

## MEDIA RELEASE - 1 November 2001

### ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE CENTRE OPENS IN NAMAQUALAND

An Environmental Resource Centre that includes an education facility was officially opened today in the Skilpad section of the Namaqua National Park near Kamieskroon in Namaqualand.

The facility will be able to accommodate groups of up to 30 people with the focus on developing an environmental ethic as well as promoting the sustainable utilization and conservation of Southern Africa's arid areas. Funding for the project was secured through a grant to South African National Parks from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) of the World Bank.

The Namaqua National Park is currently 55 000 hectares in size and the Skilpad section is internationally renowned for its spectacular displays of annual flowers in spring. This developing Park represents significant progress in the conservation of the Succulent

Karoo Biome. Challenges that need to be addressed regionally include the loss of habitat and biodiversity as a result of overgrazing, mining and the illegal trade in plants and animals, specifically succulents and reptiles.

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