



MEDIA RELEASE

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JOBS FUND PROJECT MAKES HISTORY WITH SIMULTANEOUS GRADUATION OF 119 FIELD RANGERS

The Southern African Wildlife College's recent Field Ranger graduation ceremony was remarkable for two reasons; it was the biggest in South African history with 119 National Certificates in Nature Conservation: Resource Guardianship being awarded, with half the recipients being female.

The ceremony marked the culmination of a 12-month intensive training programme which was part of a large-scale two-year project by the National Treasury's Job Fund aimed at bringing about significant change whilst impacting the creation of alternative livelihoods, poverty reduction and socio economic development,

The project objectives were two- fold; to train 257 unemployed people from historically disadvantaged communities as field rangers and to create employment opportunities within the conservation sector to help address the skills shortage largely created by the rhino poaching crisis. Over the course of the two-year initiative 257 jobs were created with the support of five employer organisations including Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Limpopo Department of Economic Development Environment and Tourism (LEDET), South African National Parks, The Lawrence Anthony Earth Organisation and Wildlands Conservation Trust.

The learners, from Limpopo, KwaZulu -Natal and North West provinces were selected through an interview process and a physical selection course that was facilitated by the SAWC's African Field Ranger Training division who also conducted the training. It was a mentally and physically demanding programme, but well worth it according to Year-2 graduate, 27 year old Thabiso Mongale: "I am proud of what I have accomplished this year. I am excited- no, beyond excited! I am ready to do this very important job."

Fellow graduate, 27 year old Glander Tshabalala echoed his sentiments, adding "We will do everything we can to protect the environment and to educate others. It is our duty to make sure we look after Nature for future generations."

Guest speaker Phumelele Ngcobo, Project Manager for the Jobs Fund, was very moved by the certification ceremony which included a 'passing out' parade by all 119 students who graduated, and who followed in the footsteps of the 136 field rangers and guides who graduated from the project last year. "The impressive display by such a large contingent of field rangers showcased the students' teamwork, discipline and attitude and showed just how far these students had come in terms of their own personal growth, their employability and in their commitment to conservation, she said. "The National Treasury's Jobs Fund is proud to have been part of such a well-run project which has delivered on its mandate," she added.

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The primary objective of the Southern African Wildlife College, which is located 10km west of the Orpen Gate to the Kruger National Park, is to provide people from Africa with the required motivation and the relevant skills to manage and conserve their protected areas and associated flora and fauna on a sustainable basis in cooperation with local communities. In doing so, the College aims to ensure that the region's rich biological diversity, and its threatened species are conserved and that the parks, if well managed, become focal points for rural development and economic growth thereby breaking the poverty cycle and making a substantial contribution to the economic activity in the region.

CAPTIONS: Southern African Wildlife College:- Following the passing out parade and certification ceremony of 119 students who completed a year-long National Certificate in Nature Conservation Resource Guardianship as part of the National Treasury's Jobs Fund Project, the joy exhibited by the previously unemployed students was almost palatable.

(Included are 4 visuals)



(1) The 2017 Jobs Fund students during the passing out parade held at the Southern African Wildlife College



(2) The graduands demonstrating their drill formation.



(3) The jubilant students celebrating their achievements.



(4) Phumelele Ngcobo, Project Manager of the National Treasury's Jobs Fund Project implemented by the Southern African Wildlife College, is seen congratulating one of the students on his achievements.