

NATIONAL PARKS SERVICE UPDATE REPORT



By: *Gavin Shaw*
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1. OBJECTIVE

Provide insight to the NPS World Heritage Site Fellowship Programme as to progress made and growth in my current position that can be attributed to the fellowship experience.

2. BACKGROUND

After returning from the fellowship programme I was almost immediately redeployed to a nature reserve in the central part of the Eastern Cape Province that is home to a critical population of rhino. In fact, the worlds 3rd largest population of black rhino lives at Great Fish River Nature Reserve. In so doing, I was moved from the World Heritage Site that I was managing to a park of different international significance. However, I still managed to apply principles learned while in the US with NPS.

2.2. *Lessons from the NPS experience!*

2.2.1. *Staffing experiences – optimal staff numbers and skills advancement*

What was clear through my visit to the ranger corps in the Olympic operation that a properly trained and capacitated workforce is critical. Many of the ECPTA's driving processes for staff capacity building and especially related to law enforcement functions have been driven by my team and I. This can be directly attributed to the experience I had with NPS. 10 of the rangers in the below photograph have obtained specialist enforcement training and 2 have been trained as registered dog handlers.

A good number of the above staff have also been equipped through the gear mobilization programmes and I personally have attended a specialized course aimed at improving ranger relationships with management staff.

Part of me came back from the US depressed about how little we have to operate with against what NPS is able to have in resources on an annual basis. The difference is considerable and in fact unbelievable! Operating in a vacuum is dangerous and I feel that we had reached this point. Since my exposure to effective operations within the NPS systems, I have endeavored to create opportunities to enhance our operational equipment and resources. We now boast an aircraft, tracking dogs and a fleet of sponsored vehicles. Life has changed around here!



Fig 1: ZU-SRP – light sport aircraft donated by StopRhinoPoaching.com piloted by myself.



Fig 2: Senior Ranger Mpolweni running a scent line with Seun.

One of GFRNR's greatest assets is its recently formed Dog Unit. "Bud" and "Seun" joined us in 2012 and have been priceless members of the Great Fish enforcement team since their arrival. Senior Rangers Mpolweni and Nkolongo attended training with Bud and Seun and in human scent tracking.



Fig 3: A large proportion of the Great Fish Ranger team in relaxed formation. Far right, Gavin Shaw, below me to the left is Assistant Manager, Catherine Dreyer and directly to her left is Principle Field Ranger, Khawulezile Gube.



Fig 4: A contrasting pic of the NPS team after their Law Enforcement refresher



Fig 5: Ranger Jen Jackson working a vehicle on a state highway through Olympic.



Fig 6: Rangers simulating vehicle extraction – the NPS scenario’s brought home and Africanised!

2.2.2. Communication systems enhancement

A new repeater system and the purchase of new radios has improved the communications on the reserve dramatically. This was a lesson learned from the NPS stay and operational exposure I received at the Olympic National Parks Dispatch. The communications improvements have resulted in the arrest of 18 people for illegal activities in the last 12 months.



Yours in rhino conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'G' followed by a few loops.

Manager: Great Fish River Nature Reserve
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