

# UCP NEWSFLASH #18

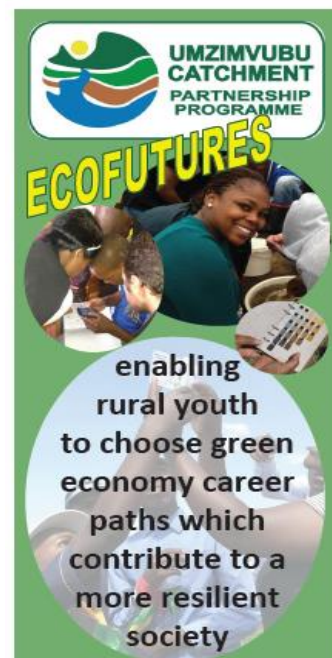
## ECOFUTURES UPDATE: EXPANSION!

The Ecofutures programme is a pilot project in the upper uMzimvubu catchment, catalysed through Green Trust funding in early 2017, with further support from CITI Foundation, which aims to open opportunities for local youth with limited tertiary access, within the local green economy. The pilot aims to develop a framework which can be used in other rural areas with high unemployment and landscape challenges: this aim makes the lessons along the way important to learn from! External support from Dartmouth College students have assisted UCP partners to evaluate and modify the approach to be more effective.

To learn more about Ecofutures, click here: [the EcoFutures blog](#).

This year's programme involves three core foci:

- fostering support for high school students in making green economy career choices;
- continued support for some of the initial group of 14 Ecofutures pilot participants;
- expanding the lessons from the pilot into the national YES programme (Youth Employment Services) in an effort to integrate the often marginalized rural youth sector.



As part of the **school support programme**, Conservation SA hosted a **green economy careers Expo** at Mvenyane High school in late February, focusing on senior phase students (grade 8-12) to provide career guidance for pursuing eco-inclusive entrepreneurship opportunities. The programme includes soliciting partnership agreements with three school governing bodies (Mvenyane, plus Mosa Sibi and Le Grange High schools in the Sibi and Nkosana areas north of Matatiele) to ensure maximum support going forward, and developing a hands-on curriculum of five key themes which are relevant for local issues, support the school curriculum, and which build capacity of local students to take action to address local problems.

The successful Expo involved over 300 students, and was supported by exhibitors from Matatiele Local Municipality, Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), DEDEAT, Rhodes University, Meat Naturally Pty, as well as local SMEs involved in biogas, charcoal production and recycling/waste management. Some of the initial Ecofutures participants acted as ambassadors to encourage youngsters to explore green economy careers.

The Expo themes included:

- Different careers in environmental sciences, business and sustainable agriculture
- Bee Keeping and honey production
- University entrance requirements for Rhodes University and what it takes to be in a university environment i.e. overcoming fear, freedom that comes with responsibility, dedication and know why you are in that space.
- Business value chains linked with alien plant clearing i.e. charcoal, biochar, biomass for cooking etc
- Waste management: 'turning trash into cash'
- Ecotourism, using village-based tourism to generate income
- Ecofutures Ambassadors sharing their journey with the programme
- The effects of climate change on our livelihoods, and importance of wetlands to our water security
- Options between studying to become an employee, and to become an employer / entrepreneur



Figure 1: expo participants at Mvenyane High School enjoying live presentations of green career options

The school support programme will help establish GEMS (Green Economy Management Science) Clubs for students to focus on their areas of interests, where different skills set and activities will be further explored. It will also provide an IT facilitator to the Mvenyane school computer centre to develop basic computer literacy skills, of fundamental importance as all countries embrace the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution where digital and ICT is taking the center stage.





**Figure 2: Sbhongile and Retha at EJS course sponsored by groundWork (two of the original pilot project participants)**

Two young ladies from the **original Ecofutures pilot group** (Rethabile Nthoba and Sibongile Masiu) are currently attending the 2019 **Environmental Justice School**, hosted by groundWork, a non-profit environmental justice organization based in Pietermaritzburg. The EJS fosters a strong understanding of the social justice challenges facing youth, helping to build knowledge of the broad economic and social contexts, both local and global, that give rise to social and environmental injustices, and developing appropriate skills to develop and manage campaigns and strategies to challenge environmental injustices. The ladies are being hosted by ERS during their year's training, part of which involves attending courses in PMB, as well as developing outreach projects to address local issues faced by their communities..

Lungiswa Nongalo, another of the pilot intake candidates, is attending the year long Herding Academy run by the SA College of Tourism in Graaf Reinet, along with 9 other local youth who have shown interest in rangeland management: two of

these candidates are Ecorangers whose talent was spotted while working on the *DEA Natural Resource Management Working for Water* projects facilitated by LIMA and ERS. The 10 students' fees are being covered through support from Conservation SA donors and the ERS Green Trust project, and will emerge with an NQF4 qualification, and skills to support the growing healthy rangeland-based livestock agricultural economy in the Matatiele area.

Another of the **Ecofutures pioneer group** is proving to be a great biomass value chain ambassador: Sthembiso Pita has taken the training he received during the original pilot phase and is running a small but sustainable charcoal business, Lumphindo Co-op, supplying charcoal to supermarkets and 'shisa-nyamas' in Matatiele for R25 per 5kg bag. His group are recycling maize bags into suitable 5kg units by hand stitching the bags with bale twine. Sthembiso featured on the recently produced RMB-funded short movie which tells the story of the vital Green Business Value Chain role in water security and wealth building. The film was initiated by UCP partner AVOCADO Vision., and can be seen at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By27v\\_JI57o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=By27v_JI57o)

An exciting element of the Ecofutures pilot lessons is **upscaling the approach for use in the emerging national YES programme**: WWF-SA and ERS have recruited 40 Ecofutures interns, supported by the First Rand Foundation, in an effort to reach more youth in the water source areas across the rural South African landscape. Another 80 interns will be included in the following two years, making a total of 120 youth ambassadors. The aim is that interns will become resources for their respective communities, able to generate income themselves as entrepreneurs, or have sufficient skills to become attractive as employees, while contributing to the local economy through their actions and careers, including as livestock farming and support, bee-keeping, biomass processing (charcoal, biochar, fodder, etc)



**Figure 3: Herding Academy students from Matatiele show off their new outfits**



**Figure 4: Sthembiso demonstrates his low-tech charcoal system to the RMB-funded film crew**

**Watch this space as exciting green economy career guidance and internships unfold, building on the Ecofutures lessons!**

ECOFUTURES is a collaborative concept developed and driven by UCPP partners, facilitated by ERS with WWF Nedbank Green Trust support. Conservation SA is collaborating on a key component of the entrepreneurial training with support from CITI Foundation.

