

Framework and Guidelines for Development of Park Management Plans

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Ministry of Environment and Tourism
Directorate of Parks & Wildlife Management



Republic of Namibia





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FOREWORD


A park management plan sets out the objectives and guidelines for the management and development of a park. As such, it represents the policies and intentions of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) on how State protected areas (parks) in Namibia should be managed.

Park neighbours and residents, line Ministries, Regional Councils, conservancies, private sector, tourists, contractors, organizations, institutions, parastatals, researchers, professional hunters, and any entity or individual dealing with the park, in any way, must ensure that any actions and decisions relating to a park are in accordance with the park management plan as the ultimate authority of the specific park. In addition, specific rules and regulations in accordance with the applicable legislation will apply.

Shorter-term operational plans or work plans will also be developed in accordance with the activities provided in the park management plan. These will identify specific or annually prioritized actions, which need to be performed to address the priorities specified in the park management plan.

The park management plan must be viewed as valuable and central document by all management and policy level staff involved with a specific park. They should be familiar with its contents, and should make use of it to familiarize new staff with the aims, objectives, management principles and strategies for the park.

It is every staff member's (involved with a specific park) responsibility to assist with the implementation of the park management plan for a park. It is also every staff member's responsibility to propose improvements to the plan, including how it may be effectively implemented.

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Dr. Kalumbi Shangula
Permanent Secretary




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1. Introduction

More than a hundred years have passed since the establishment of the first Namibian parks in 1907. It is truly impressive how conservation areas have grown then.

Parks are vital tools for conserving Namibia's essential biodiversity. By managing parks, we will leave the irreplaceable assets and the unlimited potential they possess to future generations. Parks also draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to Namibia. The international fascination with Namibia's parks is growing annually and, as more visitors arrive, they generate employment and stimulate development, not just in the parks, but nationwide. These parks also provide a unique opportunity to benefit local communities through rural development while providing research, education and recreation opportunities.

It is therefore important that each park, or parks that are interconnected, have park management plans that guide their operations. A clearly articulated plan greatly benefits a wide range of stakeholders for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, including park neighbours and residents, tourists and civil society, while ensuring that our biodiversity and environment are thoroughly considered.

It is also important to understand that the park management plan is a guiding document for the types of activities that management staff should be doing, as such it should not contain detailed activities, which are more correctly part of the operational planning component of each park.

2. Aim

This document provides guidelines and format for how park management plans should be prepared by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

3. Objectives of park management plans

- 3.1 To document all relevant information, including historical, biodiversity, archaeological and social context which is relevant for a park.
- 3.2 To describe the general characteristics of the ecosystems contained within the parks, as well as the regional biodiversity context within which the parks are located.
- 3.3 To guide staff and stakeholders of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism on how a specific park should be developed and managed.
- 3.4 To assist the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in setting priorities during planning.
- 3.5 To form part of a monitoring and evaluation system that provides the basis for determining whether goals, objectives and strategies specified in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism Strategic Plan and National Development Plans are achieved.
- 3.6 To ensure that parks contribute to sustainable utilization of natural resources and socio-economic development.

4. Preparations and approvals of park management plans

The park management plan must be viewed as the constitution representing a broad mandate that includes values, policies and principles on which management decisions for a park will be made.

The Director responsible for park management in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism shall compile and develop park management plans. He / she may put up a team or contract an external consultant in accordance with the procedures of the Government or the development partner of the Government to compile and develop park management plans.

In compiling a park management plan, the Director will visit the Park and the content of the plan will be discussed in workshop sessions and other fora with all relevant stakeholders.

The Director is responsible for final editing and will submit a draft copy to the MET Policy Research and Development Committee for review. Once endorsed by the MET Policy Research and Development Committee, the final document is submitted to the Permanent Secretary for ratification (by signing the Preface) and forwarded to Minister for approval (by signing the Foreword).

5. Arrangement of the park management plans

Foreword

The Foreword gives the external perspective of the plan and summarizes the purpose of the Park.

Preface

The Preface gives the internal perspective of the plan and shall contain the following information:

- Background to the formulation of the plan.
- Executive summary of the content of the plan.
- Acknowledgement of institutions that contributed to the formulation of the plan.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Table of contents

Chapter 1

1.1 Overview of the park

This section should include the location of the park, size, history, conservation function or purpose and economic opportunities. The specific location can also be described by means of a map (s).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose must state the reasons for the compilation and publication of the specific park management plan, and this may be standard to all plans.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives must be set in such a way that they guide the management of the park(s) and the setting of priorities for interventions. Within this context, there is the overarching Mission of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism which is as follows: "To promote biodiversity conservation in the Namibian environment through the sustainable utilization of natural resources and tourism development for the maximum social and economic benefit of its

citizens". Park objectives should also explicitly acknowledge all higher-level strategic planning aims and objectives within the Ministry and the Government of the Republic of Namibia.

Chapter 2

Management of natural resources

2.1 Habitats and special sites

This section focuses on the maintenance and rehabilitation of all habitats in the park, but with special emphasis on key biodiversity and cultural features, such as riparian forests, rivers, floodplains, swamps, fountains, sensitive plant communities, lichens, heritage sites, etc.

2.2 Fire

In parks that contain ecosystems where fire is a natural part of the ecological dynamics, fire can be used as a management tool, e.g. for the control of bush encroachment. This section should put comprehensive strategies in place on how fire can be used as a management tool to achieve overarching ecological objectives (to actively maintain and rehabilitate habitats) in the Parks, and strategies on how to prevent and manage fires which are not planned.

2.3 Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation should address degradation caused by humans, especially where it severely impacts on ecosystem functions and processes, and where rehabilitation is practical and appropriate.

2.4 Wildlife population management and introductions

This section should guide the sustainable management of wildlife populations, by using tools such as game reintroductions and translocations where necessary.

2.5 Artificial water points and management

The provision of artificial water points for game has had profound impacts on habitats throughout Southern Africa. As such, this section should clearly define objectives and conditions of water provision. It should further address any management requirements for artificial water points and should provide clear guidelines for conducting needs assessments, as well as for the management, monitoring of impacts, and possible de-commissioning of water points.

2.6 Domestic animal management

This section must address the confinement and management of domestic animals which are authorized to be within a park, or whether domestic animals must be authorized in a specific park.

2.7 Fencing

While fences can disrupt wildlife movements, they play a role in contributing to effective management and preventing the spread of diseases if the barriers are properly located, designed, erected and maintained. Fences may therefore be provided to certain parks to achieve specific goals and should be clarified under this section, and indicated for parks where they are discouraged.

2.8 Human wildlife conflict management

All parks have rural communities and land-owners neighbouring them, others have communities living inside them, as well as tourism resorts. This section should therefore address how to actively engage with communities, land-owners and other stakeholders to ensure that there are effective and responsive mechanisms in place to minimize conflicts, in line with the National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management.

2.9 Diseases and parasites

This section should specify on how MET work with other relevant public service agencies to find solutions to the management and control of communicable, notifiable and contagious human, livestock and wildlife diseases.

2.10 Alien species

National parks should, as far as practically possible, be free of alien plants and animals. Strategies and activities must therefore be set to prevent, eradicate or manage feral populations of plants and animals as appropriate.

2.11 Law enforcement and crime prevention

Clear strategies must be determined under this section to allow for an approach against illegal activities within and adjacent to the park, including a strategy on how MET will work with law enforcement agencies, line Ministries, conservancies and other stakeholders in combating wildlife and environment crime.

2.12 Environmental Impact Assessment and management

This section should summarize the requirements and procedure for conducting EIAs within the Park, with particular emphasis on assessing the impacts of management interventions (such as roads, fencing, game introductions, water provision, etc.), impacts of residents populations, as well as tourism and other developments and activities, in accordance the Environmental Management Act.

2.13 Consumptive resource utilization

Any sustainable use of natural resources within the park must be specified under this section. The purpose of any utilization should be clearly outlined, as well as strategies for monitoring. Examples of use may include support livelihoods, as a wildlife management strategy, to supply the needs of residents and neighbours with meat during traditional festivals, meat for national events in line with the National Policy on the Provision of Game Meat, or as an incentive to support conservation by communities for economic development.

2.14 Research

Park management activities should be based on accurate available information, and therefore this section should specify strategies and activities for the acquisition of such data, including the commissioning of research.

2.15 Monitoring

This section should specify strategies for the monitoring of wildlife and plant resources, climatic variables and impacts of human activities to determine and track environmental changes. The information produced from monitoring activities should feed into adaptive management decision-making. Monitoring tools may include: Incident Book Monitoring Systems, game counts and vegetation monitoring.

2.16 Coastal Management

This section applies to national parks along the coast and should specify strategies and activities on how the intertidal coastal zone, its biota and the species that transcend the marine/terrestrial interface are managed jointly by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources under agreed principles that promote synergy, efficiency and elevated conservation management, monitoring and protection of habitats, processes and species.

Chapter 3

Regional conservation, park neighbour and resident relations

3.1 Transfrontier conservation

This section applies to national parks that form part or a component of transfrontier conservation areas or transfrontier parks, and should specify strategies and activities that allow for management within the context of a regionally integrated conservation area that encompasses neighbouring conservation areas in other countries.

3.2 Regional land use planning and landscape level management

Requirements for the management of a park or parks should be incorporated into a regional land use plan where appropriate and that should be explained in the strategies and activities of this section. This section will also, where feasible, provide steps for managing the park as part of the larger landscape and provision of strategies to ensure biodiversity connectivity with surrounding land where possible.

3.3 Park neighbours and resident communities

Where it is in the interests of improved conservation for the park and promotion of national development goals, the Ministry will engage and closely work with park residents and/or neighbours or other relevant stakeholders. This section should specify how park neighbor and resident relations will be developed, maintained and promoted in line with the National Policy on Protected Areas, Neighbours and Resident Communities.

3.4 Private partnerships

The private sector, either through small local enterprises or large businesses can contribute in various ways to the achievement of the objectives of a park. If appropriate, this section should specify strategies for the promotion and implementation of private sector partnerships.

3.5 Environmental Education

The role of environmental education cannot be overstated in fostering an understanding of the value of conservation and the costs and benefits derived from effectively and sustainably managing natural resources. Long term benefits can be gained by investing in education which focuses on the values of wildlife, parks and their associated culture and history. Specific strategies and activities should therefore be specified to indicate how environmental education will be encouraged in a park.

Chapter 4

Zonation

Zonation will be determined on access, infrastructural considerations and the opportunity the park offers in relation to the objectives, while taking due cognizance of the underlying natural and cultural resources and requirements of different users. Zonation should be based on the best available information on environmental sensitivity, biodiversity status and conservation priorities. This chapter should therefore allow for a park to be zoned for enhanced conservation management and appropriate utilization, to minimize potential conflicts between activities and to facilitate conservation and development of a park. Different zones can be described by means of a map.

Chapter 5

Prospecting and mining

Prospecting and mining within parks should comply with the conservation, environmental and

economic regulatory framework and that mineral development only commences in parks when rehabilitation is guaranteed. This chapter should have strategies and activities to ensure that prospecting and mining activities, if allowed, does not cause any negative impacts to the character, ecology and tourism potential of a park, and is done so in accordance with the National Policy on Prospecting and Mining in Protected Areas.

Chapter 6

Tourism development and management

As tourist destinations, parks can be viewed as natural resource based attractions that are economically and environmentally sustainable, that optimize benefits to local communities and the nation. Tourism should be promoted so that the socio-economic objectives of the parks are achieved without compromising the conservation and integrity of natural resources. This chapter should therefore guide tourism services, activities and developments through good planning, zonation, park signage, management, and collaboration between the park and tourism private sector. For the purpose of providing detailed guidelines for tourism development, an associated tourism plan for a park can be developed.

Chapter 7

Infrastructure

7.1 Access and roads

Parks have significant road infrastructure and it accounts for a large portion of the capital assets of the parks. The road network also requires significant maintenance to ensure accessibility to the public. Parks also have public entry gates, therefore this section should include strategies and activities for the development and management of access and roads of a park.

7.2 Buildings

Buildings are required to accommodate the needs of management staff and tourists, and as support infrastructure for management functions. This section should therefore include strategies on how and where buildings will be developed in a park.

7.3 Tourism infrastructure

This section should have a strategy on how tourism infrastructure should be developed and located in a park based on the zonation plan. Types of infrastructure, materials and eco-tourism guidelines should be referred to.

7.5 Airstrips and aircraft

This section should have a strategy on how airstrips should be located in a park. Location and their purpose thereof, including the type of aircrafts for their use, should be specified. The section should also indicate in parks where they are discouraged.

7.6 Waste management

The disposal of waste is often problematic in remote areas, and the volume of waste will grow as the use of the parks increases. Solid waste should not be disposed in a park, and it should be transported to a managed waste management site on the periphery or nearby town. Strategies must therefore be specified for waste management, sewerage and toxic waste in a park.

7.7 Human safety

Wildlife may pose a threat to tourists and staff within a park. Management must monitor those instances and areas where this is likely to happen. Proactive action can often prevent or minimize these problems and therefore strategies and activities for human safety need to be set.

7.8 Fencing

Where a park should have a fence, this section should include strategies on how the fence should be constructed and maintained in line with the Regulations relating to Nature Conservation Ordinance Number 4 of 1975 (as amended).

Chapter 8

Administration and management

This chapter should include strategies to ensure compliance with public service policies and procedures within which an efficient operating system is implemented for the conservation and economic development of the park.

Bibliography

Glossary

Appendices

Appendices will include any documents which are of direct relevance to the park management plan, and which constitute an important reference.

6. Structure of the chapters / sections

Chapter 2 to Chapter 8 or their sections thereof shall include specific objectives (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound), principles, strategies and activities.

7. Implementation of the plan

Once approved, implementation commences immediately. Approved annual work plans are appended to the management plan. At the end of each year, the park's annual report will be evaluated against that year's annual work plan, thereby building up a history of management practices and activities in one document.

8. Review of park management plans

The park management plans will be reviewed every five years by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, from the date on which the Minister approves a specific management plan for a park. It is the responsibility of the Director responsible for park management to ensure that management plans are reviewed as prescribed above. During the review of a park management plan, lessons learnt and new issues arising will be incorporated into the updated version as part of adaptive management.

