

Media Release - 30 November 2000

Carnival with a cause at West Coast National Park

The West Coast National Park will be hosting a carnival on 8 and 9 December 2000 in order to raise funds for the management of the Park.

This year has been tough on the Park. Firstly, there were the fires in January which destroyed 18 400 hectares of strandveld fynbos and secondly, this was followed by a drought which had a serious impact on the wildlife.

Park management was compelled to drive in tons of supplementary feed for the game, at considerable expense, between May and July as the veld - without rain - could not support the animals. Game capture operations in September removed a large number of animals, which will enable the veld to support the remaining game through the dry season. The ideal however would have been to translocate the game into the greater part of the West Coast National Park. The game is currently restricted to the Postberg section of the Park, an area of approximately 2 400 hectares. The greater Part of the Park consists of an additional 24 000 hectares, which has a much higher carrying capacity. Unfortunately only twenty kilometers of perimeter fence has been completed. An additional twenty kilometers down to Yzerfontein needs to be erected before game can be translocated into this area. The West Coast National Park together with another eighteen National Parks across the country receives most of it's funding from the income made by the Kruger National Park. The floods earlier in the year caused an estimated R84-million worth of damage to infrastructure in the Kruger alone. The lack of income due to this disaster has meant that many projects, such as the completion of the West Coast National Park perimeter fence, have been put on hold.

State funding of National Parks has remained the same over the last decade and currently provides the SA National Parks with approximately 17% of its budget. The SA National Parks have therefore been compelled to create additional funding through tourism or sponsors. The Weskus Karnivaal is another initiative by the SANP to fund the management of the West Coast National Park and specifically to provide the necessary funds to complete the perimeter fence. The reintroduction of endemic species to the Park will have major biodiversity benefits for the West Coast. It will also promote tourism on the West Coast with economic benefits for the Park and the local community. Initial species, which have been identified for reintroduction include gemsbok, eland, red hartebeest, mountain zebra, bontebok and grey rhebok.

The Weskus Karnivaal will include the following events in the West Coast National Park:

- 42 km marathon (officially recognized as a qualifier for Two Oceans and Comrades)
- 100 km cycle tour
- 14 km sea kyak race
- dragon boat racing
- kite surf event
- flea market/ sea food restaurant/ beer garden

The Weskus Karnivaal is being managed and run by Round Table Saldanha 226, SA2000 sports events organizer, Boland Marathon club, Seekoeivlei dragon boat club and Multi sport. Entry forms and additional information on the event can be downloaded from the website www.sa2000.co.za or contact SA2000 on fax (011) 485-4239 or e-mail: <mailto:gfraser@mweb.co.za>

The Weskus Karnivaal will become an annual event with great potential to become a significant income generator for the management of the West Coast National Park. It will also provide many positive spinoffs for the local

community. Positive spinoffs that show how local communities can, and do, benefit from National Parks in a tangible way which is both non-consumptive and sustainable.

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