NAMIBIA SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

Beyond Conservation

Rewilding a Desert for Nature and People

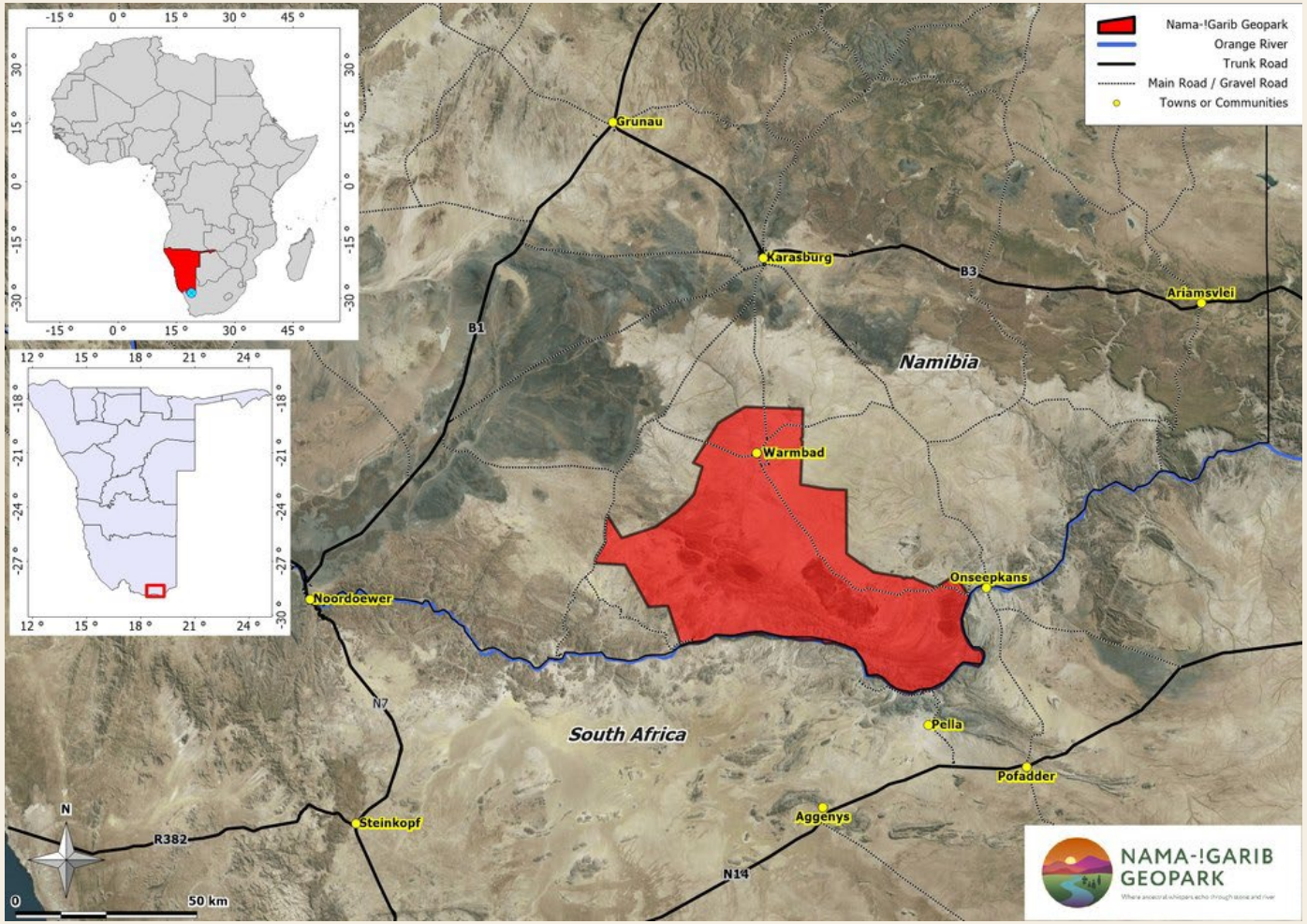
The ORKCA and Geopark Story

Nabot Mbeeli, CEO of ORKCA

5 November 2026



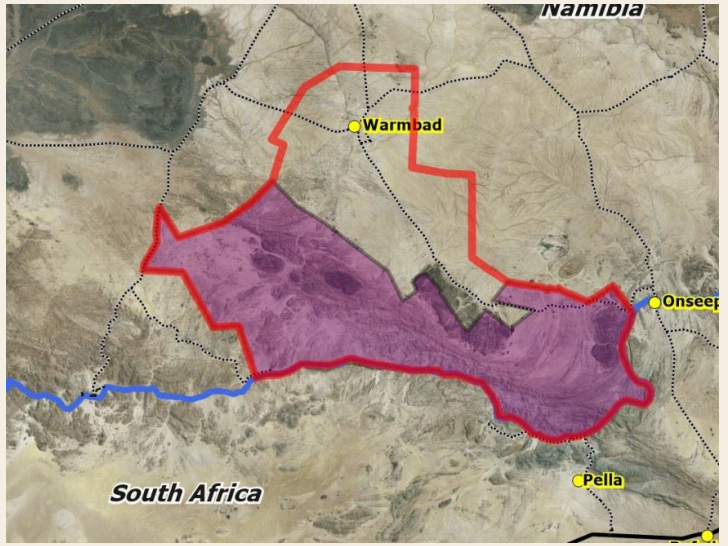
The Lower Orange River Valley



2,918 km^2 in southern Namibia

The Lower Orange River forms the southern boundary

Includes Warmbad, communal land and commercial farms



NAMA-!GARIB
GEOPARK
Where ancestral whispers echo through stone and river

FILM SCREENING

ORKCA: Rewilding a Desert

A Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative film

8 minutes 38 seconds

Open film in browser

https://youtu.be/-zNzXPXiy6k



ORKCA’s conservation footprint





About 180,000 ha across the wider landscape

About 54,000 ha owned by ORKCA

Long-term agreements with neighbouring landowners

About 100 km fences removed and 200 km remain

The Beauty -On Camera



The Gariep Centre of Endemism



A centre of plant endemism along the Lower Orange River



Rocky slopes and soils support specialised plants



ORKCA surveys found rare plants and a new record for Namibia

Research in action · Reptiles and invertebrates



Drift fence and pitfall sampling



Reptile specimen documented with scale

29 reptile species recorded / 208 invertebrate species recorded

June 2026 survey by ORKCA, EWT and NUST

Baseline data and sustainable finance



Camera traps, acoustic recorders, vegetation and soil surveys

ORKCA and Natural State are developing Rewilding Units as potential credits



A pilot across three land-use types informs the method

Blended finance could combine grants, earned income and credit revenue

Employment and household income

N$35,505

Average annual household income

19%

Of households had at least one employed member

8%

Of sampled adults were employed

Warmbad and //Gamaseb survey, 134 households

Income mix: 51% outside sources, 29% livestock, 20% jobs



Community conservation in practice

N$2 million

Distributed directly to //Gamaseb Conservancy for operations

N$900,000

Towards building the first conservancy office in the south

N$700,000

Borehole conversion, seed & training with Ministry of Agriculture

N$500,000

Community Technology & Learning Centre





//Gamaseb Conservancy game guards preparing for patrol

A landscape shaped by people

- San and Nama histories
- Pastoralism and Karakul farming
- Mining and settlement heritage



BEYOND CONSERVATION

What is a UNESCO Global Geopark?

- A defined area with geological heritage of international significance
- Protection, education, research and sustainable development
- Management in partnership with local stakeholders



NAMA-!GARIB GEOPARK
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BEYOND CONSERVATION

The aspiring Nama-!Garib Geopark

- 2,918 km^2 in the Lower Orange River Valley
- More than 2 billion years of Earth history
- Geoheritage, biodiversity and living Nama heritage



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Geopark objectives and proposed governance





Protect geology and habitats while safeguarding living heritage

Governing Board and committees provide direction and oversight

Support learning, research and locally rooted tourism

Management Unit coordinates delivery with partners

NAMA-!GARIB GEOPARK

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The Geopark application



Community consultations and dossier preparation

Evaluation mission completed in August 2026

34 geological and cultural sites documented

Draft management plan to be workshopped with communities



NAMA-!GARIB GEOPARK

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What visitors could experience



Explore the landscape on guided geotrails and hikes



Discover Warmbad’s heritage through its museum and interpretation centre



Hear Nama stories and learn about living traditions

Partners across the landscape

01 Warmbad Community, //Gamaseb Conservancy and participating landowners

02 Bondelswartz Traditional Authority and Nama Traditional Leaders Association (NTLA)

03 //Karas Regional Council, MEFT and Ministry of Industries, Mines and Energy

04 Namibia Nature Foundation, Natural State, UNESCO Namibia, NBRI, EWT and NUST

05 Oak Foundation, Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative and BW Kudu, PAW Foundation



The ORKCA team



Nama-!Garib Geopark Aspires to be the Catalyst for Change

NAMA-!GARIB GEOPARK

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ORKCA
ORANGE RIVER-KAROO CONSERVATION AREA

www.orkca.org

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