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UNIVERSITY

**Call for applications: Two-year funded Masters opportunity (2022 to 2023)**  
**The social-ecological dynamics of sustainable wildlife use in southern Africa**  
**Deadline: 22 August 2021**

**Project background**

The *Resilient Waters Project*, funded by USAID Southern Africa, aims to build more resilient Southern African communities and ecosystems through improved management of transboundary natural resources. To achieve this objective, *Resilient Waters* collaborates with regional institutions, including river basin organisations and Transfrontier Conservation Areas, to examine the critical intersection of social-ecological systems. The program focuses on the Okavango and Limpopo river basins, with the aim of improving transboundary water security, increasing access to safe drinking water, strengthening ability of communities to adapt to climate change, and conserving biodiversity and ecosystems.

Ecotourism and sustainable wildlife use (hunting, meat and wildlife sales) are common mechanisms for promoting biodiversity conservation in southern Africa, while also providing livelihoods to the people that live with this biodiversity. The role of sustainable wildlife use in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable and equitable development is, however, highly debated. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and other national and local policies recognize the role that well-managed wildlife use can play. Events such as the killing of 'Cecil the lion' by an American hunter in Zimbabwe, however, have sparked global outrage, particularly the trophy hunting of charismatic species in southern Africa. International pressure based on moral and ethical grounds is increasing to ban legal hunting altogether. Those opposed to hunting further argue that legal hunting in developing countries is not sustainable, threatening species, and that the benefits do not accrue to local people, due to corruption and poor legislation and management. Despite the limited evidence pro or against legal hunting, global outrage around trophy hunting in southern Africa is contributing to tangible policy changes. For example, Botswana banned trophy hunting, and subsequently made the controversial decision to lift this ban. Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe allow trophy hunting, but are impacted by international pressure leading to airline bans on trophy imports. How resilient would conservation in southern Africa be to the loss of wildlife use?

This project seeks to understand the social-ecological dynamics of sustainable wildlife use in different contexts across southern Africa, through both a synthesis of existing information, and new case studies.

### **Opportunity for Masters student**

We seek a Masters student who is interested in addressing one or more of the following objectives, for a study system within either the Okavango or Limpopo River Basins:

- 1) To assess the ecological sustainability of wildlife use and its contribution towards achieving biodiversity conservation objectives. Specifically, whether and where populations remain stable or decline and why, and whether ecosystems are conserved in these areas.
- 2) To assess when and why sustainable wildlife use contributes to human well-being. For example, what benefits (material and nonmaterial) and costs from wildlife use accrue to the people that live in or adjacent to the area, the attitudes of local people towards wildlife use, and how institutional contexts influence these outcomes.
- 3) To assess whether and how sustainable wildlife use contributes to rural economies.
- 4) To explore possible alternative futures for conservation in southern Africa, should sustainable wildlife use become increasingly unviable.

### **Call for applications**

This Masters project will involve synthesizing existing research, as well as on-the-ground data collection for a case study system in either the Limpopo or Okavango River Basin. The specific topic, research approach and case study can be developed based on the skills and interests of the student. The ideal candidate should have a strong academic track-record, critical thinking and analytical skills, possess a keen interest in sustainability issues and conservation science, and be an independent thinker who is open to collaboration and keen to participate in the events and activities of the Centre. Experience in GIS and statistical analysis, and/or in conducting interviews and running focus groups, will be advantageous. Students with a background in natural and/or social sciences will be considered.

The successful candidate will be supervised by Dr Hayley Clements and based at the Centre for Sustainability Transitions (CST), Stellenbosch University, South Africa (<http://www.sun.ac.za/cst>). The candidate will be co-supervised by Prof Enrico Di Minin at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Studies will generally be registered within the CST's MPhil in Sustainable Development in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, but other options can be considered.

### **Value**

Masters full-time over 2 years: ZAR120 000 p.a., excluding field costs. There will be additional funding for field costs and registration fees.

### **Requirements**

Applicants need to be southern African nationals from one of these countries: Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, or Zimbabwe. All students should have completed a three-year undergraduate degree AND one-year Honours degree, or equivalent, to be eligible. Students need a 65% minimum pass for their Honours to be considered. All candidates should show evidence of strong scholarly performance and commitment to publishing. Preference will be given to students who can work independently, are well organized and who will be willing to participate in the regular activities of the CST.

## To apply

Interested candidates should send:

- a motivation letter (detailing why you are well-suited to undertake this project, including your previous experience, your skills, your general area of interest, as well as which aspects of the project most interest you and your ideas regarding research on these aspects),
- a detailed CV that includes your academic record, previous work experience, skills, any scientific publications on which you have been an author, and the names and contact details of at least two academic referees,
- transcripts of academic qualifications,
- at least one example of recent written work (e.g. a paper, report, thesis chapter).

Please submit your applications electronically to Dr Hayley Clements: hayleyclements@sun.ac.za

We encourage you to submit your application as soon as possible, but latest by **22 August 2021**.

CST and Stellenbosch University reserve the right to not fill the post if there are no suitable candidates who meet the requirements.

## Key readings

Angula, H.N., Stuart-Hill, G., Ward, D., Matongo, G., Diggle, R.W., & Naidoo, R. (2018) Local perceptions of trophy hunting on communal lands in Namibia. *Biological Conservation*, **218**, 26–31.

Di Minin, E., Clements, H.S., Correia, R.A., Corte, G., Fink, C., Haukka, A., Hausmann, A., Kulkarni, R., & Bradshaw, C.J.A. (2021) Consequences of recreational hunting for biodiversity conservation and livelihoods. *One Earth*, **4**, 238–253.

Dube, N. (2019) Voices from the village on trophy hunting in Hwange district, Zimbabwe. *Ecological Economics*, **159**, 335–343.

Mbaiwa, J.E. (2018) Effects of the safari hunting tourism ban on rural livelihoods and wildlife conservation in Northern Botswana. *South African Geographical Journal*, **100**, 41–61.

Naidoo, R., Weaver, L.C., Diggle, R.W., Matongo, G., Stuart-Hill, G., & Thouless, C. (2016) Complementary benefits of tourism and hunting to communal conservancies in Namibia. *Conservation Biology*, **30**, 628–638.