

MSc opportunity at the SRU

Research on the establishment of a large landscape conservation area, relating theory to practice

In many parts of the world biodiversity protection is being addressed at a large landscape scale by instituting collaboration across land ownerships, among agencies, and across governing jurisdictions. Such initiatives are known in North America as large landscape conservation areas, and in South Africa as conservancies or stewardship areas. The research towards this Masters project will focus on one such area in South Africa, the Mountain Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environment.

Achieving collaboration among multiple and diverse stakeholders is challenging and requires innovative approaches towards stakeholder engagement and governance. Trade-offs are required between biodiversity protection and competing forms of land use at the landscape level. In the absence of tested guidelines, facilitators of stakeholder engagement processes often learn through trial and error. An extensive body of theory has been developed to provide guiding principles for facing these challenges. This research project aims to evaluate practice in relation to theory in the context of the past and current development of the Mountain Zebra Camdeboo Protected Environment.

The candidate will register with the Science Faculty, Nelson Mandela University, George Campus, and will be co-supervised by Dr Peter Novellie, and Dr Bianca Currie at the Sustainability Research Unit. The project currently remains unfunded and the applicant would be expected to seek funding for the project.

Applicants for this position need to have at least a B Tech or honours degree in ecology or related field. Added recommendations include a track record of prior research on social-ecological systems or related fields, or stakeholder engagement. If you would like to apply for this position or find out more information, please email your academic record and a letter of motivation to novellie@netactive.co.za