

FORUMS

IDT FUNDINGS

Improved neighbour relations and community upliftment are paying handsome dividends in many border regions of NPB reserves, as the Board's new Neighbour Relations programme gathers momentum with the aid of the Independent Development Trust (IDT).

As a means of resolving past disputes and developing communications between the Kwa Jobe people and the Board in the Mkuzi area, the Kwa Jobe Conservation Committee was formed, and has continued to meet at regular intervals. This has already begun to bear fruit in terms of mutual understanding in the region.

Resulting from these meetings, two issues have emerged which have been the cause of contention and distress in the past:

- a sacred burial site, dating back to 1818 and of great importance to the Kwa Jobe people, is situated in the north eastern section of the reserve;
- people in the area have been in dire need of water supplies.

Induna Manzi, a member of the committee, proposed that if water could be procured for his people and transported to the region at a point away from the Mkuzi River, this would take the pressure off the opposite riverbank, which is heavily overgrazed and infested with alien plants. The riverine vegetation could then be fenced off and allowed to return to its natural state.



The "Phungalutho" toilet system, part of the Natal Parks Board Neighbour Relations Project in the Natal Drakensberg Park.

On behalf of the Kwa Jobe people, the Parks Board approached the IDT with a request for funds to transport the necessary water, to fence off and restore the area on the Northern river bank, and to develop the sacred site.

The IDT has agreed to make available R200 000 to facilitate these initiatives, and it hoped that this mutually beneficial project will be the forerunner of similar plans to assist all the other people who live on the borders of NPB reserves.

Western Natal has also made good progress with community upliftment projects through several forums established with neighbours.

Acting for the Donaldson Trust (a Johannesburg-based organisation), Paul Miles at Giants Castle achieved noteworthy results through the Mkhize forum: six local schools received the benefit of improved water supplies, fencing, toilets and garden projects worth R40 thousand. Many of these

improvements have been installed and are already operating successfully.

In the Southern Drakensberg, zone officer Simon Norton has been active in securing funds from the IDT for improved water supplies in four separate communities.

And at Weenen Conservator Greg Laws and Warden Ivor Mathias are working to set up water supplies with an IDT budget of R490 000 for the Thembahile development projects and the Mabaso and Hambrook communities. Road building is underway at Itala for the Bivane community, this project being steered by Conservator Johan Gerber with an IDT budget of R500 000.

These successes are testimony to the dedication and versatility of NPB staff, much goodwill among neighbouring communities, and the earnestness with which the Board approaches its social commitments.



The Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) also targeted by poachers, is high on the list of endangered species.

GAME RANGER'S NOTEBOOK

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On Sunday 25th October 1992, a radio report was received by Conservator Scheepers and Warden Cromhout from guards in the Udiza patrol area.

The Udiza guards had come across a white rhino cow and her calf stuck in the mud in the Mkuzi River opposite Mashesha Pan.

On arrival at the site with Warden Cromhout, he found the animals apparently dead. Both the adult rhino's horns had been hacked off. Her calf

was still alive but very weak. Its anterior horn had been removed, leaving a gaping hole with the sinus passage exposed.

It was clearly close to death, and was immediately spared any further agony.

This incident happened adjacent to a quite heavily populated area with a lot of agricultural activity along the river. It is one of region's most troubled zones, with daily reports of poaching.

The incident is still under investigation.

