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## Making light work

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Bobcat's E35 compact excavator made light work of the recent construction of Mafunyane, a rustic overnight campsite that forms part of a new 4x4 eco trail in the Kruger National Park.

Located in the north-western part of the Kruger National Park, Mafunyane site forms the third overnight stop on the new 200km 4x4 eco trail which is a SANParks initiative. Entering through Phalaborwa gate, the five-day trail takes 4x4 and wildlife enthusiasts north with the first over-night at Nyari camp, followed by Malopene and Mafunyane. The last evening is spent at Shidzivane camp before leaving the Kruger Park through the Punda Maria gate.

According to Shaun O'Brien who is a SANParks Honorary Ranger, "the trail will help towards generating income for SANParks." The Honorary Rangers is the official volunteer group working in support of South Africa's national parks. "We are all volunteers receiving no rewards for what we are doing, except for the satisfaction of knowing we are making a difference." A major part of their contribution is to raise funds in support of conservation activities in the parks. With the ever increasing pressure on our parks, the SANParks Honorary Ranger's work is playing an important role to help ensure the sustainability of the parks.

Bobcat Director, Deryck Jordan, said that "When we were approached by the SANParks Honorary Rangers to supply an excavator to assist with the construction of Mafunyane, we did not hesitate to come to their aid because it gives us a great opportunity to become part of this worthy cause and join the battle in trying to eliminate the poaching scourge gripping our nature reserves." Deryck contacted Bobcat Operations Manager, Ian Caulfield, who, together with Shaun, took care of the logistics.

"We not only made a compact excavator and two attachments, a bucket and an auger, available for this project, but we also provided a trained machine operator, Adam, as well as a 5-ton Rollback truck and qualified driver, John, to transport the excavator to the camp site," explained Ian.

Mafunyane means 'Irritable One' and was the name given to one of the magnificent seven 'big tuskers' that once roamed the Kruger Park around the area where the campsite is located. The unfenced camp site would consist of two open shower structures and two eco toilets, all of which had to be skilfully camouflaged to blend in with the surrounding bush.

"With a small Honorary Rangers volunteer group of 23 people from the East Rand Region, we only had a limited window of one week which started with the long weekend in August, in which to complete the project so we had a lot of work ahead of us," continues Shaun. "Because we could not afford any equipment failure, we relied heavily on the Bobcat's performance and reliability. Due to its extremely remote location, the camp site is difficult to reach and the rough terrain slowed the progress of our convoy."

"Once we reached the camp site, we noted that, since the heavy rains in January, the high clay content soil had become extremely hard after drying out. With none of us being builders by trade, the project, which included excavation of 2 x 10m long trenches to serve as the drainage system for the open showers, digging of 2 x 4m, 2m wide and 2m deep, pits for the two echo toilets and drilling countable holes for the poles, would not have been possible without the Bobcat excavator, expertly operated by Adam," says Shaun emphatically. "Thanks to the Bobcat team, we completed all the excavation and digging work in one and a half days. We were also impressed by the machine's high manoeuvrability which enabled us to complete the construction with minimal disruption to the surrounding bush."

The Mafunyane 4x4 eco trail, which is open during the dry season only (April to August), is only the second overnight 4x4 trail in the Kruger Park. No more than five vehicles are allowed on the trail at a time, accompanied by an armed guide, "because the four camp sites are unfenced," added Shaun. "The trail takes you through remote and little explored parts of the Kruger Park and offers a phenomenal 4x4 and wild life experience, concluded Shaun and invites 4x4 and wild life enthusiasts to visit the SANParks Honorary

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