

State of Conservation Report
for the
Maloti – Drakensberg Park
World Heritage Site
Lesotho and South Africa

Submitted
by the Governments of the Kingdom of Lesotho and Republic of South Africa

February 2015



PART I – IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY

Name of property: Maloti – Drakensberg Park 985 BIS

State Party and Province: Lesotho, Qacha's Nek District

State Party and Province: South Africa, KwaZulu- Natal Province

Criteria: (i)(iii)(vii) and (x)

PART II – STATE OF CONSERVATION

1. Introduction.

This report is the response of the State Parties of Lesotho and South Africa to Decision 37 COM 8B.18 of the World Heritage Committee that requested the two State Parties to work on various state of conservation issues in their respective countries and to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2015**, a report on the state of conservation of the property, including a report on the progress made in the implementation of the 37th Session's recommendations, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in 2015.

2. Requests to the State Party of Lesotho;

2.1. Conduct further research on rock art on the basis of the ARAL (Analysis of Rock Art in Lesotho) project findings, in Sehlabathebe National Park and its surroundings to add on the existing inventory.

The State Party has engaged the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits University) as a service provider to conduct research on rock art on the basis of the ARAL (Analysis of Rock Art in Lesotho). Wits University will commence with the work as soon as the contract is signed.

Officials from Sehlabathebe National Park have in the meantime commenced with preliminary identification and basic recording of sites following training received from the Amafa AkwaZulu Natali Heritage Authority of South Africa.

2.2. Include in this inventory the state of conservation of the documented rock art sites

The officials from Sehlabathebe National Park who are already working on site identification are also recording the state of conservation of the rock art sites. Wits University will conduct a more detailed assessment of the state of conservation of each individual site and generate the necessary reports. The report will also include recommendations for monitoring in order to assist the Sehlabathebe officials with monitoring activities.

2.3. Study the potential cultural contribution of landscape elements, such as rock pools, in Sehlabathebe as part of on-going research.

The State Party has appointed the National University of Lesotho to conduct a study on the potential cultural contribution of landscape elements. This study will encompass ethnographic research with emphasis on oral history and study of cultural traditions. The State Party views this as ongoing work but the report by the University of Lesotho is expected in October 2015

2.4. Designate on the basis of the revised inventory and the research, the most significant rock art sites as national historic sites through public gazetting,

The State Party is working on designating most significant rock art sites as national historic sites in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act of 2011. The designation will only be gazetted once the Wits University study is completed and all significant sites have been identified and recorded. It is expected that this process will be completed in December 2015.

2.5. Collaborate with the State Party of South Africa, to update the existing cultural heritage management plan to include risk preparedness and a disaster response plan,

The two State Parties have started working on updating the cultural heritage management plan. This will also be largely informed by the Wits University study. The State Parties are conscious of the fact that the world heritage property occasionally experiences fires and maybe vulnerable to other natural disasters. Risk preparedness and disaster response plans will therefore be built into the cultural heritage management plan. This will be aligned to the overall management plan for the property.

2.6. Further build capacity through the training of staff of the Sehlabathebe management base and the Department of Culture in the documentation and conservation of rock art, provide significantly enhanced qualified staff within Sehlabathebe National Park

Training of staff is ongoing. Officials from the Sehlabathebe management base have been trained by the Amafa AkwaZulu Natali Heritage Authority on identification and recording of rock art sites. Some of the officials have attended regional training courses organized by the African World Heritage Fund as well as the Business Skills Training which was held in Kenya.

Staff training has also been included in the Terms of Reference of the Wits University rock art research contract. As part of this contract, Wits University required to ensure skills transfer to officials from Sehlabathebe who will be working with the researchers from Wits University.

The State Party has significantly enhanced the cultural officers capacity at Sehlabathebe. This is evidenced by the appointment of a Park Manager, a Senior Range Ecologist and two Culture Officers. The two state Parties are collaborating in ensuring that the capacity of the appointed officers is enhanced through various programmes including exchange programmes with the Amafa AkwaZulu Natali and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife which is a Management Authority on the South African side.

2.7. Allocate a specific and adequate annual budget to allow for medium-term planning in conservation, inventorying and monitoring,

Sehlabathebe National Park is included in the Ministerial Budget Framework Paper and this has ensured that adequate funds are made available for programmes to be implemented. This is evidenced by the funds allocated for projects such as Rock Art research, Oral history research, construction of staff accommodation and appointment of professional staff as mentioned in 2.6 above.

2.8. Carefully consider any proposed development of wind farms in areas neighbouring the Sehlabathebe National Park and to ensure that such developments do not adversely impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the transboundary site in particular on populations of Bearded Vultures and Cape Vultures in the Lesotho Highlands and the surrounding escarpment of South Africa;

There are currently no proposals for wind farms in areas neighboring the Sehlabathebe National Park. The State Party will ensure that if such proposals were to arise in the future, the applications will be subjected to environmental impact assessments. Any major development projects around the world heritage property are also discussed by the two State Parties through the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area (MDTFCA) coordination structures.

3. Recommendations to the State Party of Lesotho

3.1. Give consideration to submitting an International Assistance request for strengthening of heritage management,

The State Party has submitted a request for International Assistance to the World Heritage Committee for an amount of USD 20, 736. The application was supported by the State Party of South Africa through a letter sent to the Committee. The funding has been approved by the World Heritage Committee. Another request has been submitted to the African World Heritage Fund for an amount for USD 21,000 for the establishment of the botanical garden, improved presentation and interpretation of rock art, and for building tour guiding capacity of community members as well as improving craft making skills for community members.

3.2. Ensure that oral history is included in the research priorities of the park and Maloti Drakensberg Transboundary Park in order to enhance interpretation of San rock art,

Oral history research has been included in the 5 year Action Plan (2012-2017) of the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation and Development Area. The oral history aspect of research has been included in the terms of reference of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) research project and would, on an ongoing basis, be included in all cultural heritage research.

3.3. Continuing a cautious approach towards conservation interventions on rock art sites and restrict such interventions to exceptional cases where rock art would otherwise become very fragile and vulnerable,

The State Party will not be implementing any immediate conservation interventions in any of the identified rock art sites. Decisions for intervening where necessary will only be taken after the completion of the state of conservation assessment which is being conducted as part of the rock art research. Decisions for conservation interventions will be guided by professional rock art experts and would be subject to approval by the Cultural Heritage Working Group of the MDTFCA which comprises cultural heritage regulatory authorities from the two State Parties.

3.4. Improving the presentation of cultural aspects and in particular the rock art sites within the Environmental Centre,

The Ministry will provide a budget for upgrading of Environmental Centre exhibitions in the 2015/2016 cycle. The improvement will be dependent on the outcome of the rock art research.

3.5. Continuing the involvement of the local communities in the buffer zone and assisting them in establishing small-scale visitor services to generate direct revenues for the community.

In February 2014, the State Party started identifying potential small business opportunities and so far 5 villages in the buffer zone have been engaged. The State Party is working with various stakeholders to ensure that appropriate feasibility assessments are done without raising unnecessary expectations for the affected communities.

4. Request to the two State Parties (Lesotho and South Africa).

4.1. Finalize revisions, amendments and enactment of relevant laws pertinent to the property, in particular to approve and enact the draft Nature Conservation Act 2005 in Lesotho,

The State Party of Lesotho is now in the process of drafting the Biodiversity Resources Management Bill. Although the State Party has previously indicated that it had a draft Nature Conservation Bill 2005 awaiting approval and enactment, there has been a realisation that the draft Bill was not comprehensive enough and a decision was taken to develop a more comprehensive bill named the Biodiversity Resources Management Bill. This was necessitated by the fact that the Nature Conservation Bill 2005 did not include matters related to Trans Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCA), access and benefit sharing, sustainable utilization of biodiversity resources, Bio-safety, bio-trade and domestication of other multi-lateral environmental agreements such as Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Consultations on the bill are ongoing. The finalization and enactment of this bill is a high priority for the State Party.

4.2. Update the current Sehlabathebe National Park and joint Sehlabathebe National Park/ uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park management and business plans which expire by 2013 and to ensure they provide for enhanced cooperation and joint management of both natural and cultural World Heritage values,

The Maloti- Drakensberg Park Joint Management Plan which incorporates the two world heritage site components (Sehlabathebe and uKhahlamba Drakensberg) has been updated to include the management of both the natural and cultural world heritage values. The Joint Management Plan is awaiting approval.

4.3. Formalize the buffer zones surrounding the property and continue their cooperative attempts towards providing a buffer zone to the south of Sehlabathebe located in the territory of South Africa,

The State Parties are working on the issue of buffering the world heritage site on the South African side. Areas to be used for buffering have already been identified and extensive consultations are taking place to get buy in from land owners and government and non- government stakeholders. The State Party of South Africa has also developed draft buffer zone regulations in order to give effect to the buffer once it has been finalised. The regulation development process is at an advanced stage and extensive consultations are ongoing.

4.4. Strengthen transnational collaboration to share technical capacity and ensure improved management capacity within Sehlabathebe National Park,

Over and above the training mentioned in 2.6 above the following collaboration projects have also been implemented:

- Joint fire management workshops
- Community-based Natural Resources Management workshops
- Bearded Vulture Task Force workshop
- Climate Change Adaptation Project
- Cross-border Wetland Rehabilitation Project

OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE

PARTY

Currently there are no conservation issues identified by the State Parties.

CONFORMING WITH PARAGRAPH 172 OF THE OPERATIONAL

GUIDELINES.

The Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal within the State Party of South Africa is currently busy with a feasibility study for a cable car near the world heritage property. This process will be subjected to full environmental studies before any authorizations.