

SANParks receives Top Award for enabling people with disabilities to access the natural environment

South African National Parks was honoured at the 2003 Rob Filmer Awards. The awards are hosted annually by Eco-Access, the country's leading environmental/disability organisation, and were held at the Sandton Convention Centre on World Environment Day in June 2003. Tourism Director Glenn Phillips accepted the award on behalf of SANParks. Chris Patton also received a special achievement award for his contribution to getting people with disabilities into the parks.

SANParks received the award due to cumulative efforts that have been made throughout the organisation to make the parks accessible to all visitors regardless of their physical, sensory and mental ability. Most parks host accommodation that has been converted to enable access by the mobility impaired, while many other facilities have ramps, firm pathways, accessible ablutions and other enabling features. SANParks Chief Executive annually sponsors visits to the parks by groups of school children with disabilities, free of any accommodation and conservation charges. Of particular acclaim were the PPC Cement -Discovery Trail at Addo Elephant National Park (a wonderful combination of park, private sector and volunteer honorary ranger interaction) and the Penguin Boardwalk at Boulders Beach, Cape Peninsula National Park received special mention as outstanding facilities, while the disability pages on the SANParks website www.parks-sa.co.za <<http://www.parks-sa.co.za>> > TOURISM > Accessibility were held as one of the most comprehensive disability registers anywhere.



Tourism Manager Chris Patton and Honorary Rangers Chairman Ernie Blom hold the Rob Filmer Awards certificates while Tourism Director Glenn Phillips and General Manager Operations: Parks, Fundisile Mketeni look on. **(Click on photo for a larger view)**

In accepting the awards, it was conceded that while there are many wonderful accessibility successes in the organisation, there are still many ongoing challenges ahead to ensure that the parks are truly accessible to all people and hence the 'pride and joy of all South Africans'.

The awards were featured in the Sunday press and was also flighted on SABC2's 50/50 on Sunday evening.