



THE MOUNTAIN RANGE REHABILITATION & ROCK ART PROTECTION PROJECT (MRRRP)

WHAT WAS THE MRRRP?

This project focused on rehabilitating the fragile catchment areas of the Mnweni and Amazizi valleys, which border the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg World Heritage Site, between Cathedral Peak and Royal Natal National Park.

It worked to conserve water sources, remove alien weeds, prevent soil erosion and monitor San rock art sites in the traditional authority areas of the Drakensberg, while also creating community tourism facilities to bring sustainable income to the area.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Lack of water, soil degradation and desertification are among South Africa's most critical environmental issues, intricately linked to food

security, poverty, urbanization, climate change, and biodiversity. South Africa has the highest per capita soil loss in the world, and loses an estimated 400 million tons of soil per year.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the catchment areas of the Drakensberg are severely affected by soil erosion, where poor agricultural practices and overgrazing in particular have resulted in massive losses of topsoil, the creation of huge dongas (gullies) and the loss of income-earning potential for the local people. In addition, fast-spreading alien plants such as Black Wattle are also reducing the water table and valuable grazing lands, contributing to wildfires and impacting on the indigenous grasslands and vegetation.



WHAT WAS THE PROJECT IMPACT?

- Approximately **111 dongas were mapped and rehabilitated** in both AmaNcwane and Amazizi Traditional Authorities, using manual rehabilitation methods such as stone walling & stone packing, the digging of swales and planting of indigenous vegetation. The donga rehabilitation employed 79 persons from eight local community and environmental groups, the majority being women.
- **Invasive alien plant control** was conducted to remove American Bramble, Wattle species and Silver Poplar; this provided training and employment to 69 persons.
- Two **local community craft centres** (Mnweni Cultural & Hiking Centre and Thandanani Craft Centre) **were refurbished and upgraded**. There were also some improvements made to the Okhombe Buhlebemvelo Centre, managed by a Tourism Task Group.
- **Fire prevention** was conducted, with 83 persons trained and employed to burn fire-breaks and fight fires.



- **Environmental Monitoring Patrols** were conducted on horseback to monitor activities such as wetland and forest conservation, woodlot and fire management, invasive plant control and donga rehabilitation. They also helped to deter stock theft.
- **Wilderness Zoning:** The MRRRP team added a further four areas into the proposed community wilderness area to enable the completion of a community wilderness buffer between Royal Natal, in the northern section of the uKhahlamba World Heritage Site, and Cathedral Peak in the South.
- 20 **local community rock art monitors** were employed to monitor rock art sites and new monitors were trained and accredited by Amafa aKwaZulu Natali.
- A **Cultural and Rock art Appreciation Programme** was implemented by community monitors in 15 local schools.

WHO FUNDED THE PROJECT?

The three year project was funded by the National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF), which is now known as the National Lotteries Commission.

Visit the National Lotteries [website](#) to find out about other projects supported by the NLC.