



conservation agreements private partnership platform

SOUTH AFRICA - Helping farmers turn grass into gold

ACTIVE
until Dec. 2019

Years of unplanned grazing by the livestock-dependent Mnisi community adjacent to Kruger National Park has led to severely eroded rangelands, which have also been overrun by invasive plants unpalatable to livestock. On top of these challenges, the area’s designation as a foot-and-mouth disease zone due to livestock-wildlife proximity limits farmers’ access to livestock markets, further exacerbating poverty.

This pilot project is using “conservation agreements” to restore the biodiversity and ecosystem value of 15,000 hectares of degraded Mnisi rangelands. Planned grazing will help restore vegetation cover and diversity, leading to increased infiltration and decreased erosion. This will result in both improved quality and quantity of grazing for livestock—as well as improved ecosystem health for the communal rangelands and the rivers that flow through them into Kruger National Park. Coupled with other benefits such as fodder and vaccinations, livestock health will improve, enabling farmers to sell their livestock in the formal market for the first time.

What is a “conservation agreement”?

It is a deal between a community and a group or person funding a conservation project. In exchange for making specific conservation commitments, communities receive benefits from the funder.

THE COMMUNITIES AGREE TO:

- Strict use of planned grazing system and rotational resting of previously overgrazed areas
- Erosion control to reduce localized flooding and high runoff
- Bush clearing to decrease encroachment and alien species
- Resting of important riparian areas to improve infiltration and reduce flooding events

IN RETURN FOR:

- Livestock market access
- Training on design and application of planned grazing system
- Employment of Eco-rangers (community monitors) to oversee the planned grazing system and removal of invasive plants
- Traceability services for commodity-based trade to negate the current restrictions of Foot and Mouth Disease due to buffalo in the adjacent protected areas
- Development and provision of sustainable harvesting of fodder for dry season

INVESTMENT

CAPPP: \$250,000

MAC and Liebe: \$250,000

IMPLEMENTER

Conservation South Africa aims to promote and support conservation, restoration, and sustainable land use in South Africa’s hotspots as an essential element of food security and land reform; human and economic development; and building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

PARTNERS

K2C Biosphere Programme

- Coordinates across all activities in the catchment and facilitates lesson sharing

South African National Parks

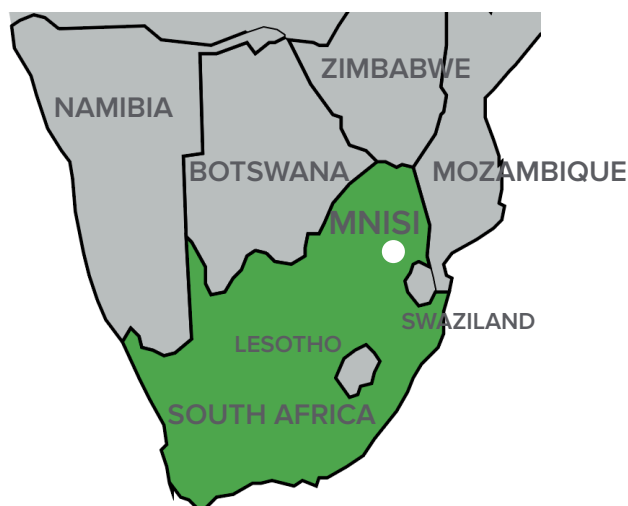
- Coordinates the Bush Clearing and Rangeland Restoration Initiative that ensures the removal of invasive alien species and the appropriate management of bush encroachment in communal rangelands

The University of Pretoria Mnisi Community Programme

- Facilitates the links between rangeland management and livestock disease as part of the market access incentive package

Meat Naturally Pty

- Facilitates benefit delivery through training, fodder provision and market access for communal farmers



RESULTS TO DATE

Since this project started in October 2017, conservation agreements have been negotiated with two farming groups representing 55 livestock owners in two villages. A visioning exercise has been conducted with the farmers regarding their intentions for good rangeland management, and when summer grazing season arrives, these cooperatives will begin to implement planned grazing in conjunction with herding provided by Eco-rangers.

MONITORING

Anticipated conservation outcomes include reduced erosion, improved infiltration, decreased bush encroachment and increased vegetation cover on 15,000 hectares of Kruger National Park's water catchment area. Progress will be measured by partners, including Eco-rangers and South African National Parks.

ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATORS

Erosion levels: No additional soil loss, compared to baseline gully sizes

Vegetation cover: Standing grass volume increased from baseline of 247 kilograms/hectare

Invasive species: Decreased number of reports

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Livestock income: Increased from 2017 baseline of R11.50/kg (\$US 0.87) 2017 to market price (R20-30/kg)

Market access: Percentage of farmers selling livestock minimum once per year increased from 5-15% to 30%

Community capacity: Improvement of the baseline "governance and management assessment" score of 41.52

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Through demonstrating that conservation agreement commitments are effectively and consistently carried out, stewards will have access to the services of a social enterprise, Meat Naturally Pty (MNP), both in the terms of market access as well as through shareholding. This will enable Conservation South Africa (CSA) to exit while still ensuring conservation priorities are met. MNP is currently piloting the mobile abattoir services with the end goal of supplying the meat to hotels in Kruger National Park. CSA is also currently working with locally owned enterprises to develop value chains for other value-added products such as cow hide furniture and décor.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Negotiations and pilot market access will be completed by September 2018, and the project envisions implementing conservation agreements across all tribal rangelands buffering the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area by 2026, following this timeline:



Contact

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