

CHAPTER 4

PARK MANAGEMENT

A wise traveller never despises his own country.

~William Hazlitt~

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In national parks in South Africa there are three management approaches, as indicated in Chapter 3, namely conservation, constituency building (community engagement) and tourism (SANParks, 2012c:20). The management approach that is adopted by a particular tourism attraction is important in three ways. Firstly, the management approach determines the formal structure of the organisation and its informal culture. Secondly, the management approach influences the staff attitudes and job satisfaction at the attraction, which leads to the third reason, which is the management approach's ability to influence the visitor experience (Swarbrooke, 2002:185). Child (2004:24) notes that the challenge with managing parks is not to make them more efficient, but to make them more effective. The process Child (2004:24) refers to could mean that the management of parks should learn from other management areas such as economics and general management.

With this in mind, this chapter will focus on the various areas of park management by providing a description of the categories of protected areas in South Africa followed by a discussion of the three management spheres as applicable to park management and elements that influence the management of national parks.

4.2 CONSERVATION CATEGORIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Park or protected area management takes place in a four-tiered hierarchy in South Africa, as illustrated in Figure 4.1. The private sector may be considered the major contributor to protected areas in South Africa, as this sector holds vast portions of land. In South Africa

alone, the private sector owns more than 1 394 000 km² of land, which is more than all national parks in South Africa combined (Lindsey, Roulet & Romañach, 2007:455; Saayman, Van der Merwe & Rossouw, 2011:1-2; Flack, 2002:29-33; Van der Merwe & Saayman, 2008:111).

The conversion of private and communal agricultural land to conservation land may be due to vast areas of the country being located in arid areas where agriculture requires significant resource operational costs, whereas wildlife costs less to manage (Bond, Child, De la Harpe, Jones, Barnes & Anderson, 2004:56).

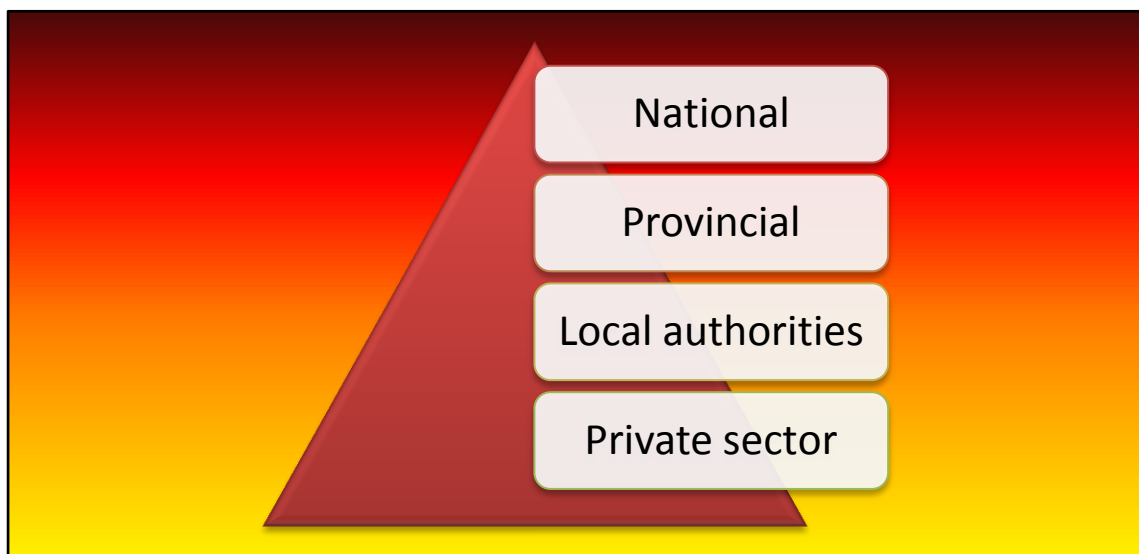


Figure 4.1: Categories of protected areas in South Africa

Source: Saayman (2009:347).

On the second level of protected area categories are protected areas managed by local authorities. Saayman (2009:348) notes that a number of local authorities have their own protected areas, which are usually on a much smaller scale than other parks. However, they play an important role, especially as urban tourist attractions and for recreation purposes. Examples of such parks are the Rietvlei Nature Reserve in Pretoria and the Faan Meintjies Nature Reserve near Klerksdorp.

On the third tier are protected areas and reserves that have been proclaimed and are managed by provincial authorities. In these cases, the provincial authorities take full responsibility for the management of these areas. Saayman (2009:348) states that a lack of funding for conservation and tourism has resulted in such parks encountering problems

with their development and the development of tourism. Examples of reserves managed by provincial authorities are the North West Parks and Tourism Board (for example, the Pilanesberg Game Reserve) and Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (for example, the iSimangaloso Wetlands Park and Tembi Elephant Park).

At the top tier of park classification lie the 19 national parks in South Africa, which are managed by SANParks. The largest and most popular national park is the Kruger National Park (Saayman, 2009:348). Although these parks were initially created purely for the purpose of conservation, they now also serve as important tourist destinations (Carruthers, 2009:247), as tourism is a major contributor of revenue for these parks (Stevens, 2012).

4.3 PARK MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The park management process could be defined as the process of conserving and promoting biodiversity in order to ensure sustainability. This process includes the management of protected areas for reserves according to Saayman (2009:347) where the author elaborates on this by stating that park management focuses primarily on conservation and on the promotion of tourism to these conservation areas.

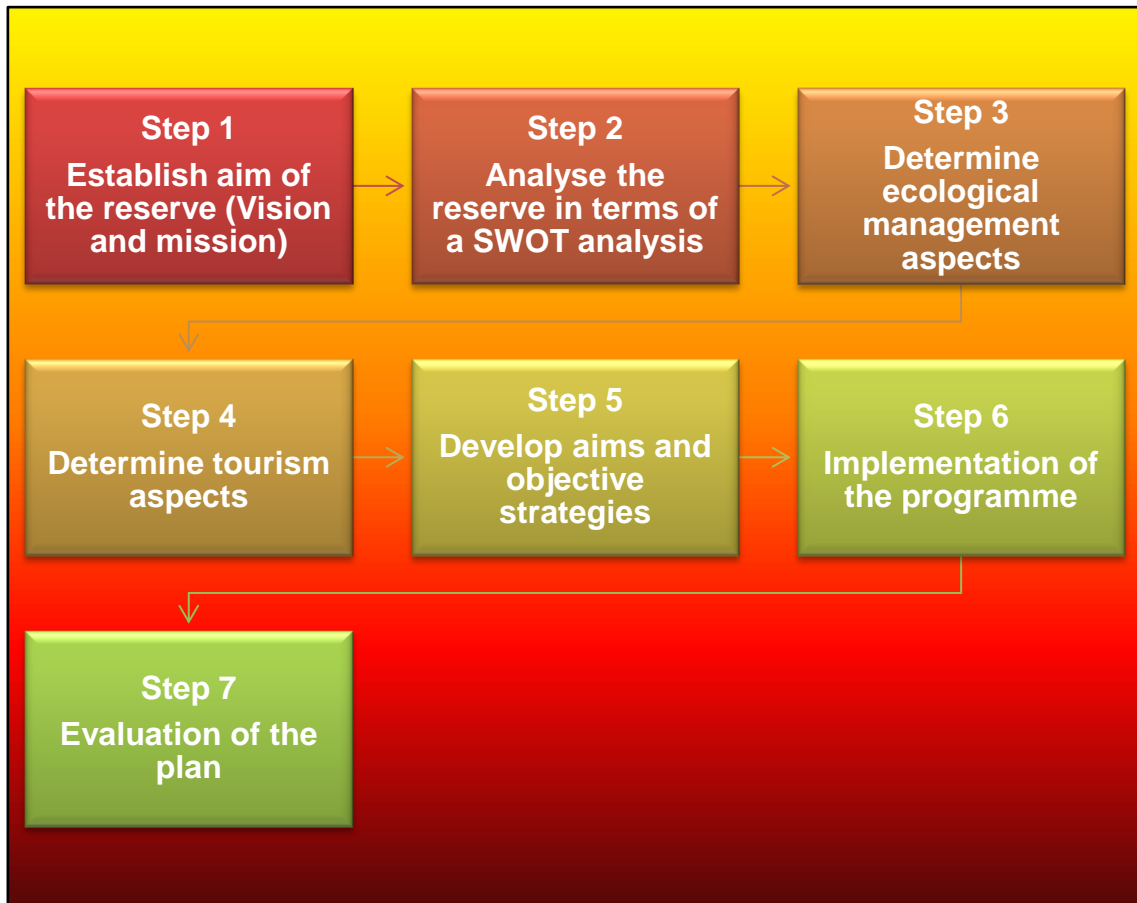


Figure 4.2: The park management process

Adapted from Saayman (2009:353).

Saayman (2009:252) states that the process illustrated in Figure 4.2 above is representative of a park that has a high concern for both tourism and conservation. This management process is outlined in an organisation's business plan, which sets out, among others, the organisation's vision and mission. In the case of MNP, this vision and mission is contained in the park management plan, as discussed in section 3.3 of Chapter 3. This vision and mission state the strategic aim of an organisation and are essential for the long-term planning of operations for both the organisation and the individuals within the organisation (Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vrba, 2011:95).

The second stage in the management process would be to determine the park's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (a SWOT analysis). This is essentially an assessment of the internal and external environmental factors facing the organisation according to Swarbrooke (2002:206) where the author provides details of the various

factors that may constitute the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a tourism attraction, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: SWOT analysis of tourism attractions

Internal factors		External factors	
Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ The organisation, including its resources such as staff and finance. ✚ The marketing system or how the organisation is marketed (including the marketing budget). ✚ The existing market for the organisation. ✚ The suppliers of good quality goods and services to the organisation. ✚ The quality of the marketing intermediaries involved with the organisation. ✚ The quality of the goods and services offered by the organisation. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Political factors, including policies and legislation. ✚ Economic factors, such as the state of the economy and wealth distribution. ✚ Social factors, such as changes in consumer behaviour. ✚ Technological factors, including new means of conducting business. ✚ Factors in the natural environment, such as pollution and environmental degradation. ✚ Competitive forces from other organisations serving the same market. 	

Source: Adapted from Swarbrooke (2002:206-207).

The third and fourth steps in the process of park management include an assessment of the park's ecological and tourism aspects. In terms of these steps, MNP has outlined a desire to respect the biodiversity values of the area, including wildlife, wetlands and the endangered riparian forests along the Limpopo River. The achievement of sustainable tourism through responsible approaches to the environmental, social and economic environments is also desired (SANParks, 2010a:18). Apart from the above, MNP has four other aspects that are deemed important for the overall park management. They are:

- ✚ *Cultural heritage and landscape values.* This includes protecting the cultural resources such as archaeological sites as well as the physical geological features of the park.
- ✚ *Social and educational values.* The park should strive to be a place of social interaction and learning through the provision of school outreach programmes, education and university research.

- ❏ *Cooperation, participation and communication.* This involves actively working with international bodies such as the TFCA, UNESCO and SAHRA.
- ❏ *Effective park operations and corporate support.* This involves the achievement of public-private partnerships, the attainment of corporate values and the incorporation of land ownership into an effective GMTFCA (SANParks, 2010a:18).

The final step in the park management process involves the determination of management aims and objectives, which is guided by the previous steps followed by plan implementation and monitoring (Saayman, 2009:354).

4.4 CATEGORIES OF PARK MANAGEMENT

Saayman (2009:358) states that three categories of park management exists, namely ecotourism management, conservation management and general management, as detailed in Figure 4.2. This forms an important part of park management, each of these park management pillars will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

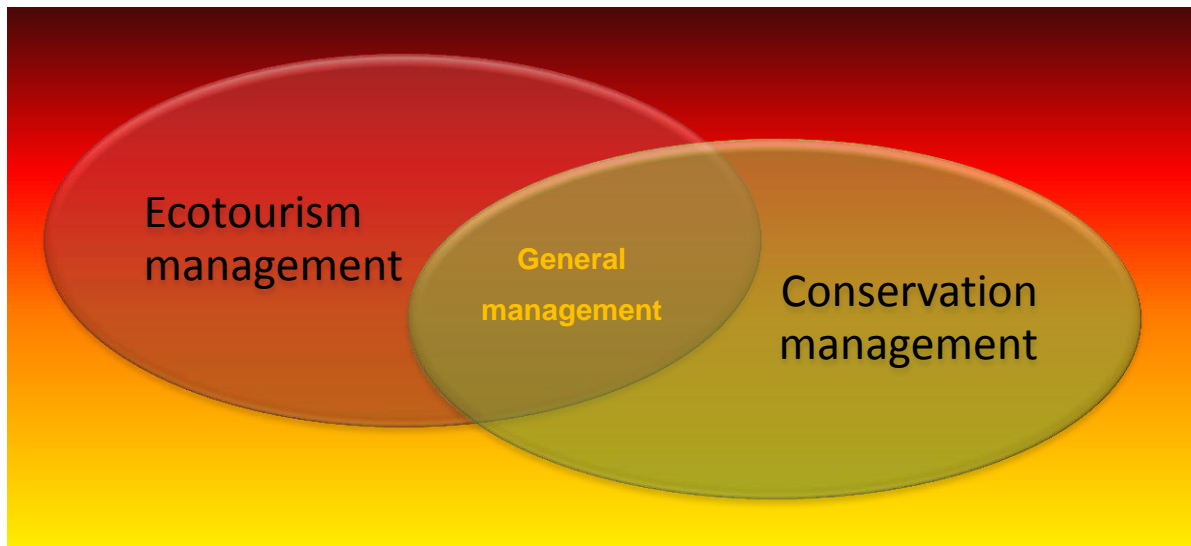


Figure 4.3: Categories of park management

Source: Saayman (2009:358).

4.4.1 Ecotourism management

As described in section 3.8 of Chapter 3, the definition of ecotourism is a much debated issue. Although all definitions proposed in this section indicate a relationship between tourism and the natural environment through an educational process, there is a debate about the relationship between ecotourism and heritage tourism (section 3.8 of Chapter 3). For the purposes of this study, the following definition of ecotourism will be adhered to:

Ecotourism is tourism that consists of travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas (Cellabos-Lascurain, 1990:2).

When analysing the above definition and pillars, it can be seen that cultural sites are included as ecotourism attractions. Geldenhuys (2009:3) broadens this definition by implying four pillars of ecotourism, namely:

- ❑ Conservation and promotion of the natural and cultural environment.
- ❑ Sustainable management of the environment.
- ❑ Participation by the local community.
- ❑ Tourist satisfaction.

In order for ecotourism to achieve its potential and to create sustainable benefits, protected area managers must implement an appropriate planning framework for guiding the management of the activities (Drumm & Moore, 2005:4). One of the essential components of ecotourism management is the process of tourism management, which, according to Saayman (2009:346), consists of four core aspects (see Figure 4.2), namely transport, accommodation and catering, entertainment, and attractions management.

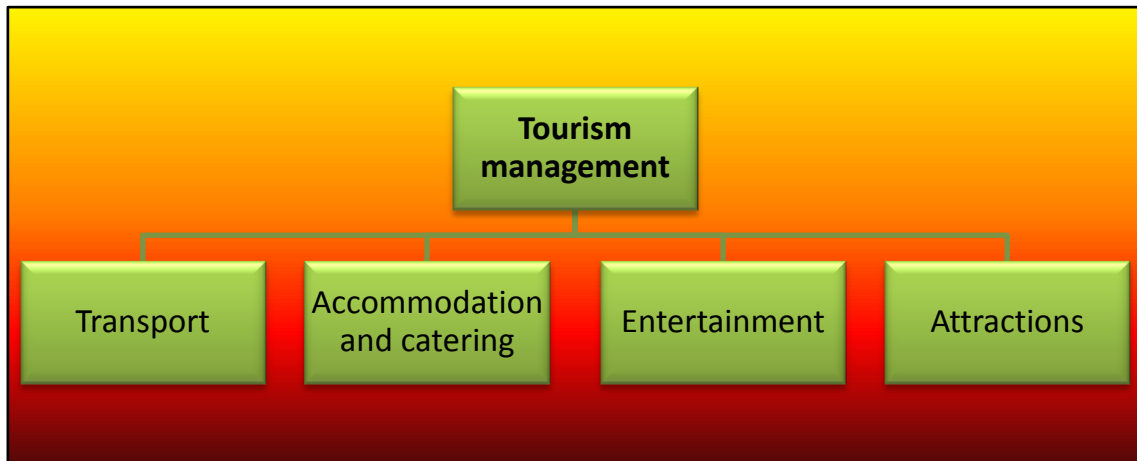


Figure 4.4: Core aspects of tourism management

Source: Saayman (2009:364).

4.4.1.1 Transport

All transport inside parks, such as game drives and transport infrastructure, constitute the aspect of transport, although Swarbrooke (2002:387) notes that tourists actively seek new technology in terms of transport to create unique experiences when at tourist attractions. In the case of MNP, the transport infrastructure consists of untarred roads, some sections of which have been reinforced by concrete portions, especially in areas over rocky terrain. Visitors self-drive through the park or may go on game drives provided by MNP or by private operators. At MNP, the park is split into two parts, which are separated by private and agricultural lands. As a result, visitors are forced to drive on the regional road (R572) to reach the different parts.

4.4.1.2 Accommodation

Accommodation and catering, also known as the hospitality sector (Keyser, 2004:178), include facilities such as tents, camping facilities, kitchen and ablution facilities and food and beverage provision (Saayman, 2009:365). At MNP, tourist accommodation consists of the following facilities:

- ❏ Tshugulu Lodge with accommodation for up to 12 people.
- ❏ Vhembe Wilderness Trails Camp, with accommodation for up to eight people.
- ❏ Leokwe Rest Camp with accommodation for up to 40 people.
- ❏ Limpopo Forest Tented Camp with accommodation for up to 16 people.
- ❏ Mazhou camping site with facilities for 10 caravans or 60 people (SANParks, 2010a:59).

Swarbrooke (2002:387) notes that accommodation itself may be considered a tourist attraction as some tourists visit attractions in order to experience unusual and unique forms of accommodation. Saayman (2009:365) notes that ecotourism facilities should strive to minimise their impact on the environment by adopting sustainable building and maintenance approaches. These approaches could include those detailed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Sustainable approaches to accommodation management

- ❏ The use of appropriate technology
- ❏ Utilising local arts and crafts
- ❏ The use of natural materials
- ❏ The provision of environment-friendly products
- ❏ The recycling of organic waste through composting
- ❏ Waste reduction
- ❏ Recycling water
- ❏ Educating employees about the environment

Source: Saayman (2009:365), Keyser (2004:187)

4.4.1.3 Entertainment

In terms of entertainment, facilities such as recreational facilities, game viewing facilities, day visitor facilities and bomas could be provided (Saayman, 2009:364). Recreational facilities could include swimming pools and sport facilities (Saayman, 2009:364). However, Van Vuuren and Slabbert (2011:700) note that recreation in terms of a tourist attraction could also include feelings related to having fun, spending time with family and friends, taking part in recreational activities and participating in out of the ordinary activities.

In the case of MNP, a study by Van der Merwe *et al.* (2009:9-11) found that visitors to the park were primarily motivated to explore a new destination, to get away from routine, to relax, to enjoy family recreation and to be educated.

4.4.1.4 Attractions

Attractions are the core elements usually associated with the main motivation behind a tourist's desire to travel (George, 2007:37; Mancini, 2013:190). These attractions could include features such as:

- Natural attractions** – These relate to an area’s physical geography, climate and landscape (George, 2007:38) and in the case of national parks the game, plants, trees and insects that are found in the area (Saayman, 2009:369). At MNP these would include attractions such as game viewing, bird watching, night drives, sunset drives, eco-driving trails, guided walks and Vhembe wilderness walking trails.
- Manmade attractions** – These attractions include all those that have been created by humans and could include buildings, conference facilities and events and activities (George, 2007:38; Mancini, 2013:190). At MNP these would include facilities such as the interpretation centre, lookout points, self-guided or guided visits to viewpoints above the confluence lookout point, the treetop walk and bird and game hides.
- Socio-cultural attractions** – These attractions, although also man-made, were organically developed at a specific area over time. They could include handcrafts, local traditions, history of the area, architecture and religious practices (George, 2007:40). At MNP these would include guided visits to cultural heritage sites on the southern terrace below Mapungubwe Hill and to the top of Mapungubwe Hill (SANParks, 2010a:60).

Ecotourism as a form of tourism may rest its commercial operations on four pillars, but in terms of park management attention should also be given to conservation management.

4.4.2 Conservation management

Carruthers (2009:247) notes that the national parks of South Africa came to being as a result of the need to conserve the country’s unique fauna and flora, which were rapidly being eradicated in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. To this day conservation is still the main mandate of SANParks, although tourism management and community engagement are now also fundamental elements of this mandate (SANParks, 2012c:20). Due to the income-generating potential of the industry, tourism is cited as a motivation for the conservation of natural and cultural resources (Keyser, 2004:333).

Timothy (2011:235) notes that the intrinsic link between tourism and conservation is interpretation. He notes that when interpretation facilities at conservation sites are appropriate and of a good quality, they effectively heighten the significance of the site in

the hearts and minds of visitors. This should lead to a greater appreciation of the site's significance and therefore a greater desire to respect and conserve the site.

Saayman (2009:375-381) notes that conservation management involves various aspects that need to be addressed in park management. These aspects could include the following:

- ❏ **Game introductions** – Some species of game have been reintroduced into the park in order to establish new populations or to augment existing populations (SANParks, 2010a:23). The TFCA also allows fauna from other countries to cross into MNP. In the case of MNP, the poor maintenance of border fences has resulted in various animal species such as lion and elephant migrating to the park from neighbouring countries (SANParks, 2012b:21).
- ❏ **Educational facilities** – At MNP these include the management of signage as well as the park's interpretive centre near its main gate (SANParks, 2010a:66).
- ❏ **Water points** – MNP is bordered to the north by the Limpopo River that provides water, especially during the summer months. The park is situated in an arid area, which means that water is scarce during certain times of the year. For this reason MNP provides artificial water points for animals (SANParks, 2010a:18).
- ❏ **Services and water supply** – For MNP to cater for tourism, it was necessary for the park to develop infrastructure. This includes connecting camps and staff villages to the Eskom power grid (the Vhembe Wilderness Camp uses solar power), the provision of water pipelines and boreholes, and the construction of septic tanks for sewerage (SANParks, 2010a:70).
- ❏ **Carrying capacity** – This may be a twofold situation. Saayman (2009:376) states the importance of managing the number of visitors entering a park in order to ensure the integrity of the park. On the other side of the paradigm is the importance of managing animal-carrying capacities, such as the elephant population in MNP, which is known to cause significant damage to the endangered riparian forest along the Limpopo River (SANParks, 2010a:26). The TFCA is envisaged to redevelop ancient animal migratory paths across political borders, which may relieve over-populations of animals in certain parts. The management of MNP has also introduced enclosures that restrict elephant access to certain parts of the park (SANParks, 2010a:27).
- ❏ **Game counting** – MNP is home to a number of endangered, rare and threatened animal species, including cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*), African wild dog (*Lycaon*

pictus), white-headed vulture (*Trigonoceps occipitalis*) and the Transvaal quiltsnout snake (*Xenocalamus transvaalensis*) (SANParks, 2010a:44-45).

- ✚ **Alien plant control** – Over 30 alien plant species and one species of alien fish have been recorded within the boundaries of MNP. These species include the common thorn apple (*Datura stramonium*), large cocklebur (*Xanthium stramarium*), castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) and various species of pines (SANParks, 2010a:35).
- ✚ **Soil erosion and reclamation** – Large portions of land that now form part of MNP served the needs of the agricultural industry for a number of years. These lands are now being rehabilitated and restored to their natural condition, although this may take a number of years in some cases (SANParks 2010a:19).
- ✚ **Problem animal control** – MNP is known to have populations of domestic animals such as cattle, goats and donkeys (SANParks, 2010a:23, 36). At MNP, elephants are known to cause severe damage to vegetation. For this reason electrified fencing has been provided to keep elephants out of areas with sensitive vegetation and areas where vegetation is being rehabilitated.
- ✚ **Removal of structures** – At MNP this includes the removal of infrastructure related to boundary fences, roads, dams and buildings that previously served military, agricultural and residential purposes (SANParks, 2010a:20).

The function of general management is regarded as the bridging tool between ecotourism management and conservation management (Saayman, 2009:369). It will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

4.4.3 General management

General management plans are usually unique to individual protected areas. The management plan defines the protected area's specific management objectives and it establishes strategies, programmes and activities for the achievement of these objectives (Drumm & Moore, 2005:31). General management includes the core tasks of planning, organising, leading and controlling (Saayman, 2009:21; Robbins & Coulter, 2012:37). These tasks are usually conducted in the functional areas of management, which may include, finance, human resources, programmes, marketing and facilities (Saayman, 2009:369).

4.3.3.1 Financial management

Parks are increasingly expected to generate some of the money they require for their own management (Drumm & Moore, 2005:31), instead of relying solely on state subsidies. Ecotourism is considered a significant opportunity for protected-area tourism development (Drum & Moore, 2005:31). The control of organisational finances is regarded as one of the most essential functions of management (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:523), especially in terms of cash flow management (Smit *et al.*, 2011:13).

4.3.3.2 Human resources management

The human resource management process may be viewed as the planning, organising, directing and control of an organisation's human resource subsystem (Swanepoel *et al.*, 2003:9). This function of management essentially involves the employees of an organisation in terms of ensuring that the organisation has the right number of people of the right quality at the right time (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:340). Coetzee and Saayman (2002:230) note that this function of management is primarily focused on the provision, training, development and maintenance of human resources in an organisation. In terms of management, this function serves an important role in the control of staff through recruitment, staff evaluation, task evaluation and training. One of the major challenges is ensuring that the organisation has a high-quality workforce (Robbins & Coulter, 2012:340).

4.3.3.3 Programme management

According to Saayman (2009:371), programme management in a park includes the management of concession areas in a park. Concessions are agreements with private sector individuals or organisations to operate tourism services in a national park (Saayman, 2009:371). These agreements often involve significant capital expenditure by the private sector on public land for a set period (Davies, 2004:214). Provision for concessions has been made at MNP (SANParks, 2010a:56). The Sefapane Restaurant at the interpretation centre is an example of a concession.

4.3.3.4 Marketing management

The marketing function of an organisation involves the marketing of the goods and services of the organisation. This involves the formulation of a marketing strategy through market segmentation as well as market positioning of the organisation and its products in relation to its competition (Smit *et al.*, 2011:12). In order for marketing to be effective,

managers need sufficient knowledge of the market(s) they serve (George, 2007:265). Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2003:13-14) indicate that the marketing function rests on five main concepts. They are (1) identifying consumer wants, needs and demands, (2) developing products and services to match these demands that provide the customer with (3) value, satisfaction and quality. Marketing also involves an (4) exchange and a transaction between the organisation and the consumer, which should stimulate positive customer relations in order to (5) grow the organisation's market base.

4.3.3.5 Facilities management

According to Saayman (2009:369-370), facilities management refers to the management of both tourism and operational facilities in a park. These facilities could include the entrance facilities, including the reception area, its cleanliness, hygiene and the staff at this facility (Saayman, 2009:370). Facilities could also include fencing, administrative and maintenance facilities, staff facilities and roads. The facilities at MNP are relatively new (most were constructed in 2006, when MNP was established), but some damage has occurred, which requires repairs and regular maintenance. This includes damage caused by animals such as baboons at the tented camp as well as the severe damage caused by the flooding of the Limpopo River early in 2013. The flooding caused damage to roads, the bird hide and the treetops walk.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Parks in South Africa are represented on four tiers, namely private, local, provincial and national level, each of which has its own specific approach to management. The management of parks follows a seven-step process which includes determining the park's main purpose, a SWOT analysis, planning and plan implementation. In the case of parks, management also takes place in two main spheres. The first addresses the interests of ecotourism and the second addresses the interests of conservation. These two spheres could have conflicting interests and in order to manage a park effectively general management is used to bridge these two spheres. General management is responsible for the planning, organising, leading and control of various managerial functions. The type of functions may differ from park to park. Parks should strive to promote sustainable management in order to establish a harmonious relationship between the organisation,

economic viability, social impacts and environmental respect. The interests of sustainable management will be discussed in Chapter 5.