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<< back >>

SANParks to Increase Fees - Innovative and cost-effective new conservation fee structure

South African National Parks (SANParks) is to simultaneously introduce a new daily conservation fee for all its parks and launch a unique loyalty card system in a bid to meet critical conservation objectives and encourage increased visits to parks.

Speaking in Johannesburg today, SANParks' CEO, Mavuso Msimang, said that the new rates will be effective from 2nd June 2003. Clients who have existing reservations, made prior to today's announcement and who have paid in full by 15th May 2003, will not be subject to the new fee.

Visitors will now pay a standard daily conservation fee, which will range in price from R25.00 to R120.00 depending on the park visited.

In a measure calculated to greatly alleviate the impact of the new daily conservation fee, SANParks is introducing the **Wild** loyalty card. This will be available to South African nationals and residents as well as nationals from the South African Development Community (SADC). A daily **Wild** card entitles SA residents to special introductory daily rates varying from R15.00 to R30.00 and from R25.00 to R60.00 for SADC nationals, depending on the park visited.

The **Wild** card developed through a partnership with Infinity, one of South Africa's leading loyalty and smart card management companies, offers the purchaser heavily discounted rates and special offers. SANParks is confident this will encourage South Africans to visit the parks more frequently.

"We must recognise and cater for our loyal clients and reward them for their continued support." Msimang said.

The SANParks **Wild** card will also include special annual membership packages for South Africa-based individuals, couples and families.

A card for individuals, which gives unlimited access to one national park for a year, will cost only R95.00. For an extra R25.00 i.e. R120.00 an individual may gain unlimited access to all national parks for a full year.

Similarly, a **Wild** card for couples (two adults) will cost R175.00 and R225.00, respectively, and a family **Wild** card (two adults and their dependent school-going children) will cost R195.00 and R245.00 respectively.

*"The extension of the **Wild** card to SADC nationals, offering them similar benefits, is a gesture of good neighbourliness,"* added Msimang. SADC **Wild** membership will be valid for 6 months.

When presenting their **Wild** card at more than 1200 Infinity partners countrywide, members will earn cash back rewards and other benefits for holidays, accommodation, tours, attractions, airlines, car hire, shopping, leisure and entertainment.

Msimang said, *"Our national parks are part of our national heritage, our pride and joy, and need to be treasured and protected. The additional revenue, estimated at R60 million annually, will be ploughed back into conservation projects that are currently grossly under-funded. We do not believe that this under-funding should necessarily be financed by taxpayers who may not be users of national parks"*

Msimang indicated that SANParks will, in collaboration with SA Tourism, aggressively market our national parks as desirable tourist destinations. *"While every effort will be made to retain the current base of our loyal visitors, we will focus especially on bringing into our national parks those previously excluded by past discriminatory laws and practices."*

SANParks has already embarked on a programme aimed at increasing the awareness of protected areas and their importance to the population at large.

"A little known fact is that the number and size of our national parks has been increasing at an unprecedented rate since 1994." Msimang noted. "We need to continue this expansion of South Africa's protected areas from the current 6% of the country's territory closer to the internationally recommended benchmark of 10%."

****See accompanying fact sheet for details***

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