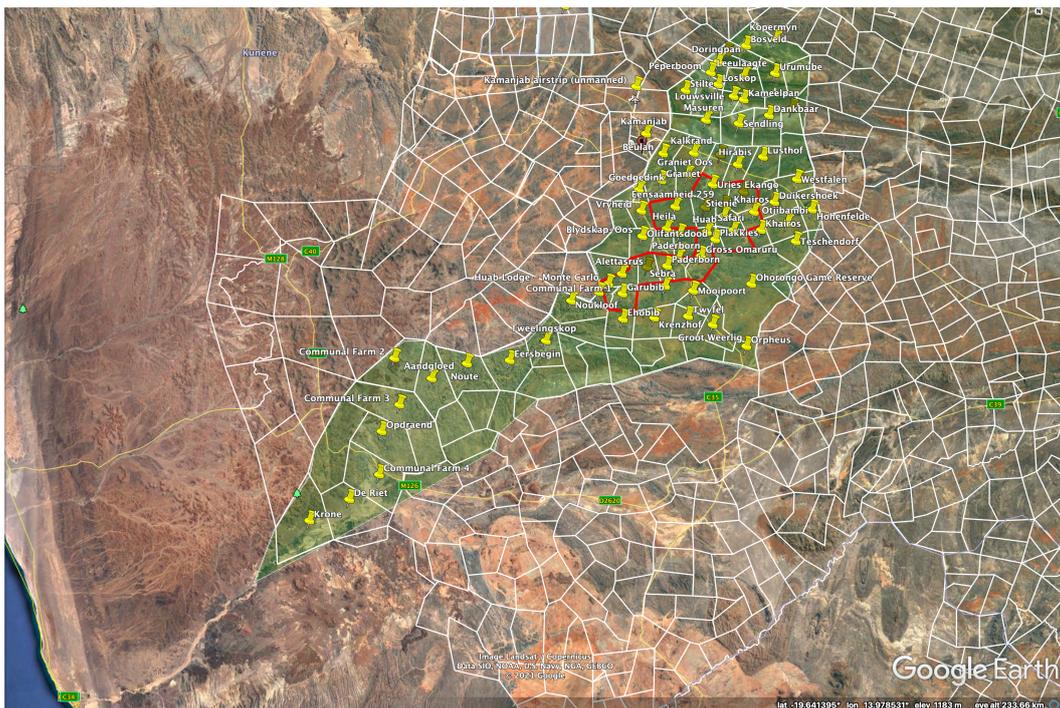


Project: **The Huab Biosphere Protected Area (HBPA)**

Proponent: **The Elefriendly Foundation (Section 21 company)**

**Overall objective:**

To establish a contiguous area of elephant and wildlife corridors among commercial and communal farms along the Huab ephemeral river system between the Etosha National Park and the Skeleton Coast Park over the next five years to eventually to cover a Protected Area of about 600 000 hectares.



The Huab Ephemeral River system, Kunene Region, Namibia.

**Conservation management objectives:**

- To establish a series of interlinked elephant / wildlife corridors among the commercial and resettlement farms located along the upper, ephemeral drainage system of the Huab River as a core conservation area / protected area;
- To address and actively manage all aspects of human-elephant conflict by setting up and maintaining an active elephant monitoring system along these corridors;
- To create an integrated wildlife management system along this system of interlinked wildlife corridors in order to recover, replenish and regenerate the wildlife gene pool and curb rising poaching of all species, including specially protected and threatened species;
- To develop this system of interlocked wildlife corridors to eventually link up with the lower Huab areas and the communal conservancy areas, so assisting in the replenishing of their drought-depleted wildlife herds.

**Scientific research objectives:**

- To facilitate, in conjunction with the Namibia University of Science & Technology and NIRST and other, international universities and research institutes, research in the behaviour of local wildlife such as the elephants, numerous other species, botany
- To facilitate and encourage archaeological investigation of the rich Stone Age caves that proliferate in this unique and relatively undisturbed area setting by up scientific field study programs;
- To expand current primate rehabilitation facilities into a fully-fledged primate rehabilitation and research centre into conjunction with an internationally-recognised scientific institution such as the Jane Goodall Institute;
- To establish a centre for the study of climate change and geo-sciences such as seismology and geo-hydrology in the larger Huab catchment and drainage area.

**Socio-economic objectives:**

- To ameliorate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by generating new and additional income streams for the participating farmers and new employment opportunities for the local residents by developing tourism and visitors' facilities on each participating farm, and linking all these facilities to each other by designated routes within the Protected Core Area of 150 000 hectares;
- To establish vocational training and hospitality training programs for unemployed youth with the help of the member farmers and staff to foster a deeper involvement and sense of ownership in wildlife and environmental management.
- To extend and establish Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) into both commercial and communal areas on an economically sustainable basis by re-establishing commercial and trophy hunting on scientific management basis.

**Brief environmental & historical background:**

The upper Huab catchment area once formed part of a protected area declared by colonial Germany over all land between the Ugab River to the south and the Kunene River that forms the border with Angola.

The Upper Huab catchment area as located south of the Outjo-Kamanjab road is characterised by a system of tributaries that joins up and flows through a rugged, dolomite-dominated terrain that, due to its rugged topography, regular seismic activity and periodic droughts, is not ideally suited to large-scale commercial livestock farming.

This area south- and southwest of the Etosha National Park was used by apartheid-era Pretoria to resettle the Dorsland Trekkers forced out of Angola. Today, there are several resettlement farms in this area, many of which are rapidly degrading environmentally due to over-stocking and highly destructive commercial charcoal production that also contributes to rising poaching and livestock theft problems.

The area however still harbours a rich and diverse animal population, including some of the last free-roaming elephant, giraffe, lions and kudu and dik-dik, to name but a few. Photographs from the 1940s show sizeable elephant herds among the dolomite hills of the area, and has been a constant feature of this area as they range up and down the many different Huab tributaries.

Most commercial farms here derive an income from both cattle farming and commercial and trophy hunting to sustain themselves financially, although some farms have been converted into tourist operations or large, private game reserves.

Due to a seven year drought that increased rural poverty which in turn fuelled poaching and over-hunting among these farms, this once-rich wildlife gene pool is now at risk of depletion and permanent loss of diversity. This poses a major risk to the entire Kunene region's tourism industry that relies mostly on foreign visitors to so-called The Arid Eden in hope of spotting some of the iconic local wildlife.

Unless a holistic and integrated management of this fast-dwindling resource is put into place, the risk is that all wildlife will permanently disappear and with it, a tourism industry worth N\$8 billion per annum in foreign revenue that employs up to one-third of Namibia's active workforce.

### **Phase 1:**

#### **Rolling out the key concept in the core conservation area, establishing secure perimeters and active surveillance**

The first and most immediate objective will be to establish a contiguous elephant corridor from the farm Uries Ekango across across Eensaamheid and Picollo south along the Huab as it wends over the farms Huab, Gross Omaruru, Paderborn, Altasrus and Garubib up to the permanent fountains at the Huab Lodge on Farm Monte Carlo.

Each property owner located within this eco-system will be approached with an offer to monitor, manage and alleviate all wildlife-related movement along and between the Huab and its the various tributaries.

All the landowners of these properties are known to be elephant-friendly and likely willing to get involved in drafting a PA charter to establish a core wildlife corridor along the western tributaries and the lower Huab.

This will require removing all fences across the riverbed and construct elephant-friendly water points, protective walls around water infrastructure and the relocation of cattle where necessary.

All the Phase 1 farms are easily accessible as they are nearly all located between the main Outjo-Kamanjab road, the C-35 road leading south to Khorixas and the Huab River and therefore ideal to develop, test and implement a local area digital network by installing repeater antennas where necessary.

This will then used to design, develop, test and implement a remotely-operated active surveillance systems to monitor elephant movements along the Huab while watching the C-35 for intrusion by potential poachers and stock-thieves.

This will allow for establishing standard the development and implementation of an integrated early-warning anti-poaching security network using the local GSM network to link all parties involved to either the Kamanjab police or a contracted anti-poaching operator.

Timeframe:

## **Phase 2:**

### **Developing tourism and management infrastructure:**

A better access road from the main Outjo-Kamanjab road over Farm Okawa / Himba Village and Uries Ekango need to be built to Eensamheid and from there, extended to Picollo and then down along the Huab River over the four other farms up to Monte Carlo, exiting onto the C35.

Camp sites need to be identified along this route with the input from farmers / owners, planned in terms of lay-out and materials, costed and then built by using voluntourists and crowd-funding.

As a basic requirement, camp sites should at the very least have a functional hot-water shower (even if a donkey), a toilet, designated braai area, basic kitchen facilities like a sink, some shaded areas and human waste disposal facilities.

A central marketing and reservation website and back office IT management system needs to be designed and developed, as well as operational procedures for managing movement of visitors between the farms' individual campsites, keep track of the individual groups and vehicles.

Farmers need to identify which farm tracks the visitors will be allowed to use to and what natural or other attractions there are on their farms they would like to give visitors access to, and mark those clearly.

Farmers should also be encouraged to sell fresh produce such as milk, meat, firewood etc to visitors; we should also encourage them to act as guides or train someone to act as guides.

An office / shop / resource centre needs to be established in Kamanjab itself to liaise between farmers, visitors and other stakeholders in developing this scheme, and provide a central management facility for bookings, rapid response to problems experienced with elephants and coordinate anti-poaching measures.

All the routes must be prepared and clearly marked, and maps produced of the publicly accessible areas, the entire area mapped out in terms of natural

attractions, grazing and water resources. Special note needs to be taken of all natural seepages and fountains in the area that the elephant may frequent.

If need be, new water points need to be established along this elephant corridor along the Huab to preclude them from entering deeper into the farms in search of water. Farmers and their workforce need to also be trained in how to behave around and respond to the presence of the elephants to avert incidences of human-elephant conflict.

Timeframe: 6 - 12 months

Funding: GiZ, Institutional and crowd-funding, voluntourism

### **Phase 3:**

#### **Progressive replacing hunting income with tourism revenue, extending core area along the eastern Huab tributaries**

Many if not most of the farms within the target area allow or are involved in trophy hunting tourism, an industry facing dwindling growth prospects as result of a growing public antipathy towards sport hunting.

Several of the farms in the target area are already operating purely as tourism operations or private game reserves that have a direct interest in becoming part of this Protected Area.

Once Phase 2 is successfully implemented, management and monitoring systems tested and the campsites successfully marketed, it will become progressively easier to expand the core conservation area along the farms located along the eastern Huab tributaries.

In total, it is envisaged that all the farms between Otjikondo, Kamanjab and extending as far south to include the Ohorongo Private Reserve will be included in an integrated Protected Area comprising some 22 farms or 150 000 hectares of unique wilderness.

In consultation with the land-owners, the project will develop a Conservation Charter for the Huab Biosphere Protected Area that will seek to implement an environmentally integrated wildlife resource management plan in line with objectives of the official MEFT Elephant Management Plan.

In return for signing up to a conservation charter for the Huab Protected Area, farmers in return will be offered opportunity to develop and operate tourism and/or academic research facilities on their own farms, to be operated by themselves and for their own account.

The Protected Area will be further integrated by developing a series of routes linking the camp-sites between the various farms, and marketed to self-drive safari

parties as an exclusive and limited access to a unique range of nature destinations.

The project will further invite and encourage the establishing of scientific field research in the Huab Biosphere and surroundings by organising baseline studies in e.g. botany, zoology, primatology and archaeology etc. in conjunction with local and foreign universities and relevant institutions.

Tourism and academic research can thus be combined to offer the visitor a deeper appreciation of this private gateway into The Arid Eden, while the landowner gains a steady and additional income stream while losses to e.g. damage to fences and water infrastructure will be eliminated by 24/7 monitoring of the elephant herds by remote surveillance and monitoring measures.

This will also curb and eradicate commercial poaching and livestock theft among all the farms in and adjoining to the Huab Protected Area and generally combat rising environmental and other related crime in the region.

Where and if necessary, the project will raise funds to purchase farms outright as part of the Trust assets and rehabilitate those to a level where wildlife can be re-introduced to these farms.

It is important to note that this will require sensitising participating farmers to the critical ecological role key species such as the elephants have in developing a sustainable and holistic management approach to the entire area. If necessary, elephants from adjacent areas such as Omatjete can be relocated here as the environment is same as their current range areas and therefore will find it easier to adapt.

There is reason to believe that these two herds occasionally do intermingle, but more rigorous studies of their behaviour and range patterns need to be done to better understand their behaviour, breeding patterns and range area requirements.

Timeframe: 24-36 months

Funding: GiZ, institutional and own tourism-generated income

#### **Phase 4:**

#### **Extending Huab Protected Area, linking wildlife corridors to communal conservancy areas**

Once the core Huab Biosphere is successfully established as a running concern, this will be extended west and down-stream of the Huab River to link this Protected Area with communal conservancy areas and extend scientific, sustainable environmental management practises into these depleted areas.

In due course, the intent is to utilise and expand the Community-Based Natural Resource Management model into commercial and communal areas alike, with

emphasis on assisting the communal conservancies to better manage their resources and develop additional income streams.

Timeframe: 36 - 72 months

Funding: GRN, Institutional and own income.