets out the format to be used for all national park management plans.

A glossary and index are provided, and further explanation of concepts and terminology can be found in text boxes located in various chapters.