



DEA FUNDED “YES” STUDENTS GRADUATE AT THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE

July 2014 marked not only the end of a year of experiential learning for the 86 Department of Environmental Affairs' (DEA) Youth Environmental Service (YES) students, but also the beginning of a new chapter for them as they will now need to apply their skills in their prospective work environments.

These students were the first graduates of a three year DEA funded programme. For the past 12 months they have been trained by the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) and placed with Local Municipalities, the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism (DEDET) – now DARDLA - and state reserves (host institutions) in Thaba Chweu, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga and Limpopo, where they have assisted the institutions in carrying out core functions. This project comprises three skills programmes namely: environmental monitors, environmental awareness and waste management and recycling training. The students were involved in a range of activities from waste collection and separation to monitoring of fauna and flora, conservation guardianship, collecting water and animal samples, combating problem plants to educating various schools and communities about environmental issues. All facilitated through collaboration with the key stakeholders.

The graduation ceremony held at the SAWC, was led by programme director Ruben De Kock who welcomed the guests, and followed by the project coordinator, Sboniso Phakathi, who gave a brief overview of the project. Themba Lubisi of Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration (DARDLA) spoke on behalf of the mentors and host institutions and brought reality to the challenges and highlights experienced by them as mentors.

He said that the project will continue growing from strength to strength and that they as a department would be there to support where possible. He wished the learners well as they set off into the world of work.

Hunadi Masha, Ruel Dibakoane and Amos Skhosana spoke on the behalf of their fellow students highlighting 'the power of education in uplifting the youth' and 'how much they had grown together as friends and developed as people'. They went on to thank the SAWC, DEA, the municipalities, LEDET, MTPA, and DARDLA for their efforts in supporting their development.

The key note address was delivered by Mr Mokotedi Thaga, the Director of Programme Planning & Implementation Support in the DEA, who gave an in-depth view of where the YES project fits into the Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programme (EPIP) and highlighted governments commitment to youth development through interventions such as the YES project. The formalities ended with the students receiving their certificates in the various skills programmes.

Ends (see pics and captions below)

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Mr Mokotedi Thaga, the Director of Programme Planning & Implementation Support in the DEA is pictured with one of the proud Youth Environmental Services graduates.



Amos Skhosana, students who behalf of the Environmental graduates.



one of the spoke on Youth Services