Wilderness Programs for Social and Environmental Reform in South Africa
Today South Africa has more land and wildlife under conservation than over the past 200 years.

Just under 15% of South Africa is under some form of conservation land use.
Conservation in context

HIV Aids & poverty
The challenges facing us

Only 11% of all South Africans have experienced their natural heritage
Our approach

Sustainable nature conservation must be social, as well as economic and biological.

A crucial spark for a conservation ethic is the direct, personal experience of wild nature.
Wilderness trails
Opinion leaders
Imbewu/Pride
Working models

*Imbewu*
Traditional knowledge links wild lands, trees, animals and birds to the heart of the people.

Highlights creative use of existing conservation role models
Working models

*Opinion Leader Trails* provide a direct experience of wildlands and fosters open communication between conservation decision makers, members of parliament and informed grassroots social & environmental activists.
The goal of Umzi Wethu is to fulfil the employability potential of resilient, motivated youth displaced by HIV/AIDS and poverty by using the power of the wilderness, promoting personal wellness in a nurturing home context, providing credible training, and securing sustainable job placements in hospitality and eco-tourism establishments – while extending the program’s social outreach to others.
Umzi Components

**WILDERNESS TRAILS**

Personal growth and leadership
Overcome fears and challenges
Teach conservation principles
Share conservation ethos

An initiative of the WILDERNESS FOUNDATION SOUTH AFRICA
Umzi Components

ACCREDITED TRAINING

- Integrated practical work
- Broad exposure to work field
- Shadow work experience
- Opportunity for advancement
- Job placement on graduation
Successes to date

- More than **95%** job placement rate across the first 5 intakes (70 students)
- **85%** of graduates are employed (May 2010)
- One graduate from each intake awarded a scholarship for further career development
- **10%** of graduates accelerated to middle management positions
- Very low absconding rate
- Model has been fine tuned for replication
- New Catering Unit to generate jobs and for further training of graduates
Just what happens on a Pride trail?
1. Learners are collected from a central pick up point and transported into the Groendal Wilderness area, near Uitenhage.
2. Umzi Wethu/WF trail guides take students on an experiential education trail in the beautiful Groendal Wilderness area.
3. Students are taught about the importance of conserving local plants and animals.
4. Umzi students (trained as peer educators earlier in their program) round off the day with an interactive workshop focused on issues of HIV/AIDS, self-esteem, values etc.
5. Before going home, learners receive a light meal.
6. Learners complete journals and feedback forms which help them reflect on all they have learned about nature and themselves.
Central ethic of wilderness is sustainability - social and environmental