

Community Perceptions towards Nature Conservation in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

Authors : Daniel Angwenyi

Abstract : Relationships between protected area managers and adjacent communities, as well as communities' attitudes, views and perceptions of these areas, are critical for the success of conservation efforts. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for protected area managers and administrators understand how local communities view these areas and their management, so that they can build sustainable working relationships. This paper is based on a survey of 375 semi-structured questionnaires administered to household heads, living at distances ranging from the edge of the reserves to 50 km away from the reserve boundary across Great Fish River, Mkambati, Hluleka, and Tsolwana in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. The paper provides a longitudinal assessment of households' knowledge on the role of reserves and how the reserves. In addition to households' knowledge, the paper also provides an assessment of their attitudes towards the location and management, as well as views on the best way to manage the reserves. For 79% of community members reserves are important as they were seen to conserve biodiversity and valuable ecological systems necessary for sustaining life. Most (75%) respondents indicated that closely located reserves gave them opportunities to learn about nature conservation and to subsidize their incomes through tourism ventures. However, 58% had a problem with reserves' staff, due to restrictions on resource use, which negatively impacted their livelihoods. Over half (51%) of the households were of the view that sustainable conservation can only be achieved through an integrated approach, where local communities' and conservation needs are given equal weighting. Thus, it is concluded that reserve management should look at communities as active partners in the running of protected areas if sustainable conservation objectives are to be realised.

Keywords : nature conservation, conservation knowledge, local communities, views, protected areas

Conference Title : ICESM 2020 : International Conference on Environmental Studies and Management

Conference Location : Boston, United States

Conference Dates : April 23-24, 2020