



Wilderness Leadership School Covid-19

BIOLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAM

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3 ABOUT THE WILDERNESS LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

The Wilderness Leadership School was the first non profit organisation in Africa dedicated to providing a pure wilderness experience for people of all backgrounds, races and nationalities. Steeped in a rich environmental history.

The Wilderness Leadership School was founded in 1957 by the legendary Dr Ian Player who, together with his friend and mentor Magqubu Ntombela, recognised the necessity for people to connect with the environment. Long before ecology had become a vogue catch-word, the Wilderness Leadership School foresaw the urgent need for a large body of well-informed, conservation-oriented leaders, capable of

and dedicated to the defence of our planet.

The Wilderness Leadership School is the patron partner of the Wilderness Foundation Global (WFG). WFG an international alliance of action-oriented, like-minded organizations who understand that wilderness areas have local meaning and global significance, with direct importance to human well-being and inspiration.

Founding members are Wilderness Foundation Africa, Wilderness Foundation UK, and the WILD Foundation (USA), with the Wilderness Leadership School the patron partner.



WILDERNESS
FOUNDATION
GLOBAL

**CONSERVATION
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MORALLY BOUND TO
QUESTION THEIR
ACTIVITIES AND
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THINKING BEYOND
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TO FOCUS ON HOW
THEY CAN
CONTRIBUTE TO AN
EMERGING SOCIAL
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CRISIS.**



4 BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent multi-level lockdown grounded many professions and workers. Whilst nature conservation was considered an essential service throughout all levels of the South African lockdown process, activity was restricted to a very narrow range of focus areas. This affected the Wilderness Leadership School not only by causing a temporary cessation of its operations and influence but also created the economic pressure of having to cover the costs of staff and infrastructure without the operations driving the sourcing of income.

Conservation areas in particular are also feeling the pinch of losing tourism revenue and reallocation of limited finance. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, North West Parks and the Wilderness Leadership School are reliant on people wishing to travel to parks, for tourism and educational purposes respectively. In spite of national Covid 19 figures shifting in the right direction, local conditions are likely to

suppress the desire to travel for a period of time that is uncertain. Compounding this situation is the time lag that it takes between a person deciding to come and actually arriving with payment. In the best case scenario, recovery to pre-pandemic occupancy levels is a year or two away.

National allocation of economic resources has followed the country's trend of marginalising the environment except where it is glaringly associated with direct economic opportunity. Relief to small businesses has also been defined in such a way that makes it difficult for conservation NGOs to benefit.

Internationally, there is recognition that, firstly, threats to biodiversity are immediately significant and secondly, that globally, biodiversity loss and climate change each represent socio-economic threats that dwarf that of Covid-19.

Project overview



The foundation of this proposed project is for the Wilderness Leadership School to provide much needed, on the ground support to protected area field staff in terms of long range patrols in various Kwazulu-Natal and North West Province protected areas.

Protected areas in South Africa are under the dual stresses of lacking financial resources to cover operational expenses and, increasingly, personnel to adequately patrol reserves. While this is true of all protected areas, of particular concern are those reserves with the added security issues associated with rhino and other priority species under threat. There is a critical need for more people on the ground in our reserves. A resource which could be effectively provided by the Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers.

Over and above their capacity to educate and facilitate, the Trails Officers of the Wilderness Leadership School probably have the highest level of outdoor skills in the country. Their capacity to spend protracted periods of time camping in the outdoors without impacting the environment in any significant way is unparalleled. Their knowledge of safely and respectfully managing potentially dangerous game on foot, day and night, is also unparalleled. Their capacity to accurately identify and interpret all aspect of the African bush-veld is beyond

question. The temporary conversion from Trails Officers to Biological Monitors would be a seamless transition that could allow the Wilderness Leadership School to fill an essential conservation service.

The structure of this will will involve Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers making up small teams (between 3 and 5 members each) to conduct long-range monitoring patrols in reserves with key threatened species such as Black Rhino and African Wild Dogs.

The function would largely be focused on biological monitoring rather than law enforcement and providing conservation managers or designated section rangers with up to date information from the field and raising potential environmental threats to through to the correct channels.

The pilot phase of this project would see this initiative rolled out with four biological monitoring teams operating in three areas,

- Ithala Game Reserve,
- Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park
- Pilanesberg National Park

All of which are areas which the Wilderness Leadership School Trails officers are operationally familiar with.

The project and approach has already received broad, in-principle support from conservation managers.

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Project Benefits

Overall, the deployment of Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers as biological monitors in remote parts of various protected areas is focused on providing increased capacity to core conservation efforts with a broad base of operational benefits for protected areas including:

- In a typical scenario, existing field rangers have a split focus on biodiversity monitoring and law enforcement. Through the added capacity provided by the Wilderness Leadership School, field rangers' time would be freed up to prioritise law enforcement/anti poaching efforts.
- Through the deployment of Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers, we effectively increase eyes and ears on the ground to timeously report suspicious and possible illegal activity to the law enforcement and anti-poaching teams.
- The increased presence in our various Wilderness Areas, especially in an extended patrol context is a well known deterrent to poaching activity. Furthermore a typical anti-poaching patrol would move through an area fairly rapidly, whilst Wilderness Leadership School Trail Officers on patrol can spend extended periods in remote areas.
- Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officer Patrols will increase capacity for monitoring and geo-tagging any priority species, particularly African Wild Dog and Black Rhino. This would also extend to photographing (where possible) individual animals for identification and submission to scientific services, research projects and section rangers.
- Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers Patrol teams would also assist with the mapping of alien infestation outbreaks to inform for further planning and management by park authorities.
- Finally, a key benefit is the ability to keep highly skilled Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers who are unable to work due to the Covid-19 lockdowns employed whilst filling a vacuum of much needed field ranger capacity in high priority protected areas.

Project Outputs

In normal circumstances, a team of 10 field rangers working in a protected area would provide an average of 1450 work hours per month. This time is also typically concentrated in areas in the broad vicinity of field ranger outposts.

Through the deployment of Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers, we are able to provide an additional highly skilled 2340 man hours per month in significantly more remote parts of our protected areas.

This proposed deployment of Wilderness Leadership Schools Trails Officers would provide also section rangers with reporting of invaluable intelligence, including:

- Immediate reporting of suspicious or potentially illegal activity to field ranger teams via radio.

- Reporting of sightings of priority red-listed animal species.
- Submission of photographic records and GPS data which can be used to identify individual animals and inform ongoing research projects.

In addition, the costs per Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officer's patrol is estimated at €2302,89, which is a significantly lower expense than could be provided by public sector funded patrols and arguably a third of the cost of a similar exercise in EU based countries.

Effectively, the deployment of Wilderness Leadership School Trails Officers as biological monitors in protected areas is a highly cost effective and valuable direct contribution to the conservation of wildlife of global significance!



OVER 2300
ADDITIONAL MAN
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REMOTE AREAS



INCREASED FIELD
PRESENCE AND EARLY
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VULNERABLE AREAS



SIGNIFICANT
ADDITIONAL
WORKFORCE AT A
HIGHLY REDUCED
COMPARATIVE COST

Project budget



The proposed budget below is based on four biological monitoring teams of four people doing an average of two, five day day patrols per month.

ANNUAL COSTS MONITORING TEAM OVERHEADS

Cost Item	Monthly	Annual
Human Resources: Trails Officers ¹	€2 855,26	€34 263,16
Food ²	€631,58	€7 578,95
Transport ³	€421,05	€5 052,63
Equipment ⁴	€0,00	€0,00
Equipment consumables ⁵	€105,26	€1 263,16
Communications ⁶	€105,26	€1 263,16
	€4 118,42	€49 421,05

ANNUAL CORE MANAGEMENT OVERHEADS

Cost Item	Monthly	Annual
Insurance (SATIB) And Guides Risk Cover ⁷	€631,58	€7 578,95
Finance, admin, comms and auditing ⁸	€1 317,89	€15 814,74
	€1 949,47	€23 393,68

ANNUAL TOTAL COST BASED ON FOUR TEAMS

Cost Item	Annual
Team Expenses	€197 684,21
Management Overheads	€23 393,68
⁹Total Annual Cost	€221 077,89
All Inclusive Cost Per Patrol	€2 302,89

1. Based on guide's salaries and inclusive of lead guide / coordination position shared pro rata
2. Based on actual estimates from test patrols undertaken
3. Based on per km AA rates for 1x return trip between Durban, iMfolozi and Ithala. Inclusive of unexpected additional extra kilometres
4. Once of annual cost for patrols specific team equipment, including GPS and trail kits
5. Monthly estimates for equipment maintenance, first aid consumables etc...

6. General communications, data and cellular airtime for patrols at a rate of R250 per guide per patrol
7. Excludes general public liability cover, includes risk cover and insurance costs related to guides and emergency cover only
8. Based on 8% of total patrols budget
9. An exchange rate of ZAR19.00 per Euro has been used throughout.



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