

MEDIA RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 2011

MAROPENG LEADS THE WAY IN GREENING INITIATIVES

With sustainability being foremost on political and business agendas around the world, going green and the importance of recycling is at last being taken seriously by businesses and industries in South Africa. One that is leading the way and has been at the forefront of innovation when it comes to setting the green standard is award-winning tourist attraction, Maropeng.

As the visitor centre for the Cradle of Humankind, it is one of only eight World Heritage Sites in South Africa, and the only one in Gauteng. It welcomes more than 250 000 visitors each year and strongly believes in both educating as well as setting an example when it comes to fostering a healthy respect for the planet's resources and efforts to conserve and protect them.

From its dedicated green team tasked with the ongoing job of reducing its carbon footprint and training staff in the ways of being eco-friendly, to its pro-active environmental responsibility programme and innovative water conservation technology, Maropeng truly is an ambassador for responsible tourism in South Africa.

Maropeng's operations manager, Zanomsa Zozi heads up the green team and has put a number of environmental policies in place and made them routine. "These include simple actions such as turning lights off at the end of the working day to ensuring that all waste is separated correctly so that it can be recycled," says Zozi.

With the many school-goers that Maropeng welcomes daily, it strongly believes in supporting educators in enlightening these future leaders in the ways of being eco-friendly. The educational resource packs, put together in partnership with the Gauteng and national departments of education, have been compiled with conservation and sustainability in mind. Aimed at Grade 11 and 12 learners, these packs are free and available for anyone to download on the Maropeng website.

The Visitor Centre is another way in which Maropeng is reinforcing its “go green” message. Here visitors and learners can explore a permanent exhibition that is dedicated to assessing the impact that the world’s population is having on the environment.

The recent construction of a new ozone wastewater purification system at the Sterkfontein Caves is the latest environmentally friendly initiative. “The system uses ozone from the atmosphere to accelerate the breaking down of solids by bacteria and also to sterilise water. It has been designed to replace Sterkfontein’s septic tanks and provide a far more eco-friendly solution to waste management in the area,” comments Mark Fouché, environmental and maintenance manager at Maropeng.

Another water management initiative is an artificial wetland system, called a SSF CWS – Subsurface Flow Constructed Wetland System at Maropeng’s Visitor Centre. The wetland has been specially designed to naturally assist in the filtering and cleansing of the site’s grey and black water. It has been in existence at Maropeng since it first opened and was constructed in order to conserve energy by minimising the site’s reliance on sewage processing plants.

“From the start, Maropeng has been environmentally focussed and we are continuously looking at innovative ways to reduce our wastage,” says Fouché. “Maropeng’s Heritage Environmental status is currently silver and we are engaged in a strategy to achieve gold status. The process is intensive but we are committed to making it a reality.”

Maropeng is continuously re-evaluating and celebrating the measures put in place to reduce its environmental footprint. “The careful management of this unique site is a clear priority if the site is to be preserved and sustainably utilised,” concludes Fouché.

ENDS

COMPILED ON BEHALF OF MAROPENG BY CATHY FINDLEY PUBLIC RELATIONS. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT NICOLLE KAIRUZ ON (011) 463 6372 OR NICOLLE@FINDLEYPR.CO.ZA.