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Economic Development, Environment,
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NORTH WEST MOVES TO STRENGTHEN RURAL BENEFITS FROM WILDLIFE ECONOMY AS HUNTING SEASON CLOSES

The North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) is strengthening collaboration with traditional authorities and rural communities to ensure that the province's wildlife resources support conservation while creating opportunities for rural economic development and sustainable livelihoods.

The 2026 hunting season, which ran from 01 May to 31 August, provided an opportunity for the Department to create, facilitate and promote responsible and sustainable utilisation of wildlife resources, strengthen compliance with applicable legislation and assess the contribution of the hunting sector to the provincial wildlife economy.

North West MEC for DEDECT, Bitsa Lenkopane, convened traditional leaders through the North West House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, led by Kgosi Thari Maotwe, for an engagement marking the close of the 2026 hunting season at Sun City Resort in Moses Kotane Local Municipality.

The engagement focused on strengthening the role of traditional authorities and communities living alongside wildlife, particularly in ensuring that they participate meaningfully in the economic opportunities associated with hunting, tourism and related wildlife value chains.

Addressing traditional leaders, MEC Lenkopane said conservation and economic development should not be treated as competing priorities, but should be pursued in a manner that protects wildlife resources while creating tangible opportunities for communities.

“This close-out is not a once-off event. It is part of a broader programme to strengthen compliance, conservation and wildlife initiatives that deliver tangible economic opportunities. We want to build a wildlife economy that protects our natural resources while creating meaningful opportunities for rural communities,” said MEC Lenkopane.

She said the Department would intensify collaboration with traditional authorities, hunting associations, landowners and communities to strengthen hunting permit administration and compliance with permit conditions and biodiversity management requirements. Joint compliance and enforcement and capacity-building efforts will also be strengthened in priority hunting areas.

The engagement also addressed legislative reform and mechanisms to improve community beneficiation from wildlife resources. MEC Lenkopane announced plans to resuscitate the North West Wildlife Forum as a platform for sustained engagement between government, traditional authorities and other stakeholders on biodiversity conservation, wildlife management and the development of the wildlife economy.

“We need structured platforms where traditional leaders and communities can contribute to decisions that affect wildlife resources in their areas. Stronger participation will help us build greater accountability, improve compliance and identify opportunities for local economic participation,” said MEC Lenkopane.

MEC Lenkopane further called on traditional leaders to promote responsible management of hunting quotas, accurate reporting and compliance with applicable legislation. She emphasised that good governance and responsible hunting practices are critical to maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the wildlife sector.

As part of the close-out programme, traditional leaders whose contributions demonstrated good practice in hunting administration, compliance, sustainable hunting practices, accurate reporting and skilled tracking were recognised and honoured.

The recognition sought to promote responsible stewardship and a culture of compliance, while acknowledging the contribution of traditional leadership to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable development of rural communities.

The hunting sector remains an important component of the North West wildlife economy, supporting biodiversity conservation and generating economic activity through hunting, tourism and related services.

The Department will continue working with traditional authorities, hunting associations, landowners, communities and other stakeholders to strengthen sustainable wildlife management and expand opportunities for rural communities to participate in and benefit from the province's wildlife economy.

Issued by the Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism

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