

A People's Park for the Kunene

Imagine more than 1 million hectares (more than 10,000 km²) of Namibia's spectacular Kunene region under special protection – potentially linking the Skeleton Coast Park with Etosha National Park, and even with Iona National Park in Angola.

Consider a landscape that secures the protection of critical rhino, elephant, lion and other wildlife habitats and ensures that tourism to these areas directly benefits those communities that live with and near their wildlife.



Envisage a 'people's park' model that could be adapted used elsewhere in Namibia and in other African countries; opening a new way for communities to benefit from living with or near wildlife, while at the same time strengthening wildlife conservation in a sustainable African way.

The 1,140 km² Ombonde Peoples' Park (OPP) is the first step towards developing the greater vision of a Kunene People's Park. It is a progressive new type of protected area – an African way of linking conservation of wildlife to enhanced quality of life of the communities who co-manage and live around the wildlife and tourism area they have chosen to protect. What makes this different from conventional national parks is that it builds on and enhances community ownership of wildlife and valuable natural resources – the key to the success of community-based conservation in Namibia – as it will be a genuine partnership between two communal conservancies and the government.

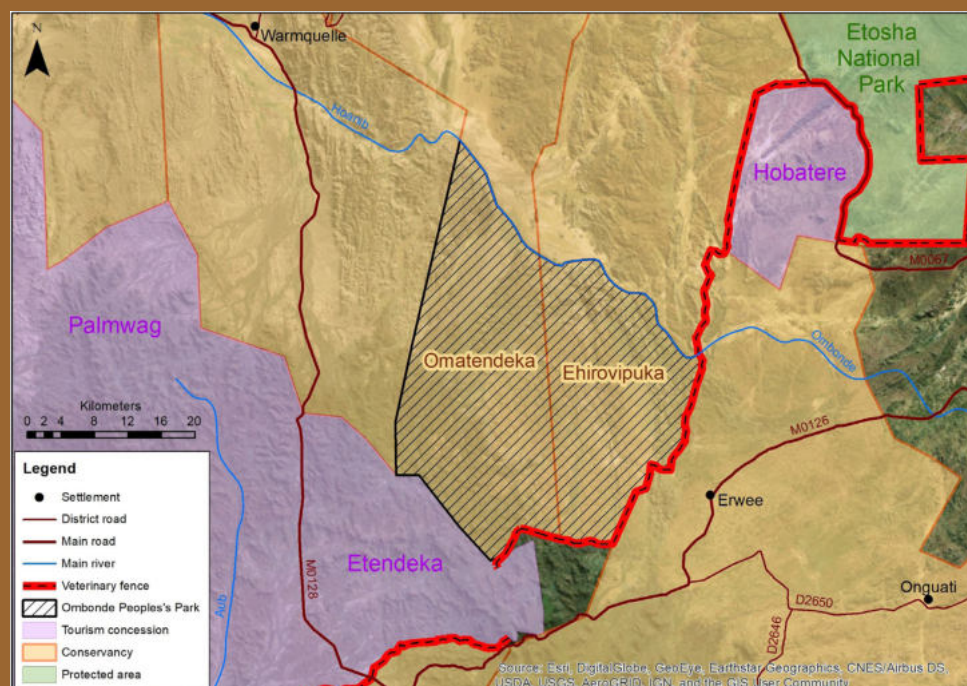


Our goal... is to explore, develop and finalize a legal land tenure model for conservancies to protect their core wildlife and tourism zones, and thus their economic future including jobs and income.



With the support of our partner the Tusk Trust, we have made progress:

1. A Project Task Force has been established involving the Kunene Regional Community Conservancies Association (KRCCA)
2. The KRCCA has been capacitated to facilitate communication, consultations and negotiations with key stakeholders and have facilitated resolutions between different local groups
3. The vision has been endorsed by all local and regional stakeholders, including traditional authorities, conservancies and community groups such as the recently established Women for Conservation
4. Significant inputs were made and adopted into the new Protected Areas and Wildlife Management Bill, which will give communities the opportunity to formally gazette the OPP, so that they would have the legal right to manage and benefit from wildlife and tourism
5. Participating conservancies and key community stakeholders have been briefed on the requirements to get the OPP registered as a community-owned and -managed protected area
6. A collaboration agreement between participating conservancies and a draft management plan have been prepared in consultation with conservancies and traditional leaders



Completion of this first phase would be to formally gazette the OPP as a "Site of Special Conservation Interest" under the new Wildlife Management and Protected Areas Bill, which is expected to be enacted in 2020.