

# Tourism development plan

NAMIB NAUKLUFT PARK

2013 / 2014 - 2017 / 2018



Ministry of Environment and Tourism  
Directorate of Regional Services and Parks Management



Republic of Namibia











Republic of Namibia  
Ministry of Environment and Tourism

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## FOREWORD

National parks are a vital tool for conserving Namibia's essential biodiversity. By managing parks, their irreplaceable assets and unlimited potential will be conserved for future generations. In addition, every year Namibia's National Parks draw large numbers of tourists to Namibia, generating employment and stimulating development nationwide. National Parks also provide a unique opportunity to benefit local communities through rural development while providing research, education and recreation opportunities.

The Namib Naukluft Park, Namibia's largest Park, contains all the elements of Namibia's western landscapes: the country's largest expanse of sand in the central Namib dune sea, wide gravel plains, a pristine coastline and a connection to the escarpment in the Naukluft Mountains. This is a conservation area of international significance, set within a larger trans-boundary landscape that covers the length of the Namib Desert in South Africa, Namibia and Angola.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism aims to develop the Park as a world class protected desert and coastal landscape and tourism destination, that capitalizes on its scenic beauty and unique biodiversity. This is aimed to enhance both biodiversity conservation and sustainable socio-economic development for the region and the country.

Tourism development within protected areas needs to be planned in a holistic manner that is strategic, environmentally sensitive and integrated into other planning initiatives at National Park, regional, national and transfrontier levels. The tourism development plan for Namib Naukluft Park is designed to accommodate long term perspective and is dynamic in nature, user friendly, easily modifiable and adaptable to changing circumstances yet designed to maintain their strategic integrity.

Park neighbours, traditional authorities, line Ministries, Regional Councils, private sector, tourists, contractors, organizations, institutions, parastatals, researchers, professional hunters, and any entity or individual dealing with the park, in any way, must ensure that any actions and decisions relating to this park are in accordance with the tourism development plan. In addition, the park management plan, specific rules and regulations in accordance with the applicable legislation will apply.

  
**Uanekua Herunga, MP**  
**Minister**





## PREFACE

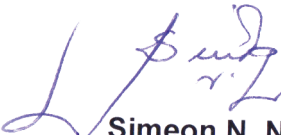
The Namib Naukluft Park provides a sanctuary on a very grand scale to large mammals including black rhino (reintroduced to their former range in 2007 to mark the centenary of the park), hartmann's mountain zebra, giraffe, gemsbok and springbok. Predators such as spotted and brown hyaena, jackal, caracal, leopard and cheetah are also protected in the park. Over 200 bird species have been recorded in the park.


The tourism development plan for Namib Naukluft Park was derived from several workshops involving the management of the MET, local communities, tourism operators and other stakeholders. The plan has been designed and structured to be priority focused and action oriented.

A prime aim of tourism development in the Namib Naukluft Park is to focus such development on specific target markets. By identifying such target markets, a range of tourism and recreation experiences and associated products may be developed that are appropriated to the market segments's demands, tourism resources within the park and those identified in the park management plan.

MET has adopted a strategic approach to tourism and recreation development for Namib Naukluft Park. This strategic approach takes cognisance of and is influenced by best practise in tourism development in protected areas, trends for future tourism and recreation within protected areas, tourism resources and attractions within National Parks, tourism markets and tourism flows, positioning for National Parks in the tourism market and relative to other competitive and complementary protected areas in Namibia and neighbouring countries.

The tourism planning process was coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism through the NAMPLACE Project. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism would like to thank all its staff members, partners and stakeholders who participated in developing this Tourism Development Plan.

  
**Simeon N. Negumbo**  
Permanent Secretary



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## ABBREVIATIONS

EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GSNL	Greater Sossusvlei Namib Landscape (A Nam-Place Group)
IBA	Important Bird Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NAMPLACE	Namibia Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Initiative
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NNP	Namib-Naukluft Park
NSS	Namib Sand Sea
NWR	Namibia Wildlife Resorts
OUV	Outstanding Universal Values
UIN	Uranium Institute of Namibia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHC	World Heritage Committee
WHS	World Heritage Site



# CHAPTER 1

## **1.1 Introduction**

The Namib-Naukluft Park Tourism Development Plan provides guidance for future tourism development in the Namib-Naukluft Park (NNP).

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism is faced with the challenge of maintaining the integrity of the NNP, including the recently enlisted Namib Sand Sea (NSS) World Heritage Site (WHS), while at the same time allowing access for Namibian and international visitors to enjoy this Park. The NNP is one of the main attractions for tourists in Namibia and is considered one of the most visited parks in the country. Visitor numbers are already high and are expected to increase significantly over the coming years. With increasing visitor numbers, the added pressure of a high world heritage listing, and additional protection requirements of the Namib Sand Sea, it has become evident that tourism development in the Park requires closer monitoring and management. This Plan sets out to explore tourism development options for the NNP that are feasible and acceptable considering environmental, economic, cultural and socio-economic requirements of the Park as a whole.

## **1.2 The regional context**

### **1.2.1 Location**

Namibia is the only country in the world with its entire coastline protected in national parks: namely, the Tsau //Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) National Park in the south, the Dorob National Park in north-central and the Skeleton Coast Park in the far north. The NNP affords this important protection.

The NNP extends from the Hardap to Erongo regional boundary in the north (and bordering onto the Dorob National Park) to the northern border of the Tsau //Khaeb (Sperrgebiet) in the south. The main road to Lüderitz - but 20km short of Lüderitz - forms the border. It extends due north for about 80km, and then due west to reach the coast at Gibraltar. The Atlantic Ocean forms its western border, while it borders to freehold farmlands to the east.

### **1.2.2 History of the Namib Naukluft Park and boundaries over time**

The legal establishment of the NNP occurred in seven different stages dating from the first decade of the 20th century. Its first proclamation as a game reserve took place in March 1907 and encompassed the dunes directly south of the Kuiseb River on the northern edge of the Namib Sand Sea. In 1962, the Namib Desert Research Association was established at Gobabeb and evolved over the years. The Gobabeb Training and Research Centre is now a Joint Venture between the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and an NGO known as the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (Seely 2012).

In 1968, the Namib Desert Park and the Naukluft Mountain Zebra Park were declared as game parks under the Nature Conservation Ordinance (Ordinance 31 of 1967). This expansion encompassed parts of the dune sea inland from Sandwich Harbour eastward to the Kuiseb River course. These parks were withdrawn in 1975 and the area was integrated as the NNP and declared a game park in 1979 (Gazette, No 118, 1 August 1979). This consolidated game park, encompassing most of the northern portion of the Namib Sand Sea, also incorporated the north-eastern portion of Diamond Area #2.

The boundaries of the NNP were amended and enlarged in 1986 under Section 15 of the Nature Conservation Ordinance (Ordinance 4) of 1975. This included adding the remainder of Diamond Area #2 and the portion of Diamond Area #1 north of the Aus/Lüderitz road. Two minor amendments of terminology and boundaries were made in 1989 and 1990 so that today the Park covers an area of approximately 50,700 km<sup>2</sup> including the Namib Sand Sea.

The Sandwich Harbour was declared a Wetlands of International Importance on 23 December 1995, under the Ramsar Convention. Tourism is currently the only use of the Sandwich Harbour.



The southern part of the NNP borders on a Cabinet-approved Marine Protected Area. The entire inter-tidal zone bordering the NNP is co-managed by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Parts of the Park are designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and qualify as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) (Seely 2012).

### **1.2.3 Environmental context**

The NNP occupies some of the most arid lands in Africa south of the Sahara. The whole park falls below the 100 mm median annual rainfall isohyets and much of it below the 50 mm isohyets. In addition to the extremely low annual rainfall, it is also hugely variable with an annual coefficient of variation ranging typically from 80% to over 100%. With its high evaporation rates and low rainfall, NNP experiences an average water deficit of about 2 m per year. Rain falls mainly from January to March (MET 2012).

The NNP falls within the southern Namib hyper-arid desert and coastal biomes, with the Naukluft extending above the escarpment into the Desert Dwarf Shrub Transition of the Nama Karoo Biome. These biomes contain a number of different vegetation types and an even greater number of habitats.

The NNP contains a large number of globally significant features. The following are perhaps the most notable:

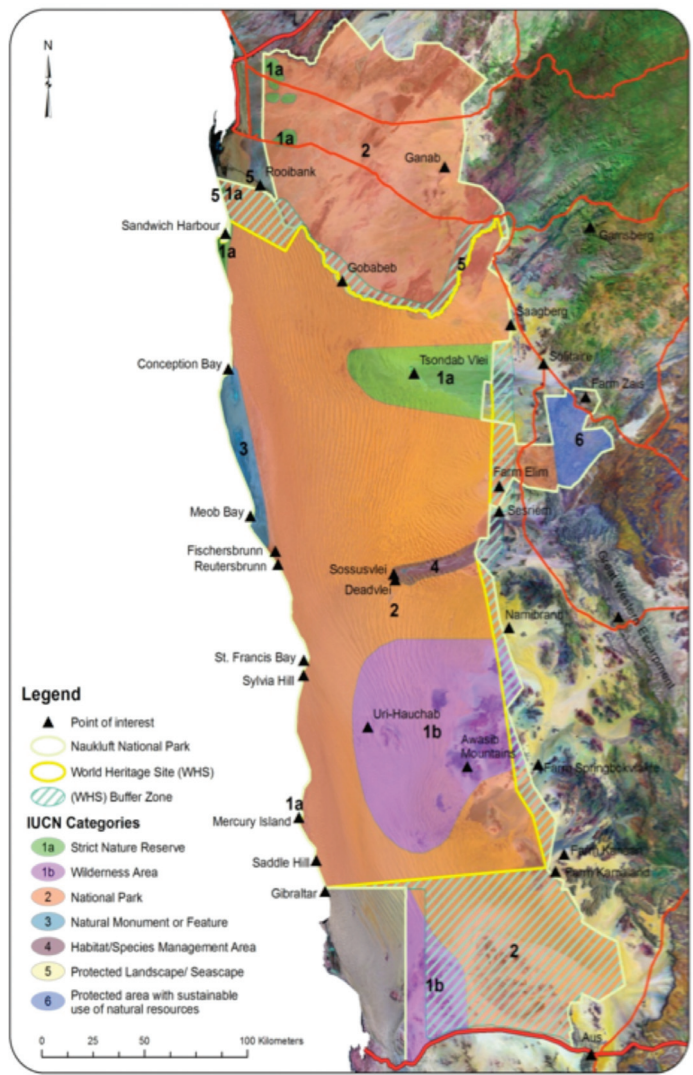
- The Namib Sand Sea has recently been inscribed as Namibia's second World Heritage Site. This continuous Sand Sea of dunes and sandy plains covering more than 4 million hectare constitutes a large part of the Park and requires special protection under the rules and regulation of global World Heritage Sites.
- About 300 km of coastline, mainly sandy shores, with a number of bays often associated with rocky outcrops or bluffs, and coastal salt flats, with Damara Terns favouring the last mentioned as breeding sites.
- The central Namib gravel plains with inselbergs that support plains wildlife such as oryx, springbok and ostrich.
- Three ephemeral endorheic river systems that end in pans amongst the dunes: Tsondabvlei in the north, Sossusvlei near the centre and Khoichab Pan in the south.
- The Naukluft Mountains, which rise from the desert plains at 400-500 m above mean sea level to almost 2,000 m, forming near vertical escarpments and deeply incised valleys.
- A vast array of dramatic landscapes and scenery, and a huge sense of wilderness, novel to most visitors and highly accessible compared to most extreme desert ecosystems.
- This Park also contains a suite of uniquely adapted organisms to desert conditions, including endemic plants, birds, reptiles and invertebrates.
- The Sandwich Harbour specifically, and in fact the entire Park, is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA), and also qualifies as a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA).
- Two Important Plant Areas (IPAs) are in the NNP: the Naukluft and the south eastern corner incorporating the Dikwillem range, which support a rich succulent plant community.
- The southern part of the NNP borders on a Marine Protected Area that includes the near inshore Mercury Island, a designated IBA.

### 1.2.4 Zoning

A zoning map for the Park is included in the Management Plan for the Namib Naukluft Park. In this map, the following zones have been identified, based upon environmental sensitivity and appropriate land uses, and following international guidelines for Protected Areas (IUCN 2012):

- Highly sensitive areas (Category 1a)
- Wilderness areas (Category 1b)
- Areas of medium sensitivity (Category 2)
- Areas with highly outstanding features (Category 3)
- Areas with specific habitat or species sensitivity (Category 4)
- Areas with general landscape or seascape value (Category 5)
- Areas for utilisation of natural resources (Category 6)

For a description of activities allowed per zone category, see Namib Naukluft Park Management Plan under Heading 4.1 below.



Map 2: Namib Naukluft Park – Namib Sand Sea – World Heritage Site - Zones



## CHAPTER 2

### World Heritage Site: The Namib Sand Sea

The Namib Sand Sea was included in the list of World Heritage Sites at the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee that was held in Cambodia in June 2013. The Namib Sand Sea is Namibia's second World Heritage Site after Twyfelfontein and the first one listed as a natural (not cultural) site. To be included on the World Heritage list, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria, i.e., six cultural and four natural criteria (UNESCO 2013). The Namib Sand Sea is one of the very few sites around the world that were listed for meeting all four natural criteria.

#### 2.1 Criteria

**Criterion One:** The property is the world's only coastal desert that includes extensive dune fields influenced by fog. This alone makes it exceptional at a global scale, but it also represents a superlative natural phenomenon on account of the three-part "conveyor system" which has produced the massive dune field from material transported over thousands of kilometres from the interior of the African continent by river erosion, ocean currents and wind. Most dune fields elsewhere in the world are derived from bedrock eroded in situ. The age, extent and height of the dunes are outstanding and the property also exhibits a range of features that give it exceptional aesthetic qualities. The diversity of dune formations, their ever-changing form and the range of colour and texture create landscapes of outstanding natural beauty (UNESCO 2013).

**Criterion Two:** The property represents an exceptional example of ongoing geological processes involving the formation of the world's only extensive dune system in a coastal fog desert through transport of material over thousands of kilometres by river, ocean current and wind. Although the nominated area encompasses only the Aeolian elements of this ongoing geological process, the other elements of the "conveyor system" are assured. The diversity of the ever-changing dune formations, sculpted by pronounced daily and seasonal changes in dominant wind directions, is also exceptional at a global scale within such a relatively small area (UNESCO 2013).

**Criterion Three:** The property is an exceptional example of ongoing ecological processes in a coastal fog desert where plant and animal communities are continuously adapting to life in a hyper-arid environment. Fog serves as the primary source of water and this is harvested in extraordinary ways while the ever-mobile wind-blown dunes provide an unusual substrate in which well-oxygenated subsurface sand offers respite and escape for swimming and diving invertebrates, reptiles and mammals. The outstanding combination and characteristics of the physical environment – loose sand, variable winds and fog gradients across the property – create an ever-changing variety of micro-habitats and ecological niches that are unique on a global scale (UNESCO 2013).

**Criterion Four:** The property is of outstanding importance for the in situ conservation of an unusual and exceptional array of endemic species uniquely adapted to life in a hyper-arid desert environment in which fog serves as the primary source of water. These are mostly invertebrate animals, and they display a range of very rare behavioural and physiological adaptations to the desert environment where they live, which contributes significantly to the property's Outstanding Universal Values (UNESCO 2013).

The boundaries of the property encompass all the elements of the Namib Sand Sea that exemplify its Outstanding Universal Values (OUV). These elements are well conserved and included at a scale appropriate to maintaining ongoing dynamic processes. The large size of the area (30,777 km<sup>2</sup>) ensures that all the active and underlying (fossilised) dune formations and features, causative processes and ancillary habitats are included. The extensive dune-scapes are unspoilt and continuously refreshed and maintained by wholly natural processes. Because of its vast size, difficulty of access and current management within the protected NNP, the Namib Sand Sea is well conserved and in an excellent, undamaged state. Permanent visitor and management infrastructure is non-existent within the boundaries of the property and visitation is restricted to small, temporary point locations that have no measurable effect on the area (UNESCO 2013).

## **2.2 Tourism at a World Heritage Site**

Managing rapid tourism growth is a time-consuming process demanding clear policies, ongoing dialogue with stakeholders and constant monitoring. Tourism activities require environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and procedures for minimising impacts. At some WHSs with limited budgets and staff, growing tourism can stretch scarce resources and take managers away from protection efforts.

While tourism can contribute to protection and restoration efforts, the right balance between economic gain and undesirable impacts can be elusive. Tourist attraction must be periodically renewed to remain competitive. In the case of WHSs, managers of the site are aware that they are under an international obligation to maintain the site's original values. This responsibility poses difficult questions regarding the degree of change that should be permitted to accommodate tourism growth. Another problem is ensuring that a portion of tourism revenue remains in the community as a means of fostering local protection, conservation and restoration efforts.

There are a number of critical tourism management challenges that most WHSs face after their nomination. These challenges include, but are not limited to:

- High visitation levels;
- Limitations to new infrastructural development within the WHS or its buffer zone;
- Lack of an appropriate tourism management plan;
- Limited availability of data on visitor numbers and future visitor projections;
- Limited understanding of visitor preferences;
- Limited financial resources to manage increasing visitor numbers;
- Lack of staff to monitor and control the impacts of increasing tourism numbers;
- Lack of interpretative and education material to fully explain the importance of the WHS to visitors; and
- Difficulties in generating economic benefits to communities as an alternative income source.

All tourism and recreation activities lead to environmental and social change. Understanding the causes of tourism impacts and problems aids decision-making and fosters more effective management actions. Understanding the range of potential impacts will inform the planning process and will help develop tourism monitoring indicators in order to determine whether management objectives are met.

In order to achieve a long-term sustainable tourism programme, it is important to involve stakeholders, interested parties (including government agencies), conservation and other non-governmental organisations, developers and local communities. Such involvement in the planning and management process is of paramount importance. However, building confidence and trust requires time, energy and organisational capacity.

Goals and objectives give direction and set the agenda for defining the experiences that will be offered to visitors, as well as determining the limits of tourism development. Setting realistic and time-specific goals and objectives is key to achieving buy-in from all stakeholders and garnering collaborative efforts for developing the tourism potential of the Namib Sand Sea. These goals and objectives should be based on data and long-term experience of tourism management at the site. Understanding and use of concepts such as carrying capacity (and its limitations) and limits to acceptable change, is essential for planning and decision-making.

In their recommendations, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has commended the Namibian Government for its landmark decision to terminate all existing mineral exploration licenses within the nominated property, thus eliminating the threat of any future mining operations that would affect its integrity. The IUCN has further requested the Namibian Government to provide a finalised management plan and map showing the intended zonation of the property and the institutional arrangements for its implementation and monitoring by 31 December 2013.



The IUCN has further requested that the following aspects relevant to the tourism side of management of the WHS be addressed:

- a) Improve visitor interpretation facilities to foster an appreciation of the unique values of the Namib Sand Sea: It is recommended to establish information centres at Sesriem, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay at appropriate points. Furthermore, information boards should be established at various scenic sites in order to explain what visitors can see and put it into perspective with regard to the importance of the World Heritage Site.
- b) Strengthen management capacity in terms of financial and human resources, including the highly effective support provided to the property by the Gobabeb Research and Training Centre: Due to the large number of visitors that is envisaged to increase significantly after site inscription, most MET Park staff are involved in visitor management, taking away time from conservation related duties. It is therefore recommended to employ dedicated tourism management staff, especially at Sesriem, but also at the Sandwich Harbour. This would free MET Park staff to focus on conservation related duties.
- c) Enhance arrangements for the identification, allocation, management and monitoring of tourism concessions: With additional staff re-focusing on important tasks, this would again become part of general duties.

### ***2.3 Monitoring of tourism at a World Heritage Site***

The Namib Sand Sea has been under conservation management for more than 50 years, with well-established management and resource allocation systems, based on regularly revised and updated management plans and long-term budgetary planning. Prior to the establishment of conservation management, the area was protected for its potential as a diamond-mining area, but this was never realised. Key management issues today include managing the increasing demand for visitor access to pristine areas and precluding mineral exploration rights that would impact on the values and attributes of the area. There is potential for serial extension of the Namib Sand Sea beyond the NNP and beyond national borders to include other significant dune systems within other protected areas of the larger Namib Desert (UNESCO 2013).

Tourism management is a specialised field of expertise that requires a detailed understanding of the tourism structure of the site. This includes, but is not limited to, understanding the economics of tourism, tourism markets and trends, visitor preferences and demands, as well as marketing and promotional strategies. It is important to have a clear understanding of why tourists visit the site and what their expectations are. All these aspects should then be taken into consideration when coordinating various service providers at local, regional and national levels.

At the local level, uncontrolled tourism industry growth and the demand for exclusive access to undisturbed areas are potentially the biggest overall threats to the character, beauty, diversity and integrity of the Namib Sand Sea. Uncontrolled tourism growth has placed other popular WHSs on the "World Heritage in Danger" list. The sheer size of the Namib Sand Sea and of popular destinations such as Sossusvlei, combined with good planning, zonation, management and collaboration between the conservation and tourism sectors offers a great opportunity to allow visitors to have a high quality eco-friendly experience that includes a sense of place, isolation and wilderness despite increasing visitor numbers. However, it is critical to develop sound management structures with appropriate monitoring and law-enforcement to implement these successfully.

Effective waste management has been identified as one area of concern in the tourism operations around Sossusvlei. Also, increasing accommodation costs have been identified as another area of concern, effectively excluding Namibians from visiting their WHSs, particularly when considering the motto of the Namib Sand Sea WHS: "Ours to Share"!

Tourism management therefore requires active engagement by other specialist agencies of the MET that do not fall under the Directorate of Regional Services and Parks Management and that have a specific mandate to address issues related to the tourism sector. Tourism development planning should strongly promote benefit sharing, income generation and investment opportunities for all Namibians through mechanisms such as the MET's Concessions and Tourism policies. At the same time, greater focus on the values of the property may be achieved by introducing a joint-branding scheme by various heritage and ecology authorities.

In order to inform a more detailed Tourism Management Plan for the NNP, it is important to start activities such as:

- affordable access for Namibians,
- tourism impact monitoring in order to estimate carrying capacities,
- provision of appropriate information centres at all access points to the Namib Sand Sea, i.e. Sesriem, Lüderitz, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay,
- providing relevant information materials to improve visitor appreciation,
- improving waste disposal procedures,
- better regulation of aerial flying heights and introducing no-flying zones, and
- improved training and registration of guides.

Monitoring is an important aspect of maintaining the integrity of a World Heritage Site. The site can only be sufficiently protected if there is sufficient knowledge and understanding of what is going on. The World Heritage Committee has voiced its concerns about the current monitoring situation of the Namib Sand Sea. The site has a distinct advantage – its enormous size. Most aspects of the four nomination criteria stated earlier are rather well protected through the sheer size of the WHS and the inaccessibility of large parts of the site. However, it is important (and strongly recommended by the World Heritage Committee) to develop a strong monitoring programme to protect the site for the future.

## CHAPTER 3

### Tourism and mining

Mining and tourism are the largest generators of income and providers of employment in Namibia. While tourism and mining require different ways of land use, they can coexist when managed carefully. The gravel plains of the northern part of the NNP offer the greatest potential for mining. The sand cover of the Namib Sand Sea makes it unlikely that new minerals or essential resources will be found within the WHS. As part of the nomination process of the WHS, the Namibian Government has terminated all existing mineral exploration licenses within the WHS, thus eliminating the threat of any future mining operations that would affect its integrity.

Uncontrolled prospecting and mining activities can seriously undermine the character, ecology and tourism potential of parks, resulting in opportunity costs for developing potential. As mining is equally important to the national economy, it is commendable that the National Policy on Prospecting and Mining in Protected Areas controls prospecting and mining in these areas under conditions and controls that satisfy the needs of both industries as well as biodiversity and ecosystem protection. The main objectives of the policy are: a) to ensure that prospecting and mining activities will not have any negative impact on the biodiversity, ecology and tourism potential of protected areas; b) to identify areas within protected areas that should not be affected by prospecting or mining activities due to high conservation, aesthetic and tourism values; and c) to provide clarity on the different exploration and mining tenements that may be granted in protected areas.

The Uranium Institute of Namibia (UIN) foresees tourism and mining developing synergy in their respective zones under the auspices of the Government-led ministries. The mining body complies with the Ministry of Mines and Energy moratorium on issuing new licenses for exploration and none renewal of licenses if requirements are not fulfilled. The UIN maintains that the Rehabilitation Trust Account is established for each mining license holder and for future rehabilitation of mining activities after operations. As a result, mines in Namibia will be able to sustain themselves and a sense of “stewardship” will be promoted.

#### ***3.1 Development of destination plan on coexistence of tourism and mining***

For Namibia’s economic prosperity, mining generates valuable income as well as creating some employment opportunities. Tourism contributes to the same economic development as mining, albeit slower but with a definite long term outlook.

It is thus essential that these two industry sectors coexist in a way that serves their mutual benefit. There is a limited potential for mining and tourism in the Park. This idea should be further investigated as well-managed mining operations can themselves be an attraction for tourists. It is particularly envisaged that there is some tourism potential if mining companies offer comprehensive tours displaying their commitment to the environment, and dedicate projects to minimise or rehabilitate negative impacts.

Mining requires good infrastructure, which in some areas has the potential to support tourism ventures. For example, better roads, mains electricity and comprehensive waste management systems including recycling could benefit tourism operations in or adjacent to the northern part of the NNP. Mining in and adjacent to national parks requires strict management and control by the relevant Government Ministries. Exploration and mining licenses are under strict control and this process should be continued.



### ***3.2 Mitigation of environmental effects from mining operations***

It is further recommended for all mining operations to include rehabilitation and detailed plans in their initial budget. Companies should ensure comprehensive site rehabilitation under Government control after the operation.

International experience shows that large international mining companies are generally keen to adhere to national and international laws and regulations. Their potential image loss could be far larger than their financial gain when circumventing rules. At least in the uranium mining industry, mines largely control themselves through a self-imposed and controlled stewardship system.

## CHAPTER 4

### Concessions

#### 4.1 Concession types as per Namib Naukluft Park management plan

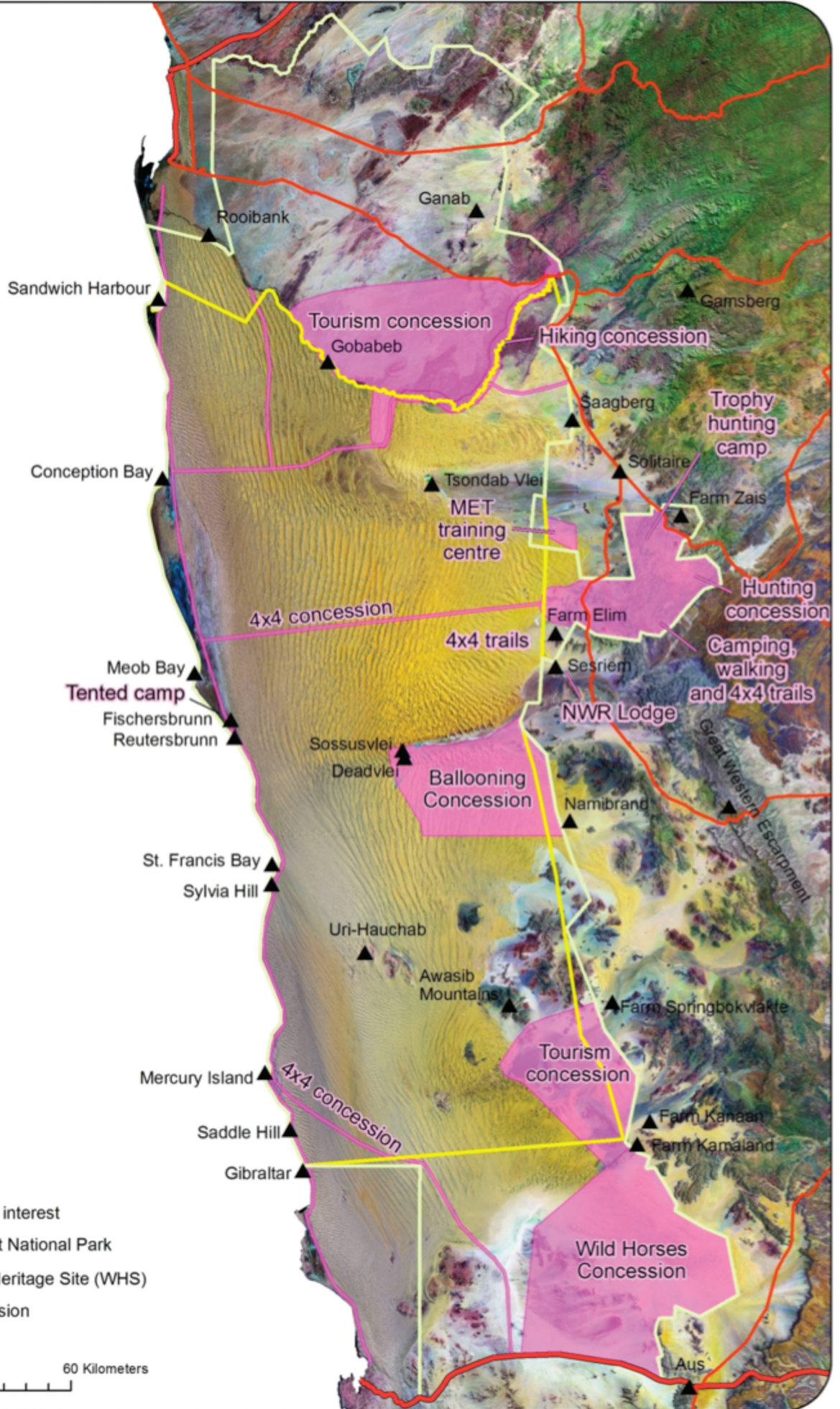
According to the NNP Management Plan the following land uses are permitted and/or should be developed within the national park:

**Table 1: Concession types as per Namib Naukluft Park management plan**

LAND USE CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS
1. Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up-market Lodge development concession opportunity for the Gobabeb Research and Training Centre in the Kuiseb River, max 24 beds, including an area of plains, river bed and dunes. This concession package focuses on “information/research” tourism, and could involve overnight fly camps, hiring and 4x4 guided trails on approved routes.</li> <li>• Up-market Lodge concession site in the Sesriem/Sossusvlei area for Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR), max 16 beds. Tented camp concession site, max 16 beds, on the coast, south of Meob Bay.</li> <li>• Existing old farm houses in the Naukluft area can be upgraded and developed as (a) a trophy hunting camp and (b) a B&amp;B and/or self catering accommodation.</li> </ul>
2. Camp sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Camp site at Homeb in the Kuiseb River, as a concession site to the Topnaar community. This may be upgraded to add tourist bungalows or a lodge, either directly by the concessionaire or as a joint venture. Max 24 beds.</li> <li>• Sesriem camp site, run by NWR.</li> </ul>
3. Day visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sossusvlei/Tsauchab River/Sesriem area, open to day-visitors as well as Sesriem camping and lodge for overnight visitors. A specific “tourism carrying capacity and management systems” study and implementation plan should be commissioned for this high-intensity use area.</li> </ul>
4. Ballooning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballooning concession area with soft outer boundary because of dependence on wind</li> </ul>
5. Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided hiking trail concession in the Kuiseb River, which may also be developed as a mule trail (to support hikers), with designated overnight camping sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> <li>• Unguided demarcated hiking trails in the Naukluft Mountains, with designated overnight camping sites.</li> </ul>

LAND USE CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS
<p>6. Guided 4x4 trails</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4x4 guided coastal &amp; dunes trail from Walvis Bay and/or Rooibank area to Conception Bay area concession, overnight at designated sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> <li>• 4x4 guided coastal &amp; dunes trail from Lüderitz and/or from the Aus-Lüderitz road to Walvis Bay concession, overnight camping at designated sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> <li>• 4x4 guided trans-Namib dunes trail from Naukluft to Conception Bay and north to Walvis Bay and/or Rooibank concession, overnight camping at designated sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> <li>• 4x4 guided plains, river and dunes trail from the NNP eastern border about 40 km north of Sesriem to the Kuiseb River, down the river for about 45 km, then south and west to Conception Bay and north to Walvis Bay and/or Rooibank concession, overnight camping at designated sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Wild horses trails</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided wild horses concession area in the Aus/ Garub south-eastern corner of the NNP, accessed by 4x4, horse riding or hiking, with overnight camping at designated sites with appropriate and approved waste management.</li> </ul>
<p>8. Eastern Namib plains &amp; mountains concession (with 4x4 link to coast)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concession area on eastern boundary, north of the Wild Horses Concession area, for small groups on concessionaire's vehicles (max 2 vehicles), with overnight fly camping with appropriate and approved waste management, and with possible 4x4 link to coast and then down to Lüderitz or Aus-Lüderitz road.</li> </ul>
<p>9. Hunting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hunting concession in the Naukluft Park to the Topnaar community, quotas to be set by MET on a three-yearly basis, adjusted where necessary year-on-year, and professional hunting contract to be reviewed and agreed upon by MET.</li> </ul>





**Legend**

- ▲ Point of interest
- Naukluft National Park
- World Heritage Site (WHS)
- Concession



Map 2: Existing Concessions in the NNP

## 4.2 *Concession management*

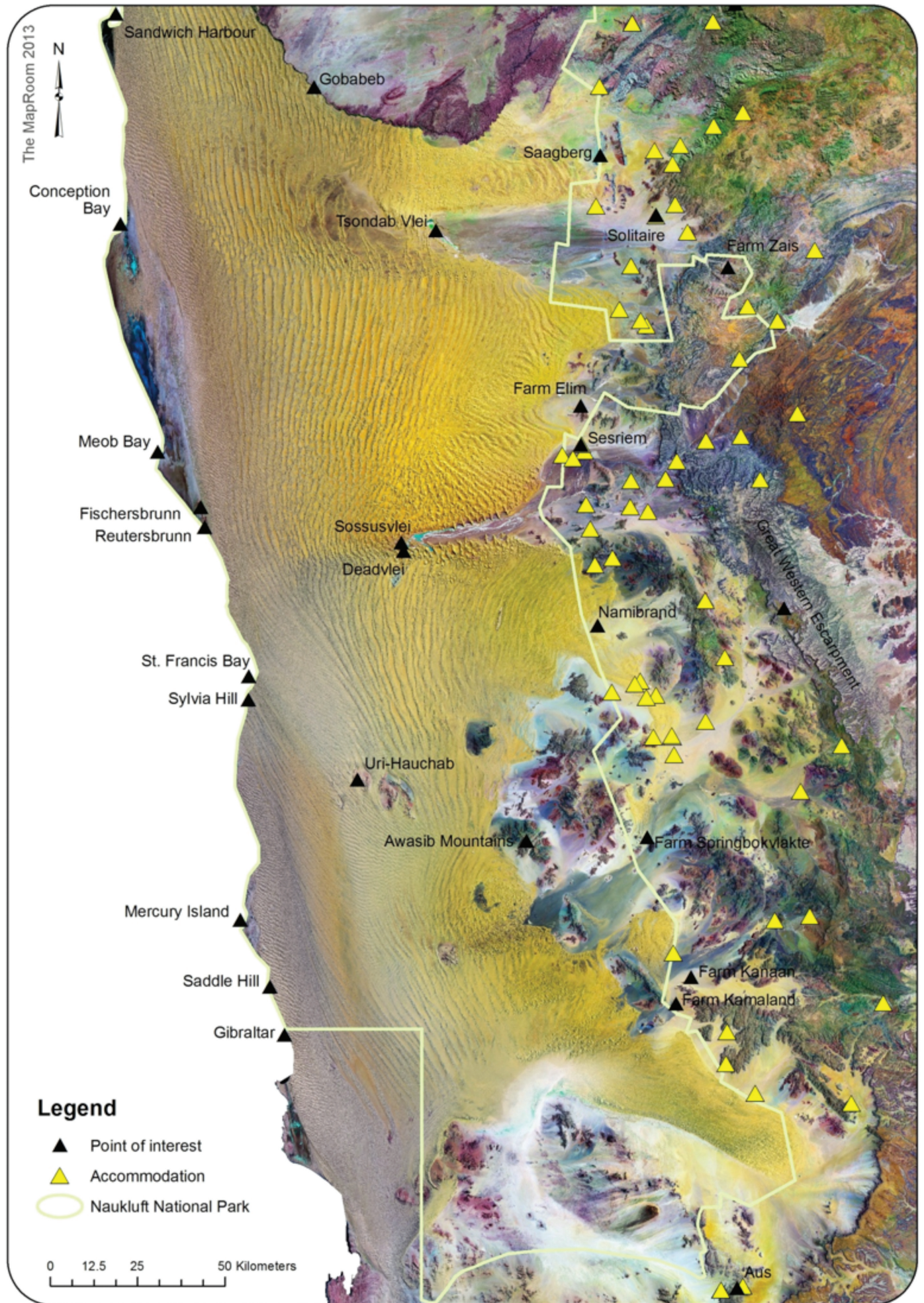
Increasing visitor pressure on sites that are easily accessible through Sesriem can be expected. While this increased tourism flow has to be managed carefully, the sheer size of the Namib Sand Sea also offers opportunities for access in other areas. Granting of additional concessions to allow access to other parts of the WHS has the potential of reducing visitor pressure on already highly impacted areas like Sossusvlei and Deadvlei.

As mentioned above, effective monitoring of concessions within the WHS has been noted as an area of concern by the World Heritage Council. Current monitoring is insufficient or just not existent. This is mainly due to the current staffing and transport situation at MET.

In order to support the MET's efforts for monitoring and compliance with the NNP Management Plan and the National Concessions Policy, the following factors are to be considered:

- Concessions should be given in accordance to Tourism and Wildlife Concession on State Land and concessionaires to be liable for all requirements outlined in the concession agreement. Should these agreements not be adhered to, concessions can be put under further investigation or ultimately be withdrawn.
- All route concessions should be define through GPS data. These routes should avoid areas that need special protection.
- No deviation from GPS defined routes to be allowed.
- Adherence to such GPS defined routes should be controlled by utilisation of latest tour technology available, such as equipping each participating vehicle with a sealed GPS or satellite tracking devices. This should include vehicles on recovery trips.
- All GPS data from these devices must be monitored by the MET using latest available technology after each trip.
- Designated camp-sites should be established along the routes traversing the Namib Sand Sea – camping should be allowed only at these sites. This would prevent additional “wild” camp-sites within the Park, facilitate the tracking of vehicles, reduce the number of tracks, and allow for state-of-the-art ablution facilities (closed dry toilet systems).
- MET should undertake spot-checks of all route concessions and can join each traversing tour without prior notice. As groups can only camp at designated camp-sites, MET officers can join these tours at any time.
- All guides need to complete a special training course conducted by MET or a nominated contractor prior to entering the NNP in a professional capacity.
- A brochure outlining a code of conduct should be handed out to all visitors and guides of the NNP together with appropriate permits. Where feasible, a briefing session should be conducted when issuing permits to access the NNP.





Map 3: Extent of Dunes to NSS Neighbours



#### 4.3 Feasible concessions for Namib Naukluft Park - NSS as a World Heritage Site

The following concessions are feasible as both short- and long term concessions to be awarded to defined entities as per the Policy on Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on State Land:

**Table 2: Area Based Concessions**

##### **General Requirements for All**

- 1-2 day trips only
- Routes to be defined for each concession
- Main activities areas: hiking, nature drives, special interest excursions
- Utilising operator vehicles only
- Route concessions – twelve years
- Lodge concessions – twenty five years

CONCESSION LOCATION	VIABLE TOURISM ACTIVITIES
<p><b>1. Community Concession</b> Area concession: boundaries to be B4 in the south, dune fields bordering the Khoichab Valley in the north and park border to farmland in the east, then follows Khoichab River valley to park border with Diamond Area #2 in the west.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day trips only (return Aus only)</li> <li>• Activities such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- guided hiking or horse/camel riding</li> <li>- dune/nature trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>- sundowner/night trips in operator vehicles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No restriction on frequency of day trips or activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Sossusvlei Dune Lodge Concession</b> (as per current status quo-NWR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For activities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- day trips into Sossusvlei only</li> <li>- guided dune hiking or walking</li> <li>- dune/nature trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>- sundowner/night trips in operator vehicles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• No restriction on frequency of day trips or activities</li> <li>• Conduct shuttle services</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Hot Air Balloon Concession</b> (as of current status quo)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing requirements are appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Community Concession at Sukses</b> (small scale accommodation facilities)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JV with lodge owners for the small scale accommodation facilities</li> <li>• Utilise the existing (currently abandoned) farm houses as small scale accommodation facilities</li> <li>• Ensure financial viability through synergy in supplying logistics and management skills</li> <li>• Utilising community members for staff</li> <li>• Provide for campsite</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Community Concession</b> (hunting concession)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising community members as trackers/skinners</li> <li>• Allows for adequate accommodation of hunters in PH establishments</li> <li>• Possible utilisation of small scale accommodation facilities of hiking area</li> <li>• Provide for equal shares in percentage for benefits with government through the Game Product Trust Fund</li> </ul>

CONCESSION LOCATION	VIABLE TOURISM ACTIVITIES
<b>6. Gobabeb Tourism Concession</b> (lodge development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- day trips only</li> <li>- guided dune hiking/walking</li> <li>- dune/nature trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>- sundowner/night trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>- Gobabeb Training &amp; Research Station,</li> <li>- No restriction on frequency of day trips or activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>7. Horse Riding Concessions</b> Predominantly crossing the Gravel Plains; possibility of skirting the NNP NSS from Sesriem to the north into the Gravel Plains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very low environmental impact activity</li> <li>• No support vehicle access to restricted areas (except areas which are open to the public with permits for the Gravel Plains area - Tinkas etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>8. Community Rooibank Concession</b> Actual accommodation part is within Dorob Park; possibility for activities within NNP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day trips only</li> <li>• Return trips to Lauberville only</li> <li>• Guided hiking or horse riding</li> <li>• Dune/nature trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>• Sundowner/night trips in operator vehicles</li> <li>• No restriction on frequency of day trips or activities</li> </ul>

**Table 3: 4x4 Route Concessions**

**General Requirements for All**

- Maximum of 52 traversing 4x4 trips per year, regardless of entry point
- Maximum of 1 trip per week on 4x4 round routes
- Routes defined by GPS data
- Monitoring of routes travelled through GPS devices in every vehicle that enters
- No diversions from routes allowed
- Traversing routes have to circumvent Sandwich Harbour dunes
- Concessionaires have to undertake that these trips can also be negotiated by overseas visitors in rented 4x4s – currently many car rental companies do not allow this
- Route concessions – twelve years
- Lodge concessions – twenty five years

CONCESSION LOCATION	VIABLE TOURISM ACTIVITIES
<b>1. Aus Round Trip Concession</b> 4x4 Round Trip Route, Aus to Khoichab Valley and outskirts of southern dune field boundary & back to Aus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 day trips with clients' own vehicles</li> <li>• Maximum 12 vehicles allowed including 2 operator vehicles with certified guides</li> <li>• GPS defined routes – no variations allowed</li> <li>• Fly-camp for overnight</li> <li>• Maximum of 1 trip per week</li> </ul>

CONCESSION LOCATION	VIABLE TOURISM ACTIVITIES
<p><b>2. Lüderitz to Walvis Bay Concession</b> 4x4 Traversing Trip as existing entry point either directly from Lüderitz or from first section of Khoichab Valley road</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-7 day trips with clients' own vehicles</li> <li>• Maximum 12 vehicles allowed including 2 operator vehicles with certified guides</li> <li>• GPS defined routes – no variations allowed</li> <li>• If applicable, utilising accommodation by iGowati Concession at Saddle Hill</li> <li>• Required 2-day stay at Meob Bay Lodge</li> <li>• Required utilisation of set camp sites (see Table 6 below)</li> <li>• Maximum of 1 trip per month</li> <li>• Not exclusive</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Faces of the Namib to Walvis Bay Concession</b> existing concession with entry at Saagberg, via Concession Bay to Walvis Bay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum 5 day trips with client own vehicles</li> <li>• Maximum 12 vehicles allowed</li> <li>• Including 2 operator vehicles with certified guides</li> <li>• GPS defined routes – no variations allowed</li> <li>• Required utilisation of set camp sites (see 5. Camp Sites below)</li> <li>• Maximum of 1 trip per month</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Lauberville to Sandwich Harbour to Walvis Bay</b> 4x4 Round Trip Route, entry point from Lauberville, exit point Walvis Bay; several operators allowed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1-2 day trips with clients' own vehicles</li> <li>• Maximum 12 vehicles allowed including 2 operator vehicles with certified guides</li> <li>• Alternatively operator vehicles, i.e. for cruise ship guests</li> <li>• GPS defined routes – no variations allowed</li> <li>• Required utilisation of set camp sites</li> <li>• Maximum of 1 trip per day (in total, not per operator)</li> <li>• For 2 day trips only every 2 days to ensure that only 1 operator is in the area per day</li> </ul>

**Table 4: 4x4 Camp-Sites within the NNP (3 Categories)**

CONCESSION LOCATION	VIABLE TOURISM ACTIVITIES
<p><b>1. Wild &amp; natural camp</b> sites with only ablution facilities, no other infrastructure, not staffed, permits needed. At Homeb, Mirabib and Vogelfederberg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those predominantly in the Gravel Plains area of the NNP (leave as existing)</li> <li>• For local communities with an opportunity for JV</li> </ul>



## CHAPTER 5

### Management interventions

Tourism management is a complex issue, particularly in a vast and not easily accessible area such as the NNP, which has various access points and offers a wide variety of activities within and adjacent to the Park.

#### **5.1 Threats and limiting factors**

This section outlines some threats and limiting factors that have been identified. Concessions management in NNP is a topical issue that needs urgent attention. Sesriem has been identified as another threat to the Park. It is the gateway to the NNP and the Namib Sand Sea – a place that is recognised for its outstanding beauty.

With increasing tourist numbers and a variety of services to be offered in the future, tourism demand at Sesriem will continue to grow. The location of Sesriem will not only attract an increasing working population but also additional squatters.

In addition, visitor numbers specifically to Sossusvlei/Deadvlei will increase due to the WHS inscription. Namibia's first WHS, Twyfelfontein, has experienced an increase of over 30% in visitor numbers since its inscription despite the existence of rock paintings and engravings in other locations around Namibia and elsewhere in the world. Sossusvlei and Deadvlei can be considered a unique natural phenomenon. Careful management of these increased tourist numbers is thus required.

#### **5.2 Sesriem settlement and gate management**

Careful management of tourism in the NNP is important, and appropriate structures should be developed to oversee and control the following:

##### **5.2.1 Sesriem "Settlement"**

The human settlement of Sesriem has become a big concern and negative examples from other parks, should be prevented from repeating. It must be ensured that "urbanisation" of Sesriem happens in a controlled manner in line with expectations and regulations of the World Heritage Commission.

##### **5.2.2 Sesriem Gate**

Entry procedures at the Sesriem Gate have caused problems recently. These management procedures at the Sesriem Gate must be improved significantly. Long lines of waiting tourists at sunrise occur regularly both at the actual gate and at the MET permit station, causing not only frustration to visitors and guides, but also constituting an environmental hazard as most people leave their engines running to keep warm in the early morning.

As a result of these delays at the gate, many visitors then speed along the tarred road to make up for lost time. Overtaking vehicles have become the norm in the early morning hours.

In order to mitigate this situation, installation of an electronic entrance gate is an option as well as restructuring the gate into two ways of in and out. This would also help with regular complaints that the gate is not opened on time in the morning. The electronic gate should include a slow down section where vehicle number plates are registered by camera and fed into a computer system.

At the same time, an ATM type machine could disperse a brochure with information and rules for behaviour in the park and NSS. Vehicles could then proceed to the Vleis without further delay.

Payments and registration would only happen on return from the Vlei. Vehicles would later leave the Park by using an electronic card at the exit boom of the gate. Such an electronic system would also ensure that all vehicles have left the Park at sunset with the exception of guests who are staying at the lodge or campsite within the Park boundaries.

### **5.3 Tourism operations**

Currently, Sossusvlei is the only easily accessible destination within the Namib Sand Sea, with the exception of the Sandwich Harbour. Conservative estimates predict that tourism pressure on Sossusvlei and Deadvlei will increase by 30% within a year of listing of the WHS. There are limited options of what tourists can do once they have arrived in Sesriem. The number of vehicles to drive into the Vleis or at least to the 2x4 car park is expected to increase at the same rate.

It should be noted that the Namib Sand Sea has been nominated and listed for four distinct criteria as stated above. The visitors mainly visit the Namib Sand Sea for its outstanding natural beauty as there is limited information on the other criteria and they are not as self-explanatory as Criterion One.

In order to decrease the direct pressure on Sossusvlei and Deadvlei, one needs to diversify the tourism package that is offered at Sesriem. The points below outline how this could be achieved:

- Develop an information centre with detailed information and brochures on what activities can be done in the area.
- Provide a map of Sesriem, indicating the height of surrounding dunes, enticing tourists to climb these dunes instead.
- Develop guided walks at the Sesriem Canyon that focus not only on geology, but also the historical significance of the location.

The WHS is surrounded by a buffer zone to protect the site from adverse impacts. In the case of the Namib Sand Sea, the property is of a sufficient size that the long-term protection of most criteria can be sufficiently guaranteed within the WHS. The primary function of the buffer zone is to protect the views over the Namib Sand Sea from any disturbance. It is therefore recommended that no new infrastructural developments should be allowed within the Namib Sand Sea, but only outside, preferably on the outer boundary of the buffer zone. These new developments include, but are not limited to, lodges, roads, power-lines, staff accommodation, viewing platforms and fixed balloons.

### **5.4 Tourism impact monitoring**

In order to allow for careful management and monitoring of tourism of the NNP, it is important to establish a carrying capacity for the Park as a whole, but most importantly for the tourism hotspots, e.g., Sesriem, Sossusvlei, Deadvlei and Sandwich Harbour. While this requirement is mentioned in the Draft Management Plan of the NNP, it was not part of this consultancy. The consultants recommend that such a study be undertaken urgently to inform the development of a Tourism Management Plan for the Park.

The task of monitoring internal activities and management of the NNP lies with the MET. Limited staff numbers for a vast area, coupled with budget limitations and transport problems make this task challenging. The MET staff mainly manages the natural resources of the NNP as well as tourism within the Park. This double burden lies with the MET staff and adds another challenge with regard to resource allocation. It is therefore advisable to split these two tasks and develop positions for dedicated Tourism Officers and dedicated Conservation Officers. The job descriptions of these positions would be rather different and require different skill sets. It is therefore recommended to employ staff with a background in tourism and/or hospitality for the Tourism Officer positions and staff with a background in natural resource management or nature conservation for the Conservation Officer positions.

A management plan for the NNP was developed as part of the World Heritage Nomination Dossier. In order to ensure the best possible protection for the Namib Sand Sea WHS, all new developments and management decisions directly impacting on the WHS should be brought to the attention of the WHC, ideally before implementation, for approval. This is particularly important for infrastructural development. Prior to issuing any new concessions within the WHS or its buffer zone, these proposals should be approved by the WHC. Even better, the WHC should be involved in the decision making from the very beginning – even before an EIA is commissioned by the applicant – to avoid later frustration or wasting money and/or other resources on projects

that are not acceptable under WH standards. EIAs routinely include an assessment of the potential impacts on the environment, culture, heritage, geology and aesthetics. An assessment of the visual impacts is especially important within the WHS and its buffer zone.

Map 6 below identifies designated “no-go” zones within the Namib Sand Sea that must have highly restrictions access conditions. These are areas of high conservation, geomorphological, archaeological, biodiversity value that need to be afforded special protection. These areas include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- all inselbergs within the Namib Sand Sea, particularly Awasib and Uri-Hauchab Mountain areas, and Vogelberg
- Tsondab Vlei and the gravel plains west of Tsondab Vlei
- Sylvia Hill
- Mercury Hill
- Sandwich Harbour: This important Ramsar Site is becoming even more critical for migratory birds with new developments at the Walvis Bay Lagoon.

No access should be allowed to the dunes above Sandwich Harbour as this disturbs birds. Sandwich Harbour should only be accessed from behind the dunes and the option of building a hide that can be accessed out of the view of the birds in the Vlei must be investigated. Definitely no driving along the beach!



