



# The Wild Life Society

S. W. A. BRANCH

☒ 3508

WINDHOEK, S. W. A.

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Dear Member,

This is just to keep you informed of the very latest attempt we are making to save Etosha from its impending disaster. The following memorandum will be sent to all newspapers in South Africa as well as South West Africa for publication.

CONSTRUCTION OF POWERLINE AND WATER PIPELINE OR CANAL THROUGH  
THE ETOSHA NATIONAL PARK

With the object of meeting S.W.A.'s ever increasing water demand, the Government has turned to the Kunene River in the north of the territory. It is proposed to convey large quantities of water from this river to the central parts of South West Africa.

In the scheme as originally conceived, the water for distribution was to be pumped through pipelines and these, as well as the powerlines, were to follow routes which, as far as possible, would follow the border of existing territorial divisions such as the homelands and the Etosha National Park.

In recent developments the powerline, which is already in the course of construction, has been routed through the Etosha National Park and it is now proposed to convey the water by means of an open canal passing right through the Park. The Nature Conservation Branch of the South West Africa Administration protested strongly against this invasion of the Park, which it controls, and the Nature Conservation Board backed up this protest by resolutions condemning any action which could deleteriously affect the future of the Park.

When the matter became public knowledge there was a strong re-action from conservation conscious members of the public, first in the German press and later in the English press. At this stage the South West



Africa branch of the Wild Life Society of Southern Africa issued a press statement in support of those protesting against the proposed developments under the heading "Let power and water flow, but not through Etosha". Subsequently an interview took place between the Member of the Executive Committee of the South West Africa Administration responsible for nature conservation and national parks, with the management of the local branch of the Wild Life Society. During this meeting the delegation was informed that the construction of the powerline through the Park had already been approved by the Executive Committee, but the question of whether the water should be conveyed by pipeline or canal had been referred back to the Department of Water Affairs for further consideration and a more detailed exposition of the pros and cons of the scheme. This information was confirmed in writing and also by means of a press statement.

The Department of Water Affairs bases its case for a canal instead of a pipeline on the relative costs of the two systems. Although no detailed figures have been made public, it is said that the cost of a pipeline would be approximately three times that of a canal, with a corresponding increase in the cost of the water to the consumer. It is not known whether this refers to the entire water scheme or only to that part of it which passes through the Park. The whole scheme envisages the conveyance of water throughout the length and breadth of the land and, if the figures mentioned refer only to the comparatively short distance through the Park, then it seems unrealistic to single out this small section and ignore the fact that over the greater part of the scheme a canal would be impractical for topographical reasons.

Information is also lacking as to whether the figures mentioned refer only to the cost of construction or have taken into account indirect and consequential expenditure which would arise from adoption of the canal project.

Such a canal would require to be fenced along both sides with elephant-proof fencing, a very expensive undertaking with no guarantee that thirsty elephants could be controlled by it. Another suggestion is that the canal could be covered with slabs to keep the elephants out. One wonders how massive and expensive these slabs would require to be to resist the weight and excavating capabilities of one or more elephants.

A canal would be exposed to damage, pollution, contamination and even infection - anthrax, a disease fatal to most animals and also to man is prevalent in the Park and infected water could present untold problems passing through the farmlands or even at it's ultimate destination, the consumer. Research carried out in the Park has demonstrated that infected water supplies are the main reason for the high incidence of anthrax in the Park. Experience elsewhere has shown that open canals contribute to the increased incidence of bilharzia and certain insect borne diseases. Losses caused by these disease and the cost of combatting and treating them cannot be ignored in any cost considerations.

In a country in which the rate of evaporation is extremely high it can be assumed that loss of water because of this factor could be quite serious, but no details are available as to comparative losses from evaporation, leakage or breakage, and the long term effects of these on the scheme.

From the point of view of nature conversation a canal through the middle of the Park would inhibit the migration of game, which is essential to the breeding pattern of certain species and the grazing habits of others. In both cases the long term effect of such limitation of movement could be a deterioration in numbers and quality with consequent adverse effect on tourism.

The great attraction for the tourist is to see game in it's natural environment and the creation of powerlines, canals and pumping stations, the latter have now also been proposed, will soon rob the Park of it's unique character.

It would appear that the indirect loss to the State caused by these adverse effects on tourism has not been taken into consideration in assessing the cost of the respective schemes.

Those opposing the proposed violation of the Etosha National Park are well aware of the urgent necessity of providing adequate supplies of water and power for the Territory as a whole, but all they ask is that when a shceme of this magnitude is planned, consideration should be given to preserving, even at some additional cost, those invaluable natural resources which once destroyed can never be replaced. Before it is too late competent autorithorities on this aspect of the matter should be consulted.