

1.0 Preamble/Introduction

This paper posits on issues dealing with aspects of sustainable use of natural resources through conservation of biodiversity in Chobe National Park (CNP). Chobe national Park is located in the northern part of Botswana within the Chobe district covering an area of 10 590 km² and is arguably one of the country's premier conservation. It was created on 14th July 1960 as a game reserve and this was later upgraded to become the first national park on 31st August 1967. CNP is the second largest park in Botswana and has one of the greatest concentrations of game found in the African continent. A major feature of CNP is the elephant population currently estimated at around 120 000. The park comprises four distinct ecosystems/thematic areas; Chobe River Front with floodplains and thick teak forest, Savuti marsh in the west, the linyanti swamps in the North West and the hot dry winter land in between.

2.0 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the CRF congestion alongside with its threats to biodiversity. There is a general concern of the congestion of the Chobe River Front (CRF) section from Sedudu entrance gate to Serondela picnic site covering a distance of 17 km. CRF find itself as a centre of attraction for game viewing due to its scenic beauty and animal population. It is a small section of the CNP and it is used by all tour operators and private individuals, hence environmental sustainability is compromised. Several meetings were held with members of the tourism industry and other government officials. It was started by giving the stakeholders the opportunity to put forward their proposal but it became evident that they have not met to discuss. However they were given another opportunity to come up with suggestions as individuals, but this did not yield any conclusive results but a number of concerns were raised as some of the factors contributing to congestion:

- Non implementation of the river front management plan
- No common management plan for utilisation of the river front for both the Botswana and the Namibian side.

Contrary to the popular belief that day trippers also contribute to the congestion it was that this people arrive into the park around 0900hours and depart at around 1500 hours when there are little or no game drive activities. Government officials however were worried that the industry was more concerned on the life of their businesses rather than the sustainability of the environment in question. The Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) mission is to effectively conserve the fish and wildlife of Botswana in consultation with local, regional and international stakeholders for the benefit of present and future generations. The DWNP in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism (MEWT), tour operators and other government departments proposed a number of solutions to solve the congestion along the riverfront. Among the four features or zones the CRF is of major concern as far as the congestion is concerned, hence the DWNP has found it fit to come up with mitigation measures as part of the

decongestion strategy that will be discussed fully in this report. Although there are some information gaps where supporting data does not exist, it is nevertheless hoped that the report will assist in future regional, national and district planning processes and guide environmental survey and monitoring activities in the country. Figure 1 below shows the geographical location of CNP in Botswana;

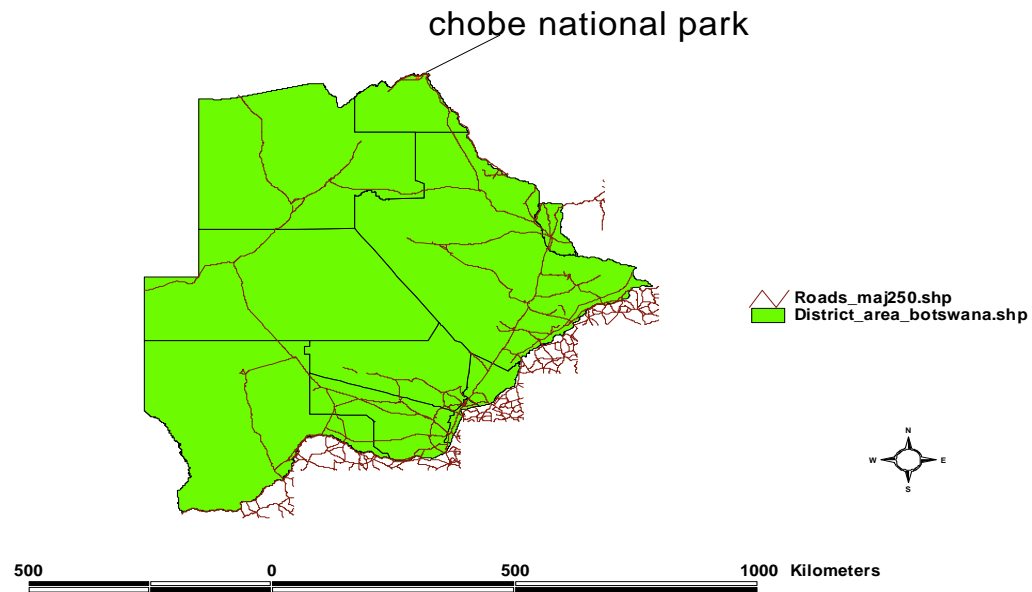


Figure 1: Thematic map of the area

3.0 Aim (s) of the strategy

The main objective of this report is to provide an operational tool for the management of the CRF through reduction/alleviation of congestion for the benefit of present and future generations. The implementation of the strategy will be done in phases to address the objective (s) of the project which include the following;

(i) Booking system for the river front

- One way traffic system (game drive) – **signage and colour tokens in place**

-One way movement around Sedudu Island (boat cruise) – **already in place**

(ii) Professional guide code of conduct- **already in place**

(iii) Client registration form (to be used for confirmation of booking) – **already in place**

(iv) Drilling of boreholes and game drive routes – **already done and preliminary animal counts on those boreholes has been done to determine their utilisation.**

4.0 Implementation of one-way game viewing routes/ Booking System

As far as the booking system is concerned DWNP has introduced a three- one- way traffic movement along CNP river bank. Entry into the park would be by booking/reservation (Sedudu entrance gate) prior to any activity to be conducted in the park. The three routes include the following; **the river front route, upper route and nogatshaa junction route**. The use of the routes will be identified by colour coded circular plastic tokens of a 10cm diameter hanging on the inside rear view mirror for ease of view for any passing vehicle. The fees for each route will be different with the river bank route being much higher than the other two. The carrying capacity per route would be 25 vehicles resulting to 75 vehicles per session. The maximum number of vehicles per company will be limited to two and companies will be allowed to wait- list on first come first serve basis such that in the case that the number 75 is not reached by closing time then they can be allowed into the park. The bookings will be done up to a week in advance and confirmation done after 2 days and bookings can also be done up to the last day for walk-in clients provided the number 25 is not exceeded in each route. The client registration form for tour operators will be used as confirmation of their booking. The Tshwaragano project would be used for bookings upon its completion but when the system is down bookings will be done manually. Booking confirmations will be done by telephone or by fax. One telephone line (hot line) will be set aside for bookings to avoid inconveniences when the usual

line is busy. In due course bookings will also be done through internet to avoid long queues at the gate and waiting to make a phone call when it is engaged.

4.1.1 River Bank Route

The river bank route runs along the chobe river from Sedudu gate to Serondela and the way back is only along the major road sedudu-ihaha. The area past of Serondela will not be part of the decongestion strategy. The colour token for the route is **blue**. Directional sign posts showing entry and exit points are already in place. This is where most of wildlife can be observed especially early morning and late afternoon as they come for drinking. Animals such as elephants, impala, kudu, lions, red lechwe etc are mostly observed in this area. The area is covered with mixed woodland but mostly dominated by *Baikea plurijuga*, *Caparis tomentosa* and Combretum species. Along that route there is a stretch point along puku flats commonly known as mahogany stretch point. 17 km from Sedudu lies the Serondela picnic site where tourists are allowed to stretch their legs and enjoy their refreshments. Ablution blocks are also available at the site. The river route will attract a higher fee/price as compared to the other two routes because of its scenic beauty. Fees still to be announced once agreed upon by relevant authorities.

4.1.2 Upper Route

The route starts from Sedudu gate then turn left at Sedudu valley while the river bank route goes to the right. Way back is along Ngoma-Sedudu tarred road and the colour token is **red**. It runs up to a point where it intersects with fire break 9 where borehole BH 10666 is located. Vegetation along this route is dominated mostly by Baikea woodland of approximately more than 5m tall. Elephants are mostly seen in this area and as you drive along firebreak 9 more of wildlife is observed at the water hole such as tshessebe, zebra, and sable antelope. Grazing is much better than at the river bank due to the concentration of wildlife. **A stretch point need to be establish in this route where tourists can stop and stretch their legs before proceeding with their game drive because the route is very long.**

4.1.3 Nogatshaa Junction Route

Starts from Sedudu gate and goes along the park boundary towards nogatshaa (southwards) and the way back is along Ngoma-Sedudu tarred road. The colour token is **green**. Two boreholes being BH 10667 and BH 10668 are located along that route and on the other side along the park boundary perpendicular to the Sedudu- Ngoma tarred road lies CNP 1. **There is a proposal to erect a road that connects the three boreholes in order to reduce the distance of travel along that route.** The area is much dominated by grasslands/mixed woodland and most of the ungulates are observed in that area such as eland, elephants, zebra, buffalo etc.

5.0 Implementation of one - way river route

Movement in the Chobe River will be in a one - way clockwise direction around the Sedudu Island from the DWNP jetty point.

- A maximum of 15 four stroke engine boats of minimum capacity of 12 seats will be allowed on this route at any given time.
- Each company is not allowed more than two boats and is not permitted to bring in more than a total of 45 clients per river session.
- Reservations for the use of the river is to be done a day before visits and this would be done at sedudu wildlife gate.
- Confirmations will still be done by a completed client registration form and registrations will still be done at the jetty point upon entry for only those that have opened registration book with sedudu office. **See appendix.**
- Companies will be allowed to wait list on first come first serve basis such that in the case the number 15 is not reached by closing time then they can be allowed into the park.

Table 1: Time sessions for users in the Eastern Riverfront

As part of the alleviation of traffic along the river bank it is proposed that entry times be fixed as per the table below;

Seasonal period	Tour operators	Self drives and day trippers
1 st April – 30 th September	Morning: 0600-0900 hrs	0900-1430hrs
	Afternoon: 1430-1830hrs	
1 st October - 31 st March	Morning:0530-0900hrs	

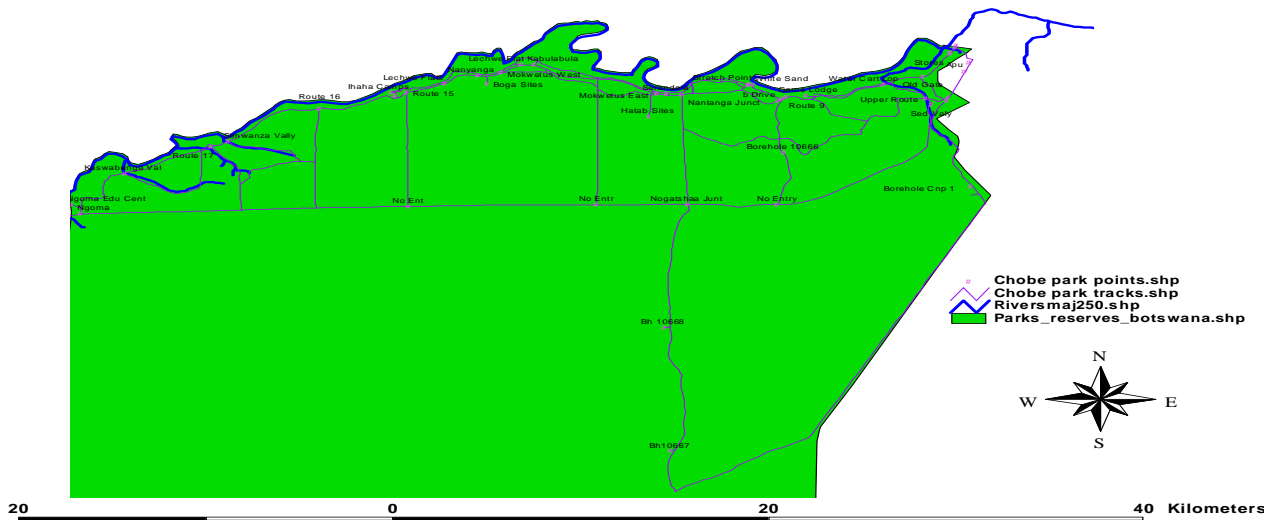
	Afternoon: 1430-1900hrs	0900-1430hrs
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According to table 1 above each session will be divided into morning and afternoon drive with self drives only allowed to use the park during low peak hours when tour operators are still at their lodges. The time sessions will change with seasonal fluctuations as stated in the **Wildlife and National Parks Act of 2000**.

6.0 Water Development

The second possible solution was to drill boreholes and construct natural water points with a network of game viewing routes. There was a proposal to erect a short-cut route that connect the three boreholes in the Nogatshaa route as the route was said to be very long to conduct a 3 hour game drive. One borehole (BH 10666) was drilled along fire break 9 in the northern part of the tarred road and three boreholes (CNP 1, BH 10667 and BH 10668) were drilled in the southern part of the tarred road. See map below:

Figure 2: River front map showing game viewing route and watering points (courtesy of M. Mafa & L. Habala, 2011)



7.0 Expected outputs:

- Full implementation and compliance with the strategy.

8.0 Anticipated obstacles of implementation:

Coordination of the implementation of the strategy has been charged to DWNP.

- Lack of transport to implement the strategy fully in

ensuring everyone follows the route that they had booked for.

- Lack of cooperation and commitment by tour operators and DWNP staff in ensuring that the strategy comes to a success.
- Delays by tour operators in informing their booking agents to get on board in relation to the strategy.

9.0 Mitigation measures to address anticipated difficulties:

- Prioritise allocation of transport and other resources that would allow full operation of the strategy in terms of visitor service patrols. Dedicated vehicle and boat patrols along these routes will be conducted to monitor that park users are keeping the allocated routes and abide by the code of conduct. See code of conduct on **appendix**.
- Vehicles that are caught contravening the above strategy will be dealt with in accordance with section 35 of the National Parks and Game Reserves regulations, which states that:
 - (1) *“If a professional guide contravenes the act, the regulations or any other law, the professional guide may be issued with a warning by a wildlife officer in the form set out in the fifth schedule.*
 - (2) *Any professional guide who receives a warning under sub regulation (1) may appeal in writing against the warning to the Director within 14 days of the date of issue of the warning.*
 - (3) *The Director may, at his sole discretion; having received and taken into consideration a written report from the issuing wildlife officer cancel or confirm the warning.*
 - (4) *Where the Director cancels the warning in terms of sub regulation (3) he shall notify the Officer-in-Charge of the cancellation of the warning, giving reasons for the cancellation.*
 - (5) *A professional guide who receives two warnings within one calendar year or who is convicted of an offence under the Act or the regulations shall have his professional guides licence withdrawn by the Director for such period as the Director may determine”.*
- Sensitize both DWNP staff and tour operators during LACOM meetings and other forums on the benefit of the strategy as a long term benefit on the sustainability of the environment.

- Give tour operators a grace period to inform their counterparts.

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND NATIONAL PARKS



SEDUDU GATE, TELEPHONE N: 6251772/6250235, FAX NO. 6251623

REFERENCE NO:

NAME OF COMPANY: _____

Dear Sir / Madam

PROVISIONAL BOOKING – RIVER BANK ROUTE

I am pleased that you are planning to visit Chobe National Park and I have accordingly provisionally made your reservation for access to River bank route on _____ from 0600hrs to 0900hrs or from 1430hrs to 1830hrs.

This route from Sedudu gate to Serondela is always in great demand and can therefore only hold this reservation until _____ by which time I know you will have confirmed it by submitting a completed client registration form. The client registration form can be delivered at Sedudu gate or at the reception office at Regional Wildlife Office in Kasane.

Yours faithfully,

**RESERVATIONS OFFICER
SEDUDU GATE**

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE AND NATIONAL PARKS



PROVISIONAL BOOKING FORM

SEDUDU GATE, TELEPHONE NO: 6251772/6250235, FAX NO. 6251623

REFERENCE NO:

NAME OF COMPANY : _____

Dear Sir / Madam

BOOKING CONFIRMATION – RIVER BANK ROUTE

I have the pleasure of confirming the above booking.

Please ensure that this confirmation is presented at the entrance gate on arrival at the park as access to the route cannot be acceded to until this is done.

As you look forward to driving on this route. I will like to draw your attention to the following:

- The river bank route starts at Sedudu entrance gate up to Serondela.
- The river bank route is a one way route from Sedudu gate to Serondela i.e there is no driving from Serondela to Sedudu gate.
- Exit out of the park is from Serondela along the Nogatshaa junction route to the tyred road or Serondela to Ihaha and to the tyred road at Ngoma gate.
- While you have booked to use river bank route you can also drive in any other route in the park except:
 - **Upper junction route**
 - Starts at Sedudud gate, up Sedudu valley, turns at Borehole number 10666 up to Nogatshaa junction at the tyred road.
 - **Nogatshaa junction route**
 - Starts at Sedudu gate and goes along the boundary towards Nogatshaa (South west) up to the tyred road.

Below are the times you are allowed to be on this route:

SPECIAL PERIOD	SESSION
1 st April – 30 th September	Morning : 0600hrs – 0900hrs Afternoon: 1430hrs – 1830 hrs
1 st October – 31 st March	Morning : 0600hrs – 0900hrs

	Afternoon: 1430hrs - 1900 hrs
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Yours faithfully,

**RESERVATIONS OFFICER
SEDUDU GATE**

PROFESSIONAL GUIDES CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHOBE NATIONAL PARK

The aim of this code of conduct is to enhance the quality of experience and safety offered to visitors to Chobe National Park and to ensure the sustainability of its ecotourism.

GENERAL CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Impart knowledge to clients voluntarily.
2. Switch off cell phones.
3. Alcohol and other intoxicating substances are not allowed.
4. No smoking is allowed.
5. Remove and dispose litter appropriately.
6. Collect any permissible scientific and educational information.
7. Always be honest, sincere and professional.
8. Know all the emergency procedures.

GAME DRIVES

1. Entry into the park should always be at designated entry points where completed vehicle and client's registration forms must be deposited.
2. A reasonable following distance of **300 to 500m** should be kept between vehicles.
3. Maximum driving speed should be **40km/hr**.
4. Only **four vehicles** are allowed per sighting and a maximum of **5 minutes** should be spent by each vehicle.

5. Parking should be done with two-side wheels on the road and the other two-side wheels off the road to avoid **off-road driving**.
6. Minimise disturbance to animals to avoid wilful obstruction to other park users.
7. No guide should inform another of a sighting through a mobile device, radios and/or cell phones are for emergency purposes only.
8. Respect the animal's living space; do not go too close to animals.
9. The first person at the sighting should be given priority, never block another vehicle.
10. Always stick to the side where the sighting is, to give way to other vehicles.
11. Slow down to avoid accidents and unnecessary dust when you approach another vehicle head on.

BOAT CRUISES

1. Entry into the park should always be via the Jetty point where client's registration forms must be deposited.
2. Only four stroke engine boats shall be used to transport clients into the park.
3. A maximum speed 15km/hr should be adhered to.
4. For safety ensure that life jackets are always available for your clients.
5. There should be a maximum of four boats per sighting and only five minutes will be allowed per boat.
6. A distance of 20to 50m should be kept between a boat and the following:
 - (a) Animals such as hippos or crossing elephants.
 - (b) Birds and crocodile nest sites.
 - (c) The river banks and island edges
7. Only boats of a size approved by DWNP should enter the park.
8. Movement in the river should be in a one-way clockwise direction around the Sedudu Island form the Jetty point.
9. Any guide operating a boat on the river should be a reasonably competent swimmer and must always wear a life jacket.

10. Keep a sharp lookout for dug-out-canoes and fishing nets on the river and ensure that your driving does not endanger them.

CHOBE NATIONAL PARK VISITORS CODE OF CONDUCT

The aim of this code of conduct is to enhance the quality of experience and safety offered to visitors to Chobe National Park and to ensure the sustainability of its ecotourism.

GAME DRIVES

1. Entry into the park should always be at designated entry points where payments are made.
2. A reasonable following distance of **300 to 500m** should be kept between vehicles.
3. Maximum driving speed should be **40km/hr**.
4. Only **four vehicles** are allowed per sighting and a maximum of **5 minutes** should be spent by each vehicle.
5. Parking should be done with two-side wheels on the road and the other two-side wheels off the road to avoid off-road driving.
6. **DRIVING OFF THE ROAD IS STRICKLY PROHIBITED.**
7. Minimise disturbance to animals to avoid wilful obstruction to other park users.
8. Do not inform another of a sighting through a mobile device, radios and/or cell phones are for emergency purposes only.
9. Respect the animal's living space; do not go too close to animals.
10. The first person at the sighting should be given priority, never block another vehicle.
11. Always stick/park to the side where the sighting is, to give way to other vehicles.
12. Slow down to avoid accidents and unnecessary dust when you approach another vehicle head on.

BOAT CRUISES

11. Entry into the park should always be via the Jetty point after making payments at Sedudu gate.
12. Only four stroke engine boats shall be used to transport clients into the park.
13. A maximum speed 15km/hr should be adhered to.
14. For safety ensure that life jackets are always available.
15. There should be a maximum of four boats per sighting and only five minutes will be allowed per boat.
16. A distance of 20to 50m should be kept between a boat and the following:
 - (d) Animals such as hippos or crossing elephants.
 - (e) Birds and crocodile nest sites.
 - (f) The river banks and island edges
17. Only boats of a size approved by DWNP should enter the park.
18. Movement in the river should be in a one-way clockwise direction around the Sedudu Island form the Jetty point.
19. Any guide operating a boat on the river should be a reasonably competent swimmer and must always wear a life jacket.
20. Keep a sharp lookout for dug-out-canoes and fishing nets on the river and ensure that your driving does not endanger them.