

## 2. POLICY CONTEXT: SANPARKS' MANDATE AND VALUES

Together, national legislation and SANParks' mandate, corporate and conservation values form the overall policy context within which protected area management must take place. This context sets the boundaries of the management planning process and content.

According to the Public Finance Management Act (No. 1 of 1999 as amended by Act 29 of 1999), SANParks is a Schedule 3(a) "public entity" that functions under the ambit of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (No. 57 of 2003). The core mandate of SANParks is the conservation of South Africa's biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets, through its system of national parks. SANParks also promotes and manages nature-based tourism and delivers both conservation management and tourism services through a people-centred approach.

The organisation's operations are guided by its vision statement and mission statement:

- **Vision:** "National Parks will be the pride and joy of all South Africans."
- **Mission:** "To acquire and manage a system of national parks that represents the indigenous wildlife, vegetation, landscapes and associated cultural assets of South Africa, for the joy and benefit of the nation."
- **Transformation mission:** "To ensure effective transformation both within SANParks and the broader society and economy, through the implementation of broad-based Black Economic Empowerment in support of the Constitution of South Africa."

SANParks' mandate is therefore multi-objective (and these objectives may sometimes be in conflict) but it clearly prioritises 'biodiversity custodianship' as the primary purpose. The requirements of biodiversity conservation may thus not be put at risk through the activities of other, secondary, objectives. A comprehensive understanding of the concept of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation is thus crucial to effectively planning and prioritising protected area management.

### 2.1 Biodiversity and biodiversity conservation

Biodiversity is a complex concept that is often misunderstood and thus potentially misused or abused. Biodiversity is *not* simply the number of species in a particular area as it also incorporates habitat.

SANParks uses the now widely accepted definition of biodiversity first published by Reid Noss (1990). Biodiversity refers to the variety of life and its processes: this encompasses compositional (what is there), structural (how it is distributed in space and time) and functional (what it does) elements of ecosystems, each being manifest at multiple levels of interconnected organisation ranging from genes to species, communities and ecosystems and landscapes.

Similarly, the Biodiversity Act defines biological diversity or biodiversity as "the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part and also includes diversity within species, between species, and of ecosystems."

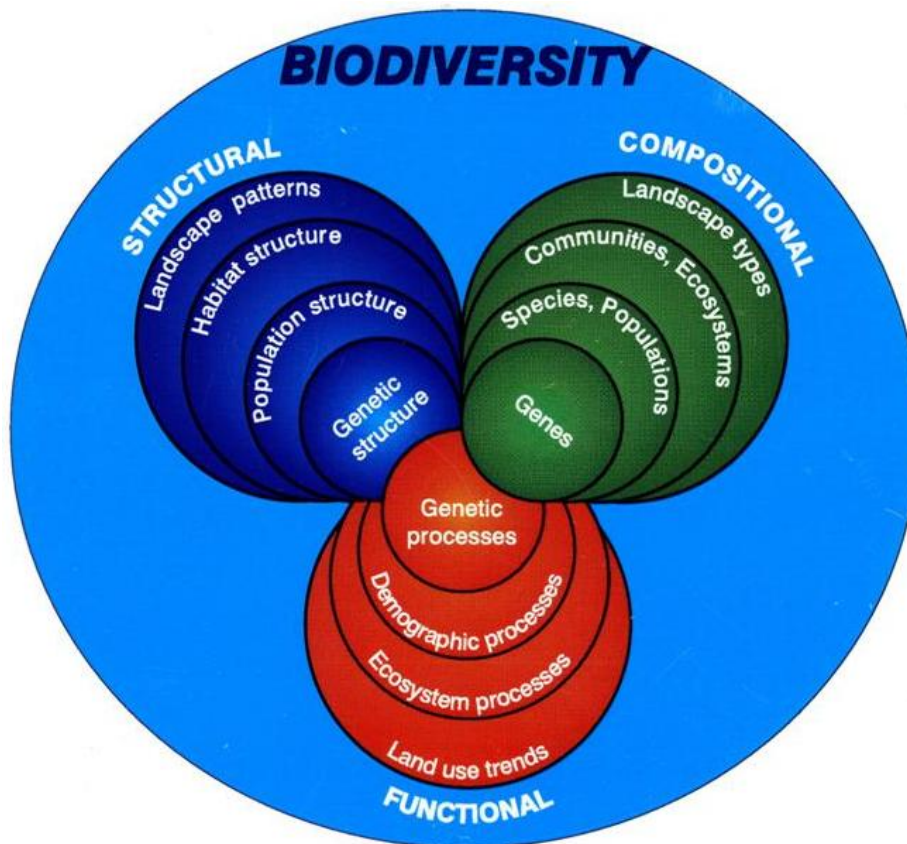
For example, SANParks is involved in countering threats to:

- Compositional biodiversity: Controlling alien plants which invade national parks and decrease the species richness of invaded areas.
- Structural biodiversity: In KNP the number of trees of various height classes is monitored to detect long-term changes over time.

- Functional biodiversity: Sedimentation of rivers in KNP reduces the diversity of habitats for aquatic organisms and riparian tree species.

And at the level of:

- Genes: Elephants from Kruger have been introduced to Addo Elephant National Park to increase the genetic diversity of the Addo elephant population.
- Species: Species that are known to have occurred in an area but are now absent are reintroduced, e.g. the reintroduction of Black Rhino to Karoo National Park.
- Landscapes: The conservation status of vegetation types in South Africa was used to delineate the low and high elephant impact zones of the Kruger National Park.



**Figure 2.1: Noss components of biodiversity**

## 2.2 SANParks biodiversity conservation values

Conserving biodiversity in its fullest sense is thus a complex endeavour, and provides the focus for an extensive body of local and international theory and research. Approaches to conserving biodiversity and managing and using ecosystems are informed not only by science, but by societal and organisational values, ethics, perceptions and preferences for the management of risk. Conservation management often involves making trade-offs between conflicting objectives under a variety of operational constraints.

SANParks' approach to fulfilling its mandate for biodiversity custodianship is guided by a set of 'conservation values'. These constitute deeply held beliefs which *guide the formation of principles for decision-making and action*.

As an underlying premise, it was recognised that:

- SANParks, as custodian, should take the lead in formulating values to be upheld in national parks.
- The values formulated by SANParks are viewed as proposals that should be tested against societal values. They are expected to evolve over time.

It is recognized that values can to an extent be separated from principles. Thus important principles that follow from the values are identified below.

The following value statements, and the principles derived from these, define the decision space for all SANParks activities that involve, or influence, biodiversity custodianship.

The conservation values commit us to:

- Respect the complexity, as well as the richness and diversity of the socio-ecological systems making up each national park and the wider landscape and context. Respect the interdependency of the fundamental drivers of landscape diversity, the associated biotic and landscape diversity, and the aesthetic, cultural, educational and spiritual attributes<sup>[1]</sup>. Leverage all these for creative and useful learning.
- Strive to maintain natural processes in ecosystems, along with the uniqueness, authenticity and worth of cultural heritage, so that these systems and their elements can be resilient and hence persist.
- Manage with humility the systems under our custodianship, recognising and influencing the wider socio-ecological context in which we are embedded.
- Strive to maintain a healthy flow of ecosystem and cultural goods and services (specifically preserving cultural artefacts), and to make these available, also through access to national parks, thereby promoting enjoyment, appreciation and other benefits for people.
- When necessary, intervene in a responsible and sustainable manner, complementing natural processes as far as possible, using only the level of interference needed to achieve our mandate.
- Do all the above in such a way as to preserve all options for future generations, while also recognizing that systems change over time.
- Finally, acknowledge that conversion of some natural and cultural capital has to take place for the purpose of sustaining our mandate, but that this should never erode the core values above.

Overall principles, as ways of thinking:

- Biodiversity forms an important basis of the ecosystem services that sustain the benefits that humans derive from conservation.
- The Web of Life<sup>[2]</sup> is seen as a fundamental notion, evoked in all thought processes.
- People are seen as part of ecosystems, though the ways in which they interact with ecosystems may vary widely in different parks and circumstances.
- Thoughtful experimentation is seen as essential, to promote learning.
- Multiple ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge are acknowledged, appreciated and integrated.
- We aim to interpret the meaning of cultural, biodiversity and landscape assets through careful documented recognition of their significance, including their tangible and intangible value, and full natural and cultural context, by fostering productive

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<sup>[1]</sup> **Biodiversity** (explained as biotic and landscape diversity above) includes structure, function and composition of biotic and all underlying abiotic elements. **Cultural Heritage** includes moveable, immovable, tangible and intangible assets, even living arts.

<sup>[2]</sup> The term **Web of Life** is used in the sense given to it in Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that "Biodiversity.....forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we so fully depend."

involvement of all stakeholders and associated communities in the development and implementation of interpretative values.

- We measure our performance in all that we are mandated to do.

#### Principles underlying social and regional linkages:

- We are responsive to the impact of other value systems on biodiversity such as cultural and tourism values. In this context we use the acronym V-STEEP (Values – Social, Technological Ecological, Economic, and Political) to encompass the range of value systems that together inform an acceptable vision of the future.
- We are concerned, and responsible, for the implications of our conservation management decisions/actions, within and without a park/SANParks, for other (V-STEEP) systems at local, regional and global levels.
- Co-operative governance is seen as a central guiding principle, and collaborative methodologies are thus seen as fundamental.
- We manage in a bio-regional context to promote connectivity across all landscape elements.
- The acquisition and restoration of land are guided by the values and principles set out in this Policy Framework.
- We strive for continuous, and co-operative, improvement of public perception of our rationale for conservation practice and beneficiation of biodiversity/ecosystem services.
- Our understanding and management must reflect the social imperatives (e.g. transformation, equity, efficiency, empowerment, growth) of an emerging African democracy.
- Whenever feasible and justifiable, we strive to implement the option which best serves local community needs.

#### Principles of biodiversity planning and implementation:

- We aim at the persistent achievement of biodiversity representivity and complementarity to promote resilience and ensure ecosystem integrity.
- We treat all biodiversity elements (all species, ecosystems, processes, structural components, etc.) with equity.
- We ensure representivity while accounting for uniqueness.
- Where human-induced influences warrant, interference, even severe interference, is acceptable for achieving our biodiversity custodianship mandate.
- *A laissez-faire* approach may be used but it will be a conscious and informed choice.

#### Principle of integration:

- We strive to maintain a balance between the management of biodiversity and cultural heritage.

In addition, SANParks is committed to adhere to the internationally accepted five principles of good governance, identified by the V<sup>th</sup> World Parks Congress (Graham *et al.*, 2003).

- Legitimacy and voice: participation and consensus orientation.
- Direction: strategic vision; including human development and historical, cultural and social complexities.
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- Performance: responsiveness of institutions and processes to stakeholders, effectiveness and efficiency.
- Accountability: accountability to the public and to institutional stakeholders, transparency.
- Fairness: equity, rule of law.

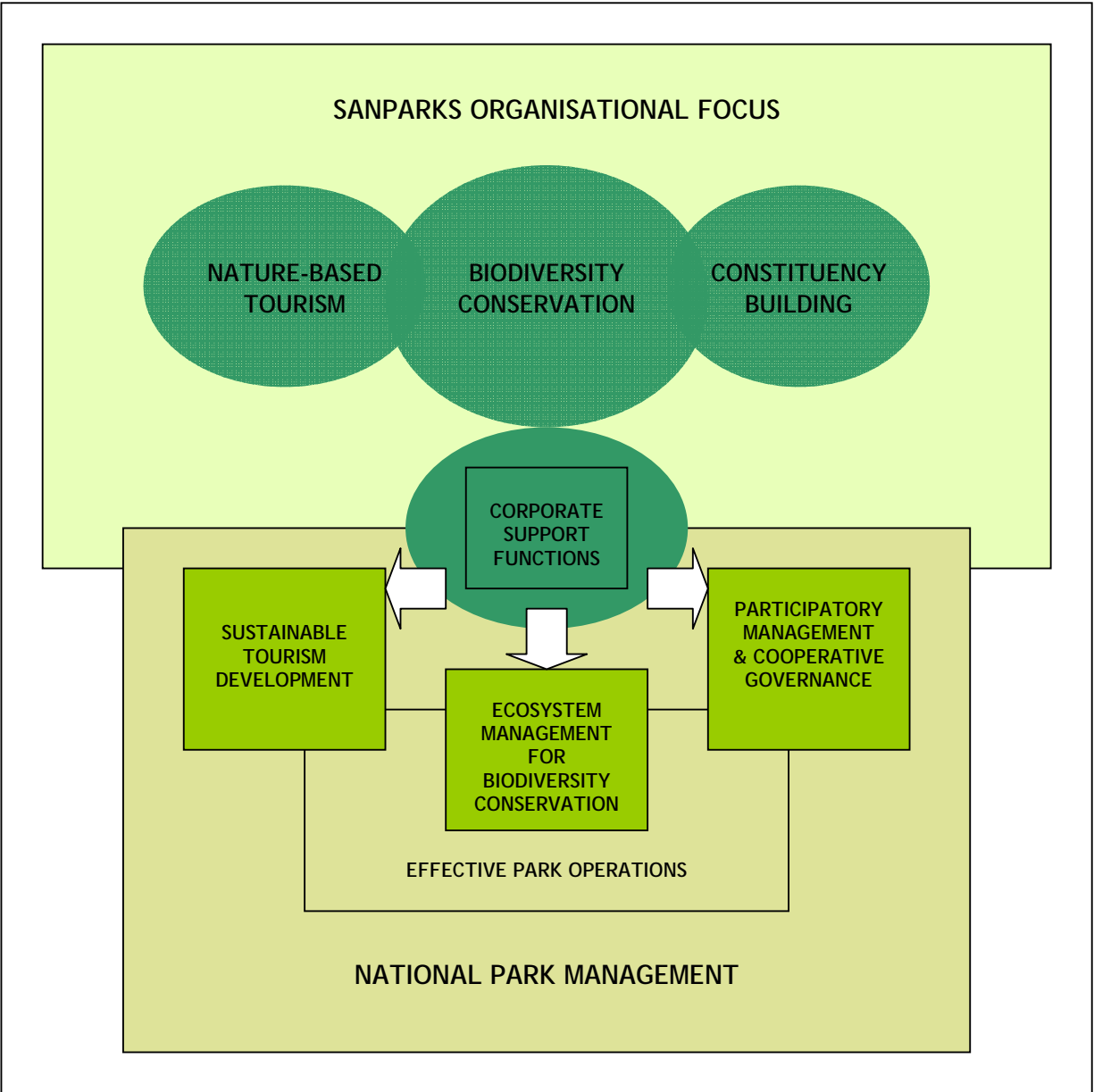
### 2.3 SANParks' organisational structure and focus

At the broadest institutional level, SANParks aims to make a specific contribution to the conservation of national biodiversity and heritage assets, and to contribute positively to the country's Gross Domestic Product. SANParks' business operations are founded on three pillars:

- **Biodiversity conservation:**  
The primary mandate of SANParks is the conservation of South Africa's biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets through a system of national parks.
- **Nature-based tourism:**  
The organisation has a significant role in the promotion of South Africa's nature-based tourism, or ecotourism business, targeted at both international and domestic tourism markets. The eco-tourism pillar of the business architecture provides for the organisation's self-generated revenues from commercial operations that is necessary to supplement government seed funding of conservation management. A significant element of the ecotourism pillar is the Commercialisation Strategy (which through the implementation of Public Private Partnerships) has as its objective reducing the cost of delivery, improving service levels by focusing on core business and leveraging private capital and expertise as well as the objective of expansion of tourism products and the generation of additional revenue for the funding of conservation and constituency building.
- **Constituency building towards a people-centred conservation and tourism mandate:**  
SANParks is required to build constituencies at international, national and local levels, in support of the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of South Africa. It has to ensure that a broad base of South Africans participate and get involved in biodiversity initiatives, and further that all its operations have a synergistic existence with neighbouring or surrounding communities for their socio-economic benefit.

In addition to the three core pillars of Conservation, Tourism and Constituency building, SANParks needs to deliver the generic **corporate support functions** of Finance, Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Corporate Support Services (including Information and Communications Technology as well as GIS), Environmental Management and Legal Services.

Finally, the **operational component** of SANParks business is delivered through the maintenance and management of individual national parks.



**Figure 2.2: SANParks institutional framework**

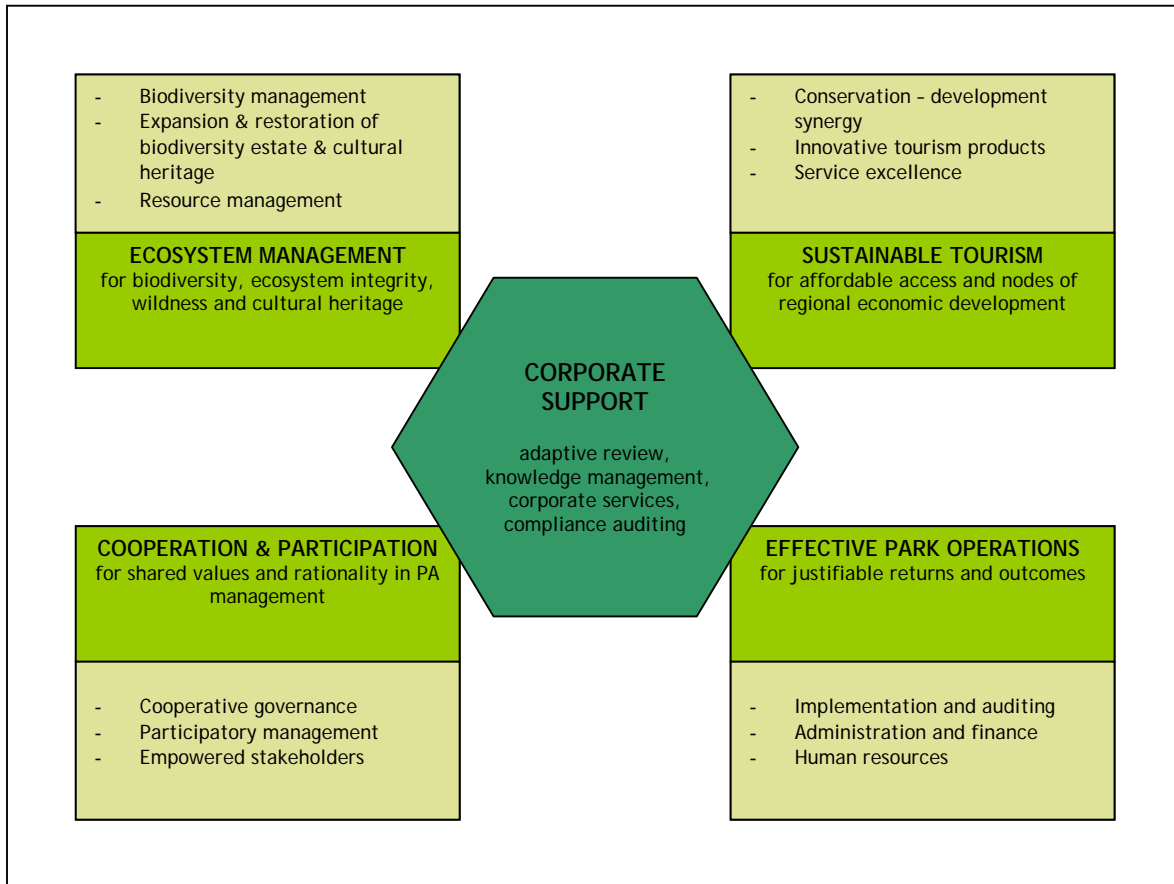
The interface between corporate and protected area activities is depicted in Figure 2.2. Corporate foci (top half of diagram) give priorities to protected area management and corporate activities provide support to operational activities of the protected area managers (bottom half of diagram). Each park has to operationalise the institutional focus through developing sustainable tourism, managing ecosystems to conserve biodiversity, and engaging stakeholders, both inside and outside government, in planning and management. The details of these core components of protected area management are discussed in the next section.

The SANParks' Value Proposition has been translated into the key Balanced Score Card strategic objectives. These strategic objectives are categorised into the four focus areas of the BSC, namely:

- Financial
- Customers and stakeholders
- Internal processes
- Learning and growth

## 2.4 Core components of Protected Area management

Five sets of management activities, or core operational components, can be delineated for protected area managers (Figure 2.3). Each of these components requires a clear set of objectives and will form a broad performance area against which national park management will be reviewed. This compartmentalising of activities and objectives is intended to help managers better focus their work and performance reporting.



**Figure 2.3: Core components of protected area management**

The five sets of activities are:

- Ecosystem management aimed at conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- Sustainable Tourism in synergy with conservation and socio-economic development.
- Building co-operation with stakeholders through cooperative governance and participatory management.
- Managing day to day operations effectively and within budget.
- Providing, or using, support services to ensure accountable and cost effective management that meets corporate values, principles and vision.

These components and activities are interdependent. Ecosystem management must take place in a co-operative manner that includes, and empowers all stakeholders. At the same time

biodiversity provides the basis for tourism that must be sustainable within those biodiversity constraints.

The content of the boxes in Figure 2.3 is not comprehensive or prescriptive, and only gives a general list of the applicable management activities and tools. Management plans and activities must be customised to meet the different emphases in individual national parks.

## Conservation activities

The fundamental purpose of a national park is to conserve certain national public assets. These can be described as biodiversity, the integrity of the protected ecosystems, a defined character of wildness and any associated cultural resources and artefacts. There are three sets of conservation activities:

### The direct management for specific biodiversity outcomes:

There must be clear statements of the state and nature of biodiversity that management is aiming to achieve in a national park and how these will be achieved. The SANParks biodiversity values must guide management decision making. All other activities in, and objectives for, a national park will have to be traded off against these values and objectives.

### Expanding and, where necessary, restoring the biodiversity estate and cultural resources:

There is a national drive to increase the area under formal conservation protection. Each organisation with a mandate to manage protected areas has a strategy to increase the area conserved and to restore degraded systems to meet the biodiversity objectives. Cultural heritage associated with that estate will also be restored.

### Management of natural resources within the national park:

A national park is a storage house of ecosystem goods and services, and cultural resources. These may be sustainably utilised as long as this use does not compromise the biodiversity mandate for that national park. A policy and strategy for this use must be developed at the park level according to the corporate values. The policy must consider *inter alia* issues of game capture, translocation and sales, culling, alien biota control, and management of cultural resources associated with the biodiversity estate.

## Sustainable tourism

Every protected area is required to develop policy and manage for sustainable tourism which, in turn, needs to promote affordable access to citizens, contribute to regional and national economic development and be in synergy with biodiversity conservation objectives. Important tools for achieving this synergy include Conservation Development Frameworks (CDF) and a host of tools used in monitoring the compliance of development with organisational, national and international environmental standards (e.g. IEM procedures/systems, ISO protocols).

Tourism resource uses in protected areas are both consumptive and non-consumptive. They consist of a spectrum from natural to highly developed tourism landscapes. Within the continuum of tourist uses there exist multiple, overlapping and potentially conflicting, uses and user groups.

## Building co-operation

The South African Constitution and various Acts of Parliament passed since 1994 emphasise the need to democratise decision making and the management of common property resources such as protected areas. Where appropriate, society must be able to participate in decision making and management. These requirements go beyond merely providing the public with an opportunity to comment on plans and activities already developed by a management authority. Management must therefore move toward a more participatory approach and not simply rely on consultation with interested and affected parties.

In addition, the Constitution, Biodiversity and Protected Areas Acts require organs of state to practice “cooperative governance” in their dealings with each other. In the case of protected areas management, relevant interagency interactions include national, provincial and local government and their development planning processes.

## Effective park operations

Meeting conservation, co-operation and tourism objectives requires a great many logistical, administrative and human resource management skills. Overall management has to apply these skills to achieve biodiversity outcomes whilst also achieving justifiable economic and social returns from the operation of the national park.

## Integrative support services

Management of national parks will invariably be supported by various corporate level policies and services. Among these would be a knowledge management system that generates, synthesises and disseminates information to improve decision making. Human resource management, financial, marketing, review and auditing services all contribute to effective management.

## 2.5 Legislative requirements for the contents of Protected Area Management Plans

In addition to requiring that SANParks produces management plans for all national parks in consultation with stakeholders, the Protected Areas Act (Section 41 (1) to (3)) provides more specific requirements for the contents and process of management planning.

Management plans must contain:

- The terms and conditions of any applicable plans for biodiversity management within the bioregional context.
- A coordinated policy framework.
- Planning measures, controls and performance criteria.
- An implementation programme for the plan, with costing.
- Procedures for public participation.
- Where appropriate, the implementation of community-based natural resource management.
- Zoning plan indicating the conservation objectives of each area and what activities may take place there.

Management plans may also contain:

- Development of economic opportunities within and adjacent to the park in terms of the Integrated Development Plan framework.
- Development of local management capacity and knowledge exchange.
- Financial and other support to ensure effective administration and implementation of a co-management agreement.

Preparation of park management plans is also governed by related legislation such as the Biodiversity Act, national policy, and international conventions that have been ratified by the South African government.

There are also biodiversity conservation planning processes at the national and regional level that take place outside of protected area management, under the auspices of other government agencies such as SANBI and DEAT. South Africa's current biodiversity planning context outside of park management is based on explicit spatial targets and systematic conservation planning. There are well-articulated national conservation targets within the national spatial biodiversity assessment (NSBA) and the national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP). A Protected Areas Expansion Strategy is currently being developed by SANBI and SANParks. SANParks is required to incorporate these national conservation objectives into its management planning process, as well as report against these national objectives.