

## **Mjejane Game Reserve (MGR) and its agreement with the Kruger National Park (KNP)**

The 23 June 2009 marked a historic occasion in the development of Mjejane Game Reserve (MGR) and its agreement with the Kruger National Park (KNP). In its support for MGR, the KNP started re-stocking MGR by delivering giraffe, zebra and wildebeest which, on their own, delayed crossing the Crocodile River into MGR. Later, white rhino and more Zebra will follow and possible impala in order to create a sustainable tourism experience. These species will attract more predators onto MGR and so offer visitors a meaningful game experience, as up until now, the dominant large species on MGR were elephant and buffalo.

The MGR started with a land claim that awarded to the Mjejane Community, situated a few kilometers east of Hectorspruit, and could be hailed as a workable model for land reform processes in the country.

The 3825 hectare MGR eco-tourism development borders the KNP along 10 km of Crocodile River. After the land claim was settled, a solution on how best to utilise the land in line with the conservation objectives of the KNP was sought. This was in stark contrast to the initial intention of the community, being to utilise this property for housing purposes and some farming. However, the soil is relatively poor with limited water resources for agriculture, and little potential for cattle farming because of wildlife diseases such as Bovine TB, Foot and Mouth and Corridor because the property borders KNP.

When Safrican Leisure Properties (formerly Hanrob CC) became aware of the Land Claim Commissioner's intention to secure a suitable strategic partner to work with claimants on a sustainable development programme for their land, they submitted a business plan which was accepted.

The essence of Safrican's proposal was to use the restored land for conservation and tourism development, using a model that was developed and successfully implemented over many years by the company in other regions. The Mjejane land is still pristine and relatively unspoilt. Bearing in mind the KNP initiatives to increase conservation areas and create buffer zones around them, Safrican believed it was crucial that this land be used for the right kind of eco-tourism development which would benefit the community on a sustainable basis.

To this end, the Mjejane community agreed to place their housing development on the portion of their land on the southern side of the N4, and Safrican have been assisting them with this development for which they have secured financial support both from the province and the Nkomazi Local Municipal Council.

Safrican's business model for the eco-tourism development included a range of potential income earning facilities including whole ownership, fractional ownership, timeshare, a tented camp, small lodge and commercial hotel, with the development being phased and limited to specific low sensitivity development nodes, thus preserving around 3000 hectares of the land for conservation, game viewing and related activities.

This mix of products and the development process itself would provide immediate and sustainable employment for the community including building work, permanent staffing required for the whole MGR tourist facilities. In addition, the community would receive income from the sale of stands, timeshare and fractional lodges and Safrican will soon pay out the first substantial dividend to the Mjejane Trust.

MGR has officially now obtained government permission to construct a low-level bridge over the Crocodile River to link provide limited access into KNP. The KNP will be responsible for and jointly manage the conservation of Mjejane Game Reserve, including control of the entrance gate.

<http://estata.co.za/propertydevelopments/mjejane-game-reserve-kruger-park-mpumalanga.html>