

2023/2024



MUSEKESE CONSERVATION

A JOURNEY OF GROWTH IMPACT AND CHANGE

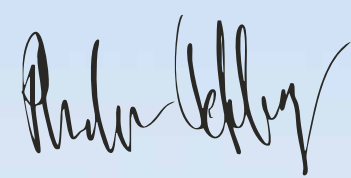


OPENING REMARKS

It's hard to sum up two years in a few paragraphs, especially when so much of what matters doesn't show up in spreadsheets or numbers – like the early mornings and late nights, muddy boots, and quiet wins (failures, too!) in the field. 2023 and 2024 brought plenty of challenges, but what really stands out is the way people pulled together. From traditional leaders and CRB's, to DNPW Officers, fellow conservationists, and our supporters and donors around the world – this has truly been a team effort.

At Musekese Conservation, we've never seen ourselves as working alone; we're just one piece of a much bigger picture. I am immensely proud of what our team has done, and even prouder to be part of something that keeps growing stronger through collaboration, trust, and a shared purpose.

Thanks for being a part of it, too.



Phil Jeffery
Co-Founder

REFLECTIONS ON 2023 & 2024

A PERIOD OF GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

The past two years have been transformative for Musekese Conservation. From a team of 60 in early 2023 to 135 by the end of 2024, our growth reflects more than just numbers — it marks a shift in strategy, scale, and impact.

As conservation management in Kafue evolved, so too did our focus. Our law enforcement operations moved out of the National Park and into the Game Management Areas, where the pressures — and the needs — are just as urgent. Through retraining, new partnerships, and decisive operational choices, we've scaled up across Mumbwa and Kasonso–Busanga GMAs, linking landscapes and livelihoods through a deeply rooted, community-led approach.

Meanwhile, our Research and Monitoring Programme — which remains anchored inside the National Park — has grown in scope and personnel, becoming more robust and responsive. It also plays a key role in shaping evidence-based decision-making and contributes to broader scientific collaboration across the greater Kafue landscape.

These shifts didn't happen in isolation. The Nature Conservancy's timely and significant support helped us maintain momentum during a complex period of change. While formal agreements take time, TNC's long-term commitment — alongside the Government of Zambia — has brought much-needed stability to our expanded presence across the Kafue GMAs.

GMAs may be viewed as buffer zones — but they are far more than that. They are dynamic conservation landscapes in their own right: inhabited, ecologically rich, and central to long-term ecosystem resilience. They support biodiversity, sustain livelihoods, and connect protected core areas with the people who live alongside them. Our commitment to these spaces is long-term and firmly established.

This report reflects our journey through 2023 and 2024: the progress, the challenges, and the promise of a more resilient Greater Kafue Ecosystem.



Katrina Garnett
Programme Manager

FROM FOUNDATION TO EXPANSION

A LASTING LEGACY IN MOTION

Securing the Musekese–Lumbeya Section of Kafue National Park and Expanding Beyond

Musekese Conservation's roots lie in the Musekese–Lumbeya section of Kafue National Park—an often-overlooked but ecologically vital area east of the Kafue River. Originally established by Jeffery & McKeith Safaris (now Classic Zambia), Musekese Conservation became a standalone organisation in 2018. In close partnership with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), our early efforts focused on providing essential rations, uniforms, and field supplies to existing Park staff.

What began as basic support evolved into a full operational presence. We built a deployment base, introduced a fixed-wing aircraft, constructed a hangar, and launched a formal ecological monitoring programme. We procured critical field assets including patrol vehicles, boats, a firefighting unit, radio systems, and solar infrastructure. By 2022, six fully equipped patrol teams were operating in the area—helping stabilise wildlife, catalyse tourism investment, and generate local employment.

This model—grounded in targeted patrols, monitoring, and local partnerships—demonstrated what smaller, field-based NGOs can achieve through trust, consistency, and presence.

Although the Co-Management Agreement between African Parks and the Zambian Government—establishing Greater Kafue Landscapes Ltd (GKLL)—was signed in July 2022, Musekese Conservation continued to fund, support, and implement law enforcement operations inside the Musekese–Lumbeya section into early 2023. In line with the new management structure, Musekese Conservation was subsequently instructed to withdraw its law enforcement support from the Park. All personnel Musekese Conservation had been supporting inside the National Park remained with the organisation and were redeployed to the Mumbwa GMA.

Importantly, Musekese Conservation's ecological monitoring programme in the Musekese–Lumbeya section remains active and ongoing. Our dedicated research presence continues to generate valuable long-term data on predator populations, biodiversity trends, and ecosystem health—ensuring this landscape remains part of the conservation picture even as our operational footprint has shifted.

With timely and significant support from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Musekese Conservation expanded into both Mumbwa and Kasonso–Busanga GMAs—areas of equally urgent conservation need. TNC's landscape-wide commitment enabled a smooth and strategic transition for Musekese Conservation and other partners adapting to the shift.

We remain proud of the foundation laid inside the Park. It is our hope that the stability and protection Musekese Conservation helped to establish in Musekese–Lumbeya has contributed to the long-term sustainability of Kafue National Park, and that it enabled others to inherit a stronger landscape than might have otherwise been the case.

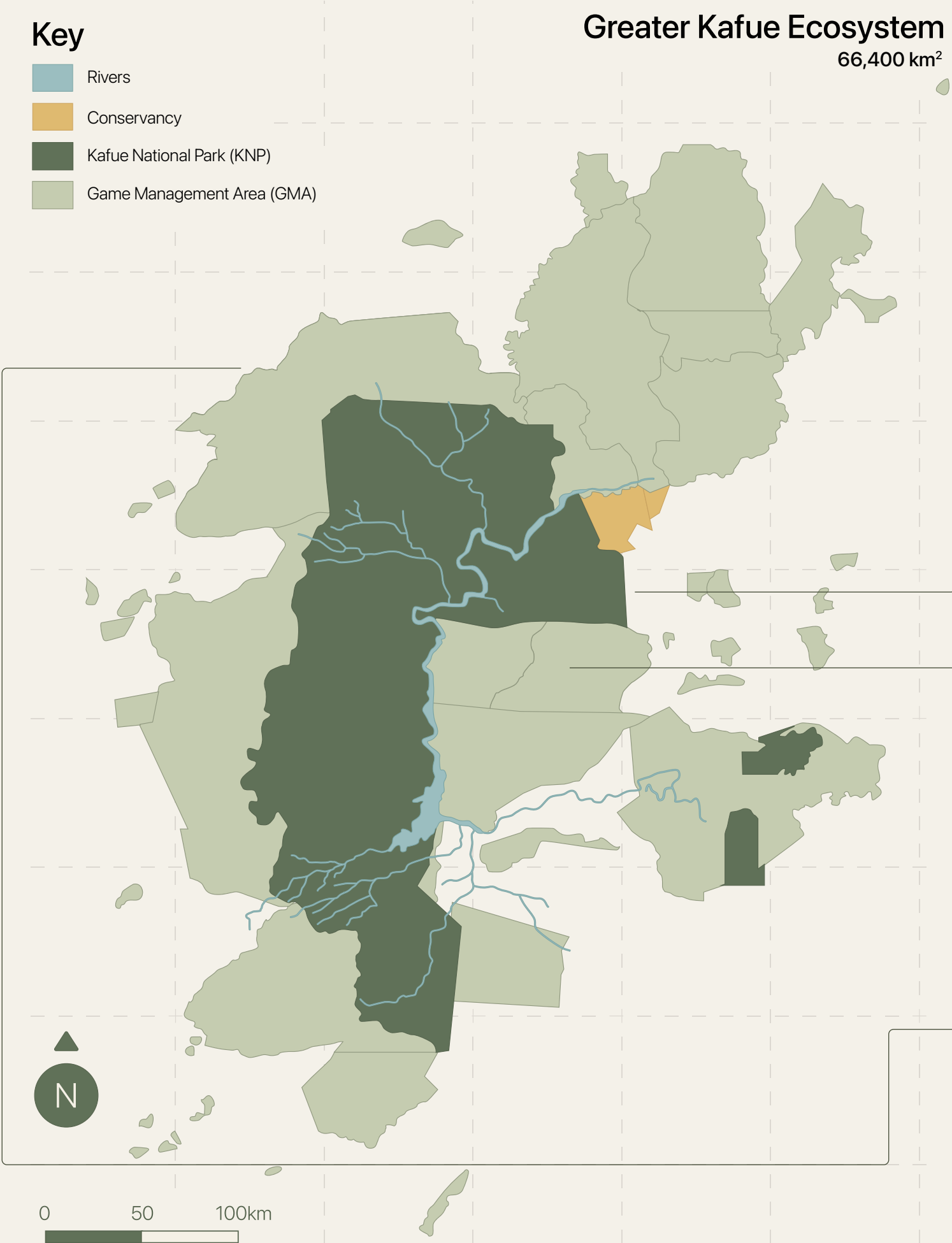


EXPANSION & STRATEGIC GROWTH

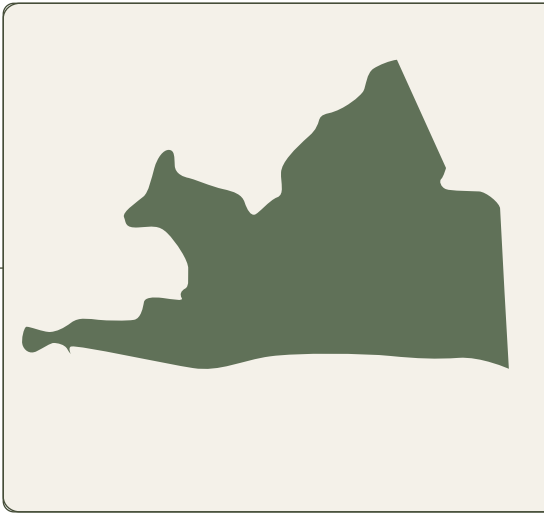
Key

- Rivers
- Conservancy
- Kafue National Park (KNP)
- Game Management Area (GMA)

Greater Kafue Ecosystem 66,400 km²

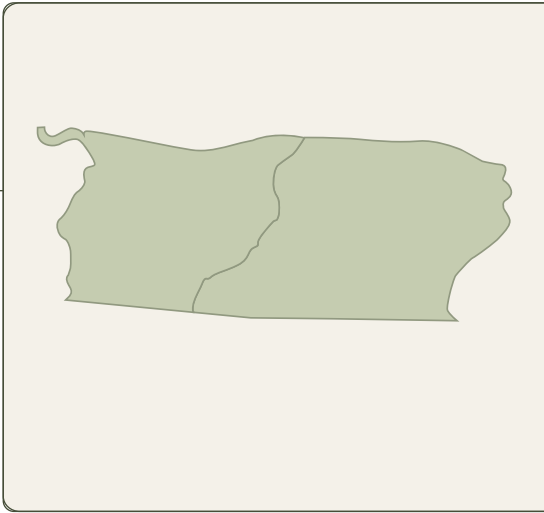


WHERE MUSEKESE CONSERVATION WORKS IN THE LANDSCAPE.




Musekese-Lumbeya (KNP) 2,700 km²

The only portion of Kafue National Park that lies east of the Kafue River, this sector is twice the size of Kenya's Maasai Mara and forms the cornerstone of the eastern Kafue landscape. It is where Musekese Conservation was first established, with early efforts helping to stabilise wildlife populations and attract tourism investment—bringing employment opportunities through camps and lodges. However, with the exception of Mumbwa GMA to the south, the sector is bordered by unprotected areas where illegal activity and deforestation are widespread. Its long-term protection depends on sustained collaboration between conservation actors, communities, and government stakeholders.



Mumbwa (GMA) 3,380 km²

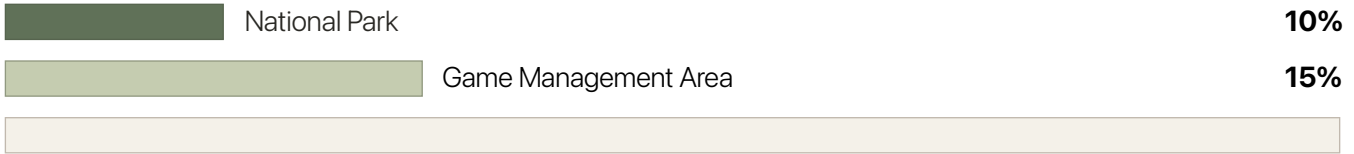
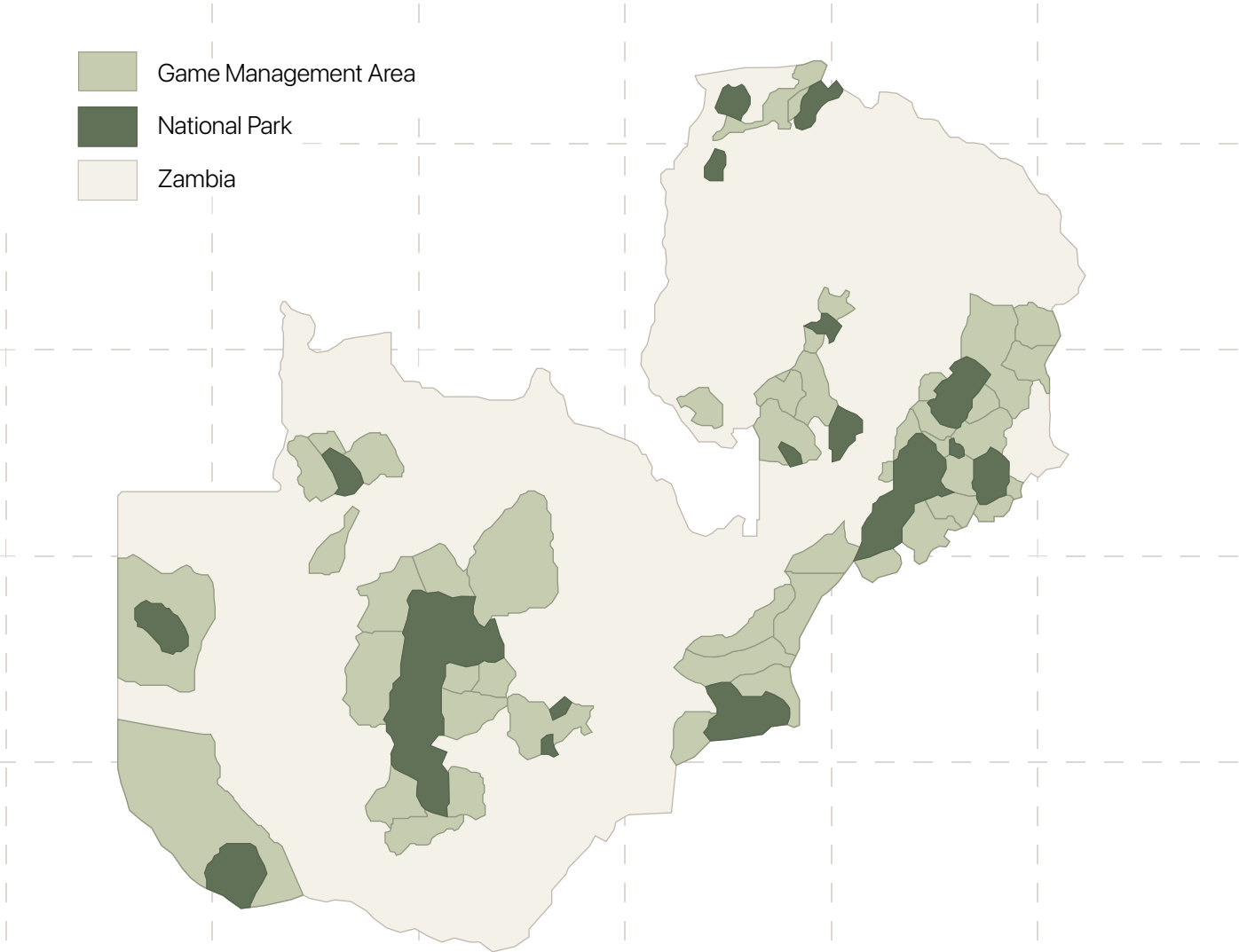
Located along the eastern boundary of Kafue National Park, Mumbwa GMA is a key conservation area within the Greater Kafue Ecosystem. Despite increasing pressure from encroachment, poaching, and habitat degradation, it remains ecologically and socially important. MC works in close partnership with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), Community Resource Boards, traditional leaders, and other conservation partners to strengthen law enforcement and promote community-led conservation. Securing Mumbwa GMA is critical to stopping the westward expansion of settlement towards the Kafue River and preserving key wildlife corridors connecting the Musekese–Lumbeya sector with the wider park landscape.



Kasonso Busanga (GMA) 7,790 km²

Situated in the northwest of the Greater Kafue Ecosystem, Kasonso–Busanga adjoins both Kafue and West Lunga National Parks. The GMA includes important elephant migration corridors and extensive miombo woodlands, which function as vital carbon sinks. It spans two chiefdoms—Mubambe and Kasempa—and comprises Kasonso–Busanga, a high-value conservation zone, and Lunga–Busanga, an area impacted by historical wildlife loss. Years of limited investment and the absence of an active conservation presence have led to growing encroachment and illegal activity, particularly in the north and west. MC's involvement marks the first dedicated effort to restore ecological function and foster long-term benefits for both wildlife and local communities.

GAME MANAGEMENT AREAS VS. NATIONAL PARKS IN ZAMBIA



In Zambia, Game Management Areas (GMAs) and National Parks serve different but complementary roles in conservation. Here's how they differ:

National Parks (NPs)

- **Strictly Protected Areas:** National Parks are fully protected conservation areas where no human settlement, hunting, or resource extraction is allowed.
- **Primary Focus on Biodiversity Conservation:** These areas exist solely to protect wildlife and natural ecosystems.
- **Managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW):** The government oversees their protection, often in partnership with conservation organizations.
- **Tourism & Research:** National Parks generate revenue through photographic tourism and scientific research.

Game Management Areas (GMAs)

- **Multi-Use Conservation Landscapes:** Unlike National Parks, GMAs are designated as human-wildlife coexistence zones where sustainable use of natural resources is permitted.
- **Buffer Zones for National Parks:** GMAs often surround National Parks, helping to protect them from encroachment and serving as wildlife corridors.
- **Local Community Involvement:** Communities residing within GMAs have legal rights to benefit from regulated natural resource use, including fishing, farming, and designated wildlife utilisation under Zambia's conservation framework.
- **Co-Managed with Community Resource Boards (CRBs):** Governance involves local communities, conservation organizations, and the DNPW to ensure sustainable resource use.

In Zambia, Game Management Areas (GMAs) and National Parks play distinct but complementary roles in conservation. National Parks are strictly protected areas managed by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), where human settlement, hunting, and resource extraction are prohibited. Since 2022, Kafue National Park has been co-managed by African Parks and the Zambian Government under Greater Kafue Landscapes Limited (GKLL).

In contrast, GMAs are dynamic conservation landscapes where regulated human activity is permitted — including settlement, farming, and the sustainable use of natural resources. They function as ecological buffers and vital corridors for wildlife movement, helping reduce pressure on National Parks. Crucially, GMAs are co-managed by Community Resource Boards (CRBs), traditional leaders, and conservation organisations, creating opportunities for local communities to directly benefit from and participate in conservation efforts.

Though often seen as secondary to National Parks, GMAs are vital ecosystems supporting biodiversity and species movement. However, their governance requires a more adaptive approach, balancing law enforcement with community engagement, sustainable land-use planning, and investment in alternative livelihoods to ensure long-term conservation success.

Key Differences

Feature	National Park	Game Management Area
Human Settlement	Not allowed	Allowed
Hunting	Prohibited	Permitted under regulations
Management	DNPW + conservation partners	DNPW + CRBs + partners
Purpose	Full conservation of biodiversity	Conservation & sustainable resource use
Tourism	Non-consumptive (photographic safaris)	Mixed (photographic + regulated hunting)

RESOURCE PROTECTION

MUMBWA GMA


Musekese Conservation’s Adaptation to the Shift into Mumbwa GMA

In 2023, Musekese Conservation (MC) received ‘First Aid’ funding from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to sustain core operations in Mumbwa GMA. While this support was critical, uncertainty around the broader TNC–Zambian Government agreement meant the funding was limited to essential costs, restricting infrastructure expansion. Unlike our fully established base inside Kafue National Park, operating in GMAs required a more adaptive, community-focused model.


A core pillar of this model is Human Rights Training and sensitisation, which has become central—not supplementary—to our work. As field operations continued in Mumbwa, we prioritised legal awareness and accountability, delivering targeted training in March 2023 on the Wildlife, Forestry, and Fisheries Acts. This is especially vital in Mumbwa GMA, which is experiencing one of Zambia’s highest rates of deforestation—nearly 50 hectares lost per day. Unlike National Parks, GMAs demand a careful balance between enforcement and community engagement. Ensuring that frontline teams understand legal boundaries and community rights is essential to building trust and reducing conflict.

With limited infrastructure investment, MC adapted by converting our former conservation camp into a Research Camp, installing a 20-foot storage container at the park gate for rations, and renting a three-bedroom house in Nalusanga for the support team.


Primary Threats in Mumbwa GMA




Illegal Encroachment
Unregulated settlement expansion.



Deforestation
Driven by commercial logging and charcoal production.



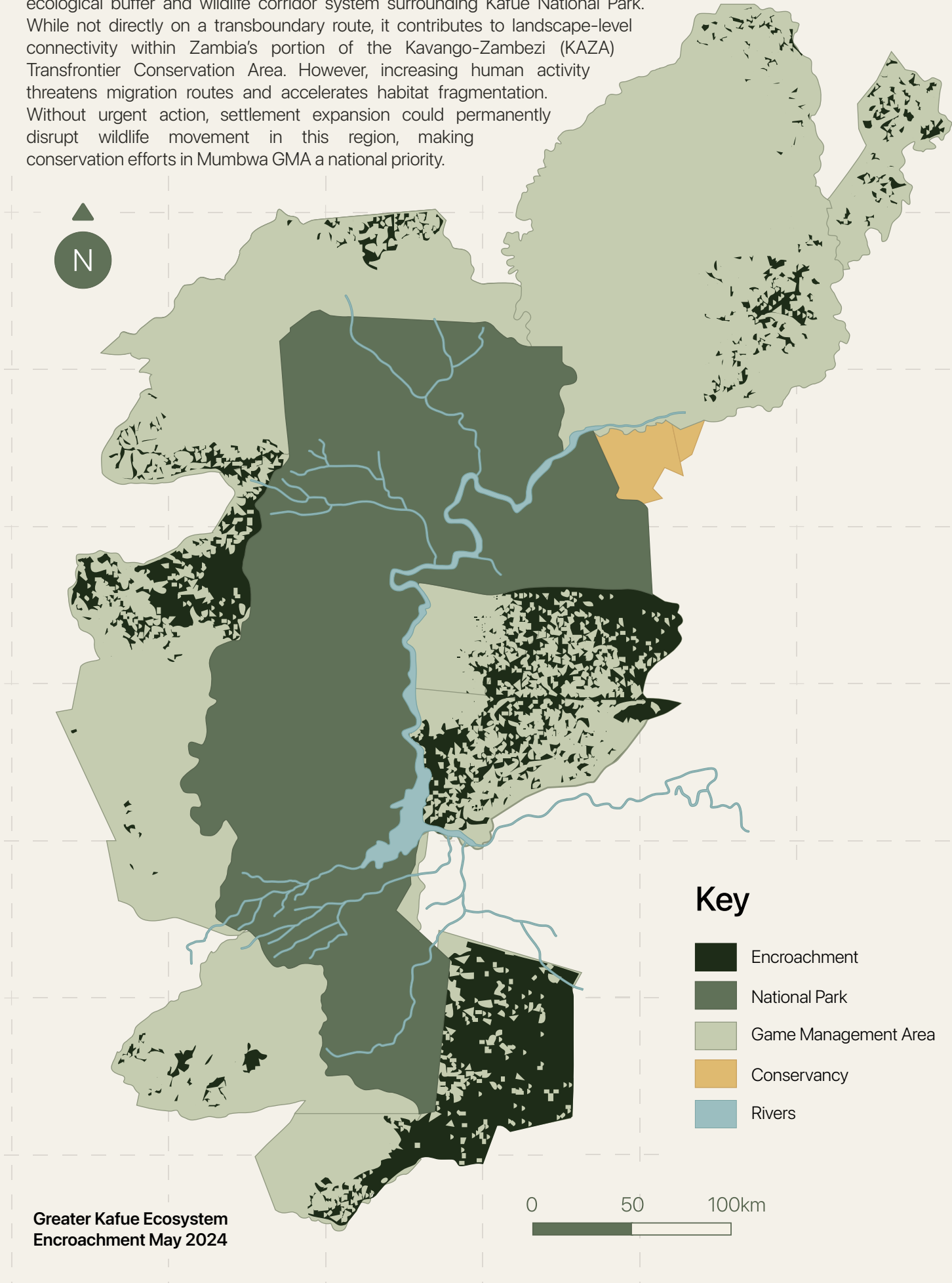
KAZA Wildlife Corridor Disruption
Human pressure affecting wildlife movement and increasing Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC).



Uncontrolled Fires
Accelerating habitat degradation and threatening biodiversity.

The KAZA Connection & Growing Human Pressure

Mumbwa GMA plays a vital role in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem (GKE), forming part of the ecological buffer and wildlife corridor system surrounding Kafue National Park. While not directly on a transboundary route, it contributes to landscape-level connectivity within Zambia’s portion of the Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area. However, increasing human activity threatens migration routes and accelerates habitat fragmentation. Without urgent action, settlement expansion could permanently disrupt wildlife movement in this region, making conservation efforts in Mumbwa GMA a national priority.



MC's Strategic Response & Initial Implementation into Mumbwa GMA.

Musekese Conservation (MC) believes that effective GMA conservation begins with community investment. From the outset, we prioritised:



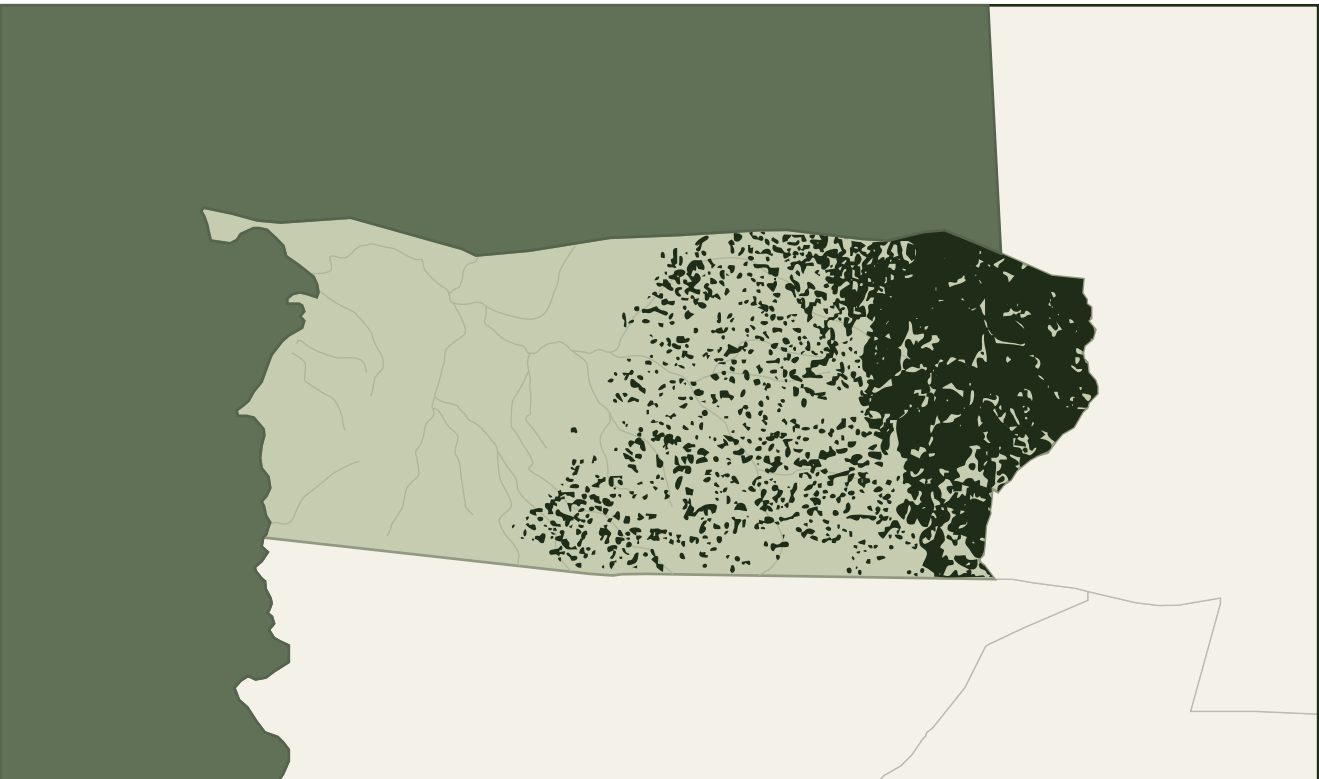
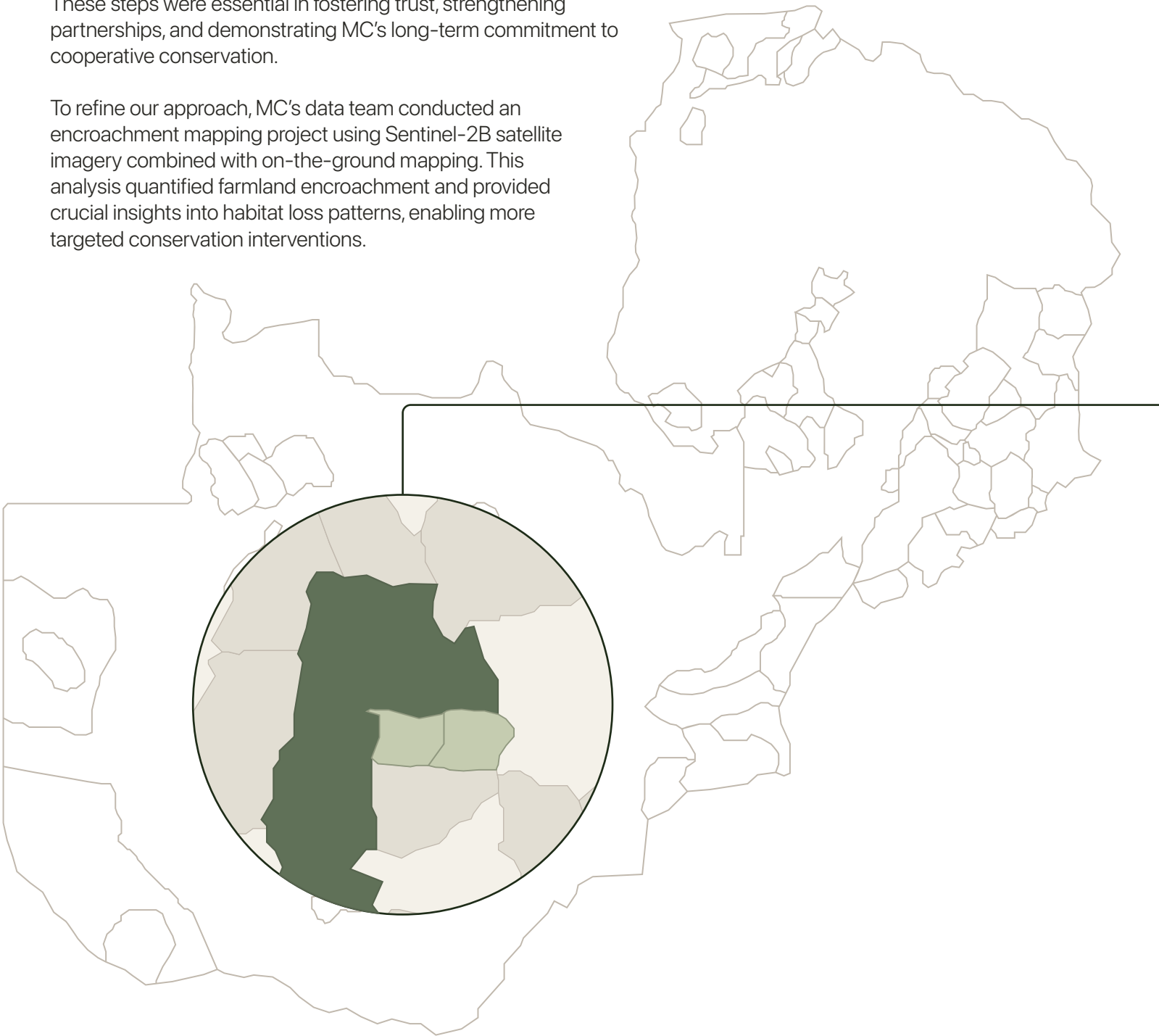
Retaining and supporting existing community scouts to maintain a presence in the landscape.



Deploying a dedicated Community Engagement Officer to work directly with the three Community Resource Boards (CRBs) and Traditional Leaders.

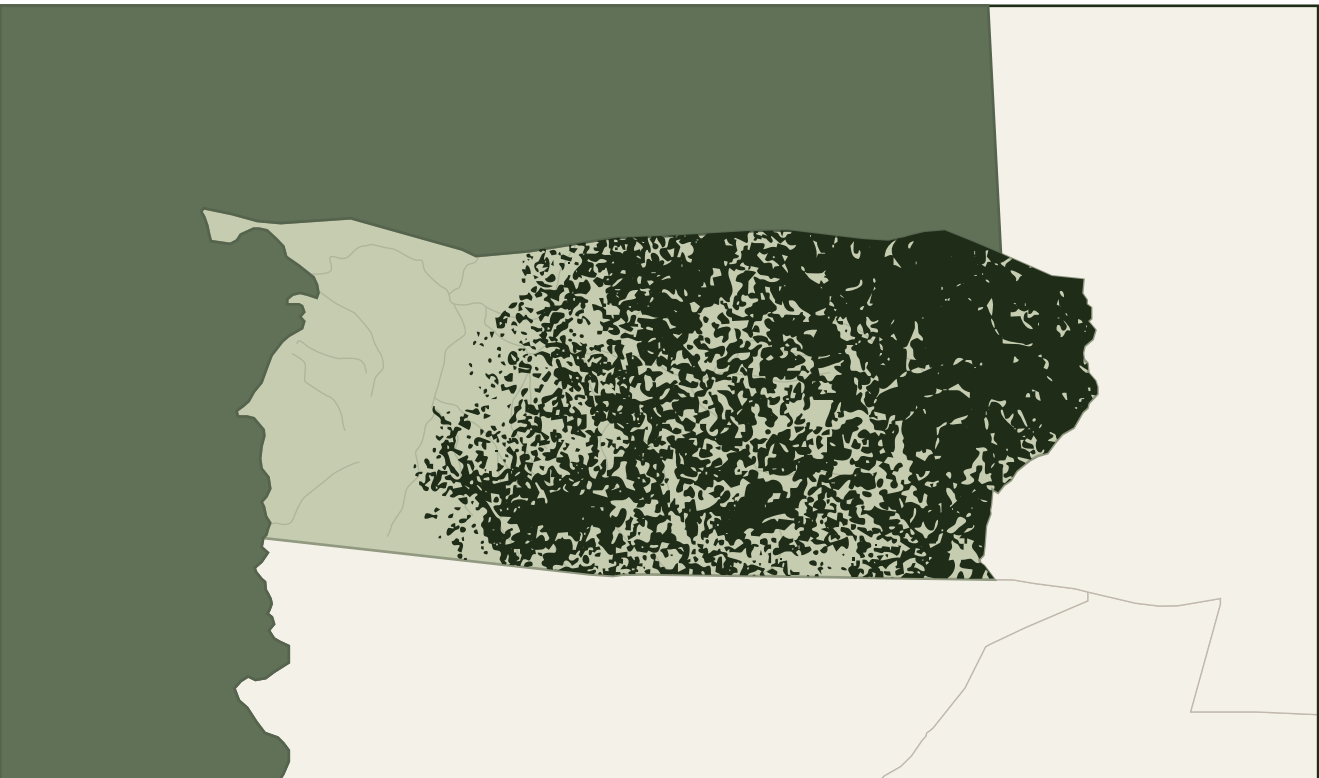
These steps were essential in fostering trust, strengthening partnerships, and demonstrating MC's long-term commitment to cooperative conservation.

To refine our approach, MC's data team conducted an encroachment mapping project using Sentinel-2B satellite imagery combined with on-the-ground mapping. This analysis quantified farmland encroachment and provided crucial insights into habitat loss patterns, enabling more targeted conservation interventions.



Encroachment in Mumbwa GMA

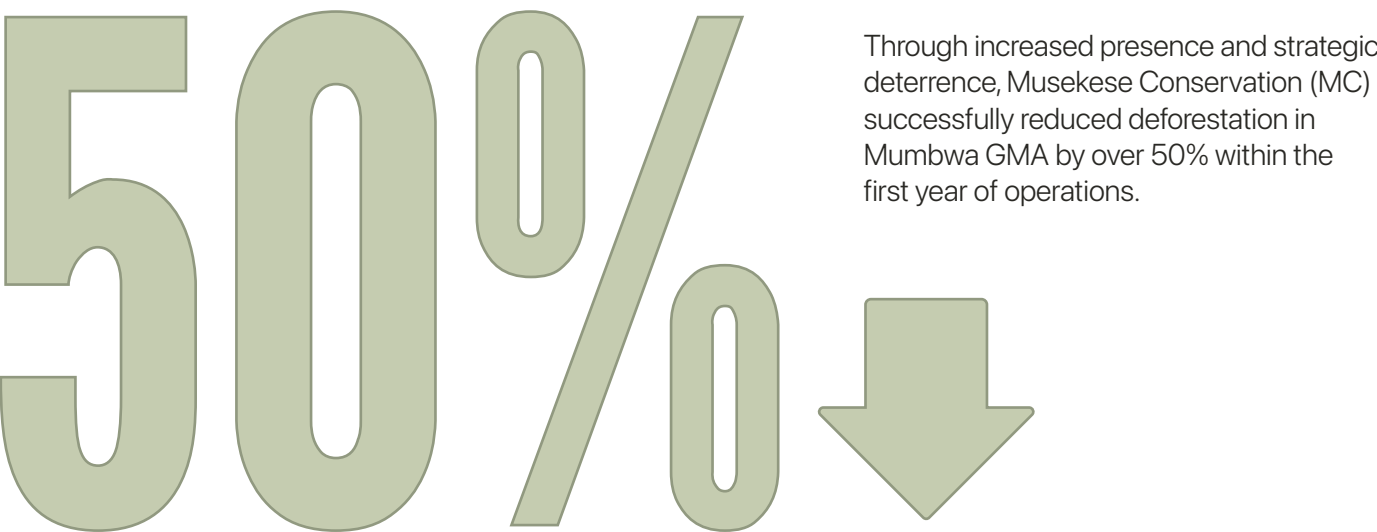
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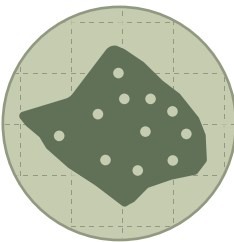
Encroachment in Mumbwa GMA

2024

Impact & Measurable Change in the First 12 Months



KEY FACTORS DRIVING SUCCESS:



Visible Field Presence
A consistent resource protection presence, supported by aerial patrols, deterred illegal activities and reinforced conservation laws.



Rapid Response System
Charcoal bags left roadside often signalled hidden stockpiles. MC established a reporting system to track locations, allowing teams to uncover and destroy illegal charcoal production sites, disrupting supply chains.



Aerial Surveillance Support from GKLL
Regular flights identified illegal farms, charcoal kilns, and timber concessions early, enabling swift intervention by protection teams, disrupting supply chains.



Earth Ranger Integration
Real-time tracking and coordination across conservation partners improved response efficiency and targeted enforcement efforts.

With GKLL pilots providing continuous reconnaissance, MC was able to pinpoint and address illegal activities faster than ever before, intercepting deforestation, charcoal production, and illegal farming operations that previously went unnoticed.

The initial adaptation phase in Mumbwa GMA has offered valuable lessons in conservation within a human-wildlife landscape. Moving forward, MC remains committed to strengthening community partnerships, expanding resource protection, and leveraging conservation technology to ensure the long-term sustainability of Mumbwa GMA and its role within the Greater Kafue and KAZA ecosystems.



Solidifying MC’s Resource Protection Efforts in 2024 in Mumbwa GMA.

By mid-2024, Musekese Conservation (MC) secured a larger grant from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), expanding our capacity beyond core operations. This funding enabled infrastructure improvements, personnel support, and enhanced logistical capabilities, strengthening our long-term conservation efforts in Mumbwa GMA.

A major milestone was the construction of a new deployment base, completed in December 2024. Rising material costs due to inflation required us to adapt the design to stay within budget while maintaining functionality. The final structure includes multiple rooms and operational facilities, providing a secure, centralised base for resource protection teams. Strategically positioned away from the main community, its location ensures confidentiality in conservation operations.

With an expanded operational presence, MC enhanced scout training and development, using the new facilities for structured assessments, skills workshops, and interactive training sessions. These improvements have strengthened team coordination, allowing for more effective conservation interventions.

Additionally, logistical support was reinforced through increased mobility and personnel capacity, ensuring more efficient deployment of resource protection teams across the landscape. Local hires, including additional drivers, further reflect MC’s commitment to community engagement and employment.

These strategic investments in infrastructure, training, and operational capacity have significantly strengthened MC’s conservation strategy, enhancing our ability to respond effectively to threats and safeguard the Greater Kafue Ecosystem.

RESOURCE PROTECTION

KASONSO BUSANGA GMA

Kasonso Busanga GMA: Expanding Conservation Efforts

Kasonso–Busanga GMA spans 7,800 sq. km, making it one of the largest GMAs in the Kafue ecosystem and a vital part of Zambia’s protected area network. It encompasses a portion of the Busanga Plains—an internationally recognised RAMSAR wetland—and forms part of a key transboundary wildlife corridor for species such as elephants, moving between Kafue and West Lunga National Parks. Its expansive miombo woodlands play an increasingly important role in carbon sequestration and landscape-scale climate resilience.

This vast and ecologically diverse terrain holds significant potential, but it has also long been under-served in terms of structured conservation investment. The sheer remoteness of the area, combined with limited infrastructure, has historically made it difficult to sustain a consistent conservation presence.

Challenges & Conservation Needs

For many years, Kasonso–Busanga GMA lacked the stability, resources, and coordination needed to protect its biodiversity and ecological function. The absence of an active concessionaire over a prolonged period meant no income flowed to the Community Resource Boards (CRBs), leaving them unable to finance basic protection activities.

As a result, poaching, illegal logging, and encroachment intensified, particularly along the northern and western boundaries, where access routes from neighbouring districts put pressure on forested zones. Without adequate boots on the ground, critical habitats became increasingly fragmented, undermining connectivity and weakening one of the most important buffer zones in the Kafue landscape.

MC’s Entry into Kasonso-Busanga GMA

Following the success of our Mumbwa GMA model, Musekese Conservation (MC) expanded into Kasonso–Busanga in March 2024, working in close partnership with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Mubambe CRB.

Unlike Mumbwa where MC had existing infrastructure, a local presence, and years of relationship-building Kasonso–Busanga required a full operational rollout from scratch. It was a strategic and logistical challenge, but also a crucial opportunity to apply lessons learned from Mumbwa and create a scalable approach tailored to this new landscape.

Historically, protection in the area had been maintained through the income from consumptive utilisation, which provided some patrol coverage. In its absence, however, the GMA had gone largely unsupported. MC’s first priority was to re-establish a structured, community-led presence — one that would be both operationally credible and locally trusted.



Building Resource Protection Capacity

Recognising the urgency of threats in the area, MC launched a major recruitment drive in July 2024. In partnership with DNPW, TNC, Mellivora Systems, and the Mubambe CRB:

- A pre-selection process was hosted at Shinganda Conservancy, where 80 candidates from surrounding communities were evaluated.
- The top 35 recruits were enrolled in a three-month Community Scout Training Course at Chunga, graduating on 31 October 2024.
- Ongoing aerial support across the GMA was provided by GKLL.
- In parallel, MC absorbed 14 existing CRB scouts, many of whom had not received formal training in over a decade. They underwent a six-week refresher course before redeployment.

To ensure enforcement capacity was backed by legal authority and coordination, several Wildlife Police Officers (WPOs) were embedded into the newly formed field teams in collaboration with DNPW.

The result was a locally embedded, professionally trained, and well-coordinated protection force, grounded in the needs of the landscape and the communities that call it home.



Scaling Up Protection & Field Presence

By the end of 2024, MC had successfully deployed nine resource protection teams across the GMA. Patrols are now supported by decentralised field bases—including Shongwe Gate and Lushimba Guard Camp, co-managed with GKLL—that allow for rapid response and improved coverage in remote and high-risk areas.

Key investments to enable field operations included:

- Five Land Cruisers and one motorbike to support scout mobility and coverage
- One Prado dedicated to community engagement and CRB coordination
- Recruitment of key leadership and technical staff, including an Area Manager, Project Coordinator, Data Intern, and dedicated operational support

Project Outcomes & Next Steps

This growth represents a pivotal advancement in MC's conservation footprint and has already delivered:

- Broadened patrol coverage and enhanced operational responsiveness
- Meaningful employment linked directly to conservation outcomes
- Deepened collaboration with Mubambe CRB and traditional leadership
- Strengthened ecological monitoring capacity through targeted training

As MC consolidates its presence in Kasonso–Busanga, the next phase will focus on refining internal systems, strengthening team capacity, and identifying pathways for sustained operations that also deliver long-term benefits to local communities. Ensuring that conservation efforts generate tangible, lasting value for those living alongside the landscape is central to building an operational model with real longevity.

Expanding Protection Across the Landscape

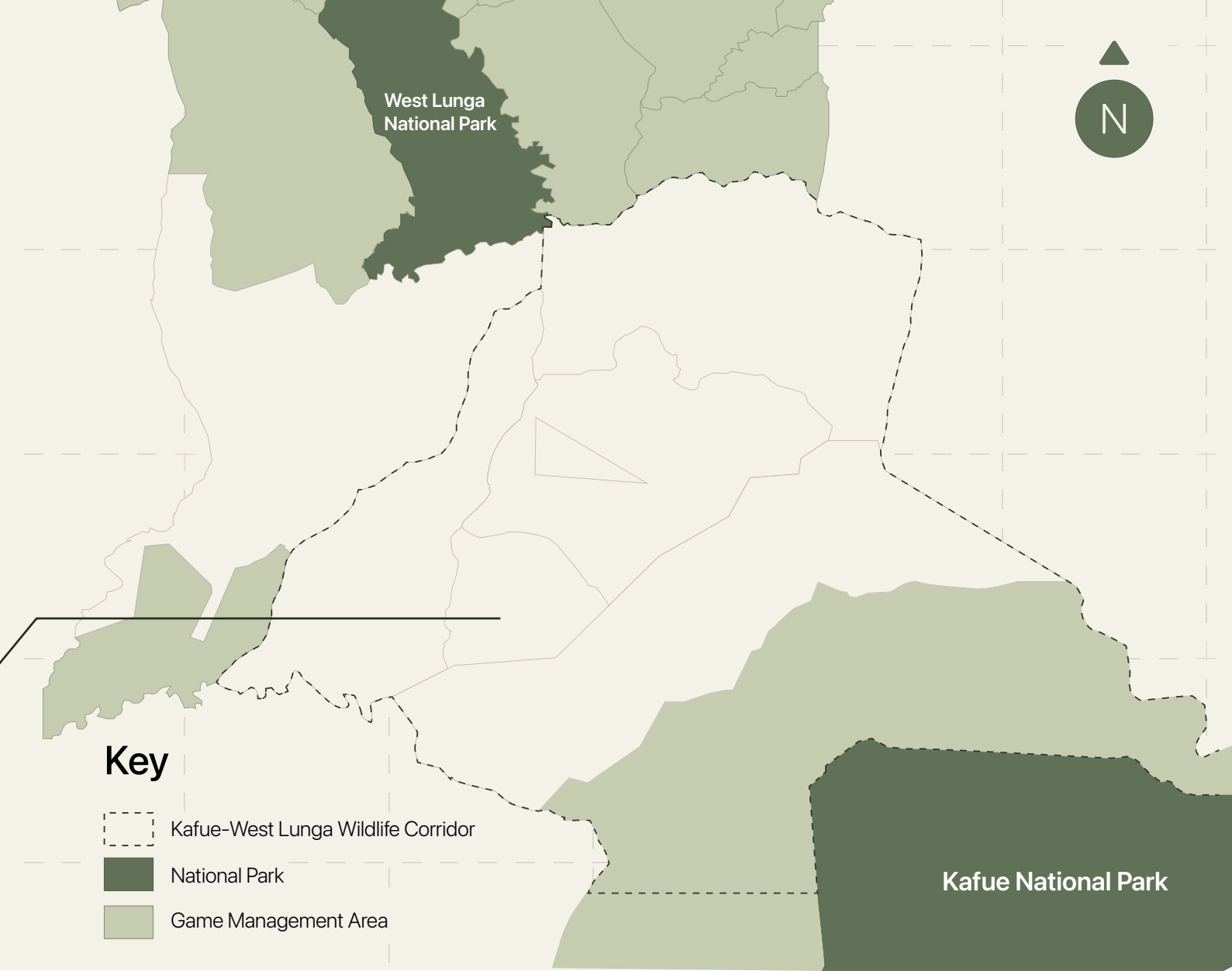
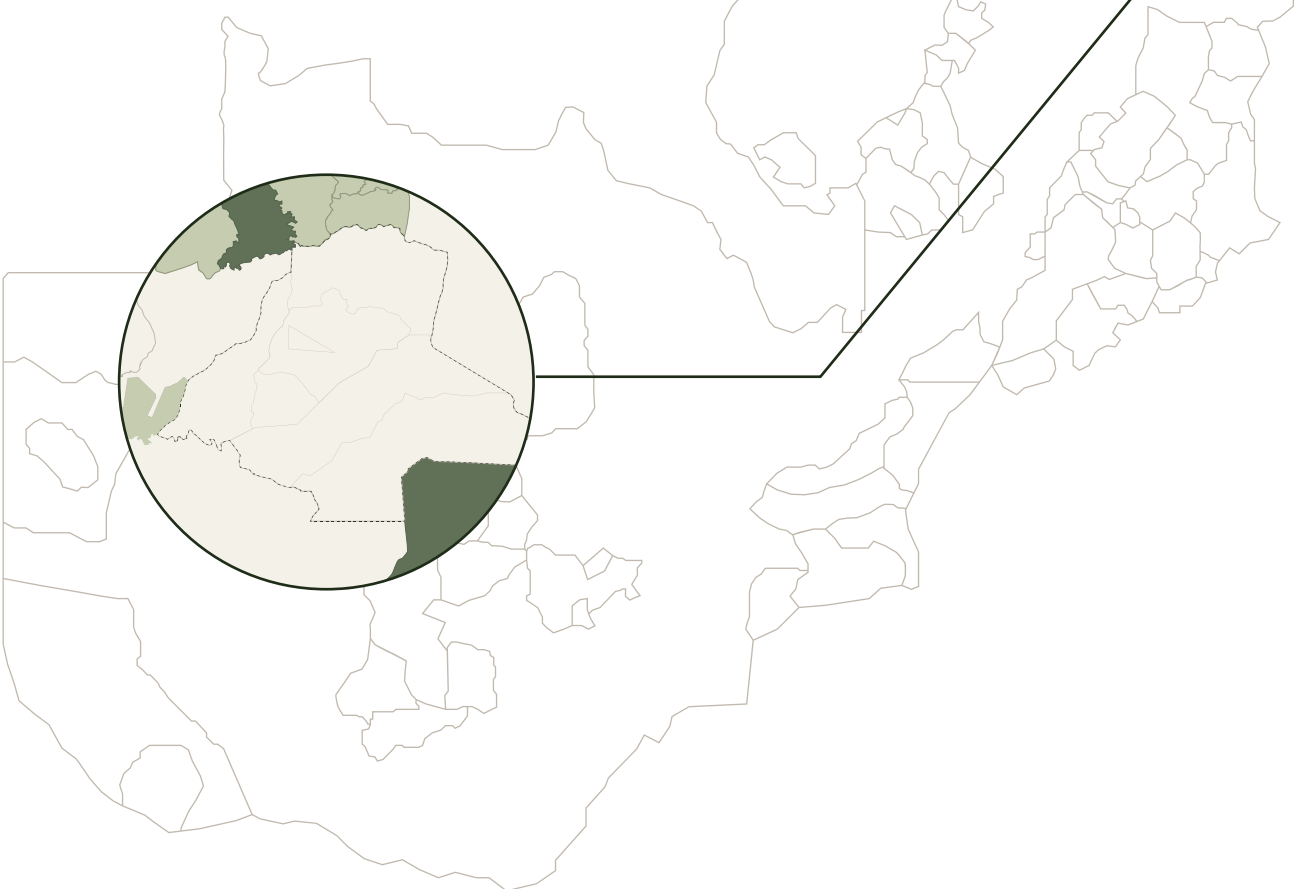
Following these extensive recruitment and training efforts, MC now supports nine fully operational resource protection teams across Kasonso-Busanga GMA, marking a significant investment in securing this critical landscape. As resource protection capacity grows, MC aims to expand its conservation footprint beyond the GMA and into the wider Kafue-West Lunga Wildlife Corridor.

Kafue-West Lunga Wildlife Corridor: A Critical Conservation Link

The Mubambe Chiefdom also encompasses the southern extent of the Kafue-West Lunga Wildlife Corridor, an area containing large tracts of wildlife-rich forests, portions of which are managed as private conservancies. However, the corridor faces increasing threats from illegal logging, poaching, and encroachment, jeopardizing its critical function as a connectivity link between Kafue and West Lunga National Parks.

Recent elephant movement patterns highlight the urgent need for conservation action, with increasing numbers of elephants migrating northward from Kafue National Park into West Lunga National Park. If unchecked human activities continue to fragment the corridor, wildlife movement between these ecosystems may be permanently disrupted.

Musekese Conservation sees significant potential for developing a wider resource protection and conservation strategy in collaboration with the Government, Mubambe community, and private conservancies. As MC strengthens its resource protection presence in Kasonso-Busanga, law enforcement efforts can be strategically extended into the corridor to secure long-term ecological connectivity and habitat integrity.



IMPACT OF WORKFORCE GROWTH:



Increased patrol coverage and protection of high-risk areas within the GMAs.



Greater local employment opportunities, reinforcing conservation-linked livelihoods.



Stronger community partnerships, with dedicated personnel engaging with local stakeholders.



Improved research capacity, allowing for more detailed ecological data collection and analysis.

While this expansion marks a significant milestone for Musekese Conservation, it also presents new challenges in ensuring efficient management, training, and sustainability of a larger team. Looking ahead, our focus will be on streamlining operations, enhancing skills development, and maintaining financial sustainability to support this growing workforce effectively.

MUMBWA AND KASONSO BUSANGA GMAs

LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

2023 - 2024



Anti-poaching teams
14



Individuals supported
135



Deployment Bases
2



Patrol Man Days
12,095



Kilometres on Foot
26,802.3 km



Apprehensions
99



Firearms
Recovered
33



Traps and Wire Snares
Removed
195



Illegal Bushmeat
Recovered (kg)
561.8



Illegal Bags of
Charcoal Recovered
1,909



Charcoal Kilns
Destroyed
503



Illegal Logs
215

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

Community Engagement: Strengthening Conservation Through Partnerships

At Musekese Conservation, we recognise that conservation is not just about protecting wildlife but also about fostering strong relationships with the communities that share the landscape. Over the past year, our community engagement efforts have continued to grow, strengthening the connection between people and conservation. Successful conservation is contingent on community buy-in.

As we have shifted into Game Management Areas, we have gained deeper insight into the needs of the communities across the landscapes we work in. Effective community engagement requires understanding these needs and determining the best ways to offer support—there is no one-size-fits-all solution. If local communities do not benefit from the landscape, promoting sustainable livelihoods becomes a challenge. Implementing programmes that shift the mindset towards valuing the landscape as more protected than depleted is neither an easy nor a quick task.

TNC Support to the GMAs and CP Establishment

TNC is supporting GMAs and the development of Conservation Partnerships (CP) through efforts to strengthen resource protection, community engagement, and sustainable revenue models. This includes expanding community scout recruitment, improving law enforcement infrastructure, and fostering collaboration with traditional leaders and stakeholders to develop CP steering committees.

To ensure communities see the benefits of conservation, TNC and partners are exploring conservation dividend models and revenue-generating opportunities, such as biodiversity credits and sustainable tourism. These initiatives aim to create a well-governed, conservation-driven socio-economic model that benefits both people and nature.



Mumbwa GMA

Our long-standing collaboration in Mumbwa GMA continues to strengthen conservation partnerships and community participation. We actively engaged in Annual General Meetings (AGMs) across three chiefdoms—Mulendama, Kabulwebulwe, and Chibuluma—where 947 community members took part in discussions on CRB achievements, challenges, and future plans.

A highlight was showcasing our partnership with the Kabulwebulwe Women's Farmers Group to donors from The Nature Conservancy (TNC), reinforcing the role of sustainable livelihoods in conservation. We also supported the Conservation Sports Tournament in partnership with African Parks and CP, raising awareness under the theme "Conserve Nature for All."

Another key milestone was the launch of the Kids in the Kafue project, in collaboration with Classic Zambia Safaris, which provided 12 students from four local schools with their first opportunity to visit the national park and experience conservation firsthand. The trip included an interactive wildlife story map presentation at Musekese Conservation Base, a guided game drive, and a boat cruise with Classic Zambia. Each student received a certificate of participation, designed to encourage ongoing interest in conservation and nurture a stronger emotional connection to nature.

Additionally, Musekese Conservation hosted the CP Working Group, bringing together key stakeholders—including CRBs, traditional leaders, DNPW, and conservation partners—to strengthen collaboration.

Further, three team members participated in the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Conference, focused on participatory governance and community empowerment.



Kasonso Busanga GMA

Our work in Kasonso Busanga began in 2024. We focused on building relationships with CRBs and demonstrating the value of collaboration. In this early phase, community scout recruitment, alongside broader engagement efforts, has been an essential step.

At the end of the year, Musekese Conservation, together with GKLL, TNC, and DNPW, visited all 10 Village Action Groups (VAGs) under Mubambe CRB. These meetings, attended by 394 people, provided a platform to discuss key issues such as human-wildlife conflict, GMA encroachment, and improving communication between CRBs and communities.



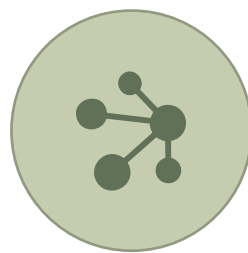
RESEARCH & MONITORING

STRENGTHENING OUR IMPACT

Musekese Conservation's research and monitoring program was launched in 2020 to establish baseline data on large carnivore populations and assess the effectiveness of resource protection efforts in supporting their recovery.

Our work is driven by strong collaborations with Greater Kafue Landscape Limited (GKLL)—the managing body of Kafue National Park—as well as key research partners, including the Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP) and Panthera. These partnerships enable us to systematically monitor large carnivore populations, track recovery trends, and identify the critical factors influencing their resurgence in the ecosystem.

Over the past two years, we've made significant progress in expanding and strengthening our research and monitoring capacity:



Growing Our Team – With secured funding, we welcomed a Research & Site Manager, Senior Field Ecologist, and Field Ecologist, alongside five field ecologist interns. Notably, two of these interns have since transitioned into full-time roles, strengthening our in-house expertise.



Enhancing Field Capacity – To support our expanded operations, we procured an additional fully equipped research vehicle, increasing our fieldwork frequency and coverage.

With these advancements, we are better positioned to drive data-led conservation efforts and ensure a thriving future for Kafue's large carnivores.

Expanding Research for a Deeper Understanding

Between 2020 and 2022, our research and monitoring efforts were primarily focused on the western sector of the Musekese-Lumbeya (ML) area due to limited resources. However, with increased funding, expanded capacity, and strengthened partnerships, we significantly extended our monitoring coverage to the eastern sector in 2023 and 2024. This expansion has provided a more complete picture of large carnivore populations and prey dynamics across the entire ML area.



Key Research Projects (2023–2024)

Over the past two years, we have undertaken three core research initiatives:

- Large Carnivore Monitoring – A multi-faceted programme using collar checks, camera trap surveys, vehicle-based encounter surveys, citizen science and opportunistic sightings to assess population status, identify threats, and inform conservation strategies for lions, wild dogs, cheetahs, hyenas, and leopards.
- Herbivore Population & Prey Availability – Applying distance sampling methods to estimate herbivore densities and understand prey availability as a key driver of carnivore populations.
- Reducing Human-Caused Mortalities of Large Carnivores – Monitoring and responding to threats such as snaring through intensive monitoring, den checks, and incident reporting to reduce preventable deaths of carnivores.

With our expanded capacity, we continue to refine our research methodologies, improve data collection, and enhance monitoring efficiency—ensuring our conservation efforts remain data-driven and impactful.



Research Project	Objective	Purpose	Survey Method	Target Species	Years Conducted	Collaborating Partner
Large Carnivore Population Monitoring	Asses population status, trends, and dynamics over time Identify and mitigate threats, evaluate conservation effectiveness, inform management plans	Identify and mitigate threats, evaluate conservation effectiveness, inform management plans	Intensive Monitoring/collar checks	Lion, Wild dog and Cheetah	2020-2024	Zambian Carnivore Programme
			Camera trap study	Lion, Spotted Hyena, Leopard	2022-2023	Panthera
			Search & Encounter	Lion	2023-2024	Panthera
			Citizen Science	Lion, Leopard, Wild dog, Cheetah, Spotted hyena	2024	Panthera and ZCP
Herbivore Population & Prey Availability	Determine herbivore distribution and density as a measure of prey availability	Inform management plans, assess impacts of threats, evaluate conservation actions, understand carnivore dynamics	Herbivore Transects by Distance Sampling	Prey Species	2020-2024	Zambian Carnivore Programme
Reducing human-caused mortalities of large carnivores	To reduce human-caused mortalities of carnivores, such as those caused by snares, vehicle collisions, and prescribed burning	Assess and reduce impacts of threats, evaluate efficacy of actions	Intensive Monitoring/collar checks	Lion, Wild dog and Cheetah	2020-2024	Zambian Carnivore Programme
			Den checks and Halo reports	Lion, Wild dog and Cheetah	2020-2024	Zambian Carnivore Programme



Intensive Monitoring

Musekese Conservation (MC) works in close partnership with the **Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP)**, a key long-term collaborator in the landscape. Together with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), ZCP leads the deployment of wildlife tracking collars on selected individuals, providing critical spatial and temporal data. This enables MC’s monitoring teams to track movements, assess threats, and safeguard key habitats for large carnivores.

Currently, we monitor seven lion prides collared by ZCP, along with six wild dog packs and six cheetahs. Since only one individual per pride or pack is collared, we are effectively tracking 47 lions, as well as 12 males across six coalitions. For wild dogs, this extends to 66 individuals across six packs, while cheetah monitoring focuses on six individuals, allowing us to gather valuable insights into movement, survival, and habitat use. Beyond movement tracking, collars enable increased sighting opportunities that provides us with key demographic insights such as pride sizes, cub survival rates, pack dynamics, and dispersal patterns—essential for understanding population stability and reproductive success.



Camera Trapping

Musekese Conservation (MC) collaborates with Panthera to conduct camera trap density surveys for lions, leopards, and spotted hyenas, providing critical data to inform park management. Since 2022, MC has refined methodologies, expanded survey coverage, and generated key population estimates in the Musekese-Lumbeya (ML) region.

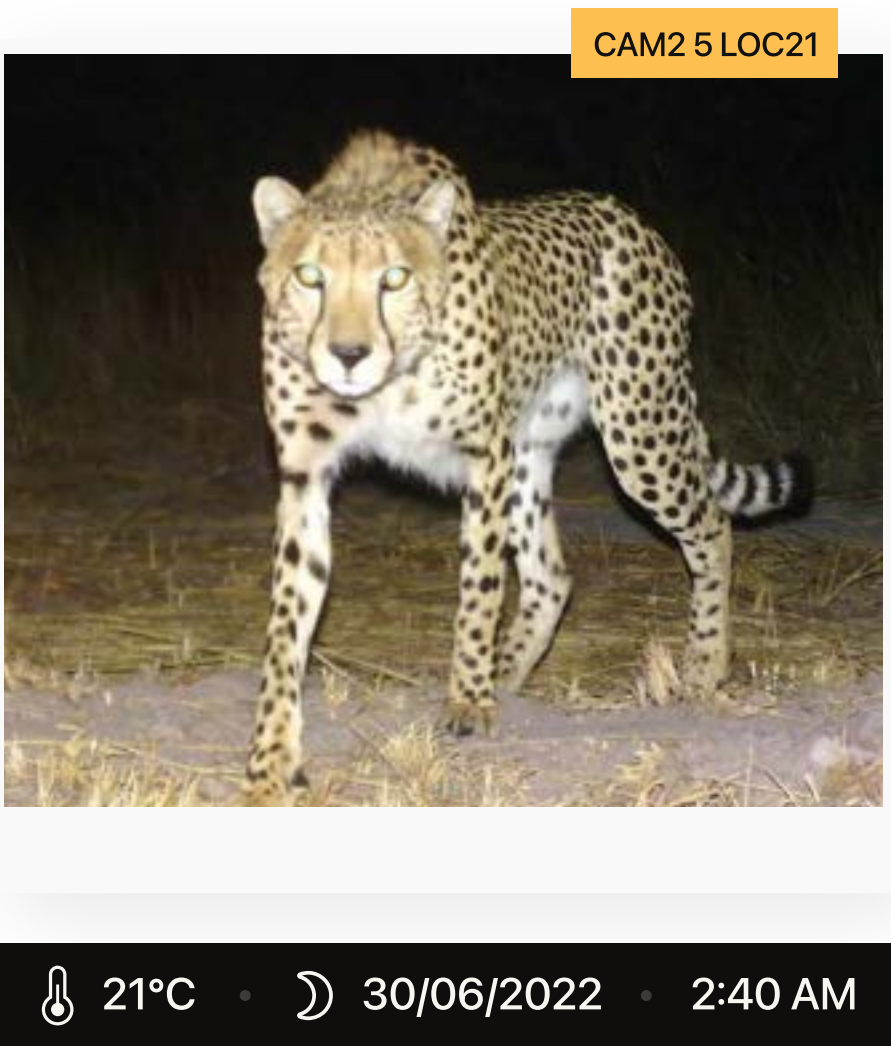
2023 MC improved the study design from the previous year, further expanded coverage, and strengthened population estimates in the ML region.

2024 Building on this success, MC deployed 200 camera traps across 100 stations, covering 1,044 km² of the ML region.

Beyond density surveys, MC partners with NatureSpy, a UK-based camera trap organization that has generously sponsored equipment for our work. While not used for density estimates, these cameras are positioned around MC’s research camps and key tourism lodges to monitor wildlife activity in high-use areas. They provide valuable insights into species presence, activity patterns, and seasonal movements in areas with regular human activity.

To complement the camera trap work and enhance lion density estimates, MC began conducting vehicle-based Search & Encounter (S&E) surveys in 2023, generously funded by the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.

These targeted surveys have helped identify lions not previously detected through camera traps, intensive



monitoring, or citizen science efforts highlighting the importance of this approach in building a more complete understanding of the lion population. Notably, the method has provided additional evidence that lion density in the region is increasing, reinforcing the effectiveness of ongoing protection and restoration efforts.



Citizen Science

Musekese Conservation’s Citizen Science Programme collaborates with Classic Zambia’s Musekese Camp and McBride’s Camp to record large carnivore sightings and share identification photos with our research team. As part of the park-wide Kafue National Park citizen science program led by Panthera, this initiative expands data collection by leveraging the high field presence of guides and guests. Their frequent activity in tourism zones allows our research team to focus on remote, lesser-traveled areas where human-wildlife risks are higher and carnivore populations are less understood. To support accurate identification, we have developed ID booklets featuring all known lions, wild dogs, and leopards, highlighting unique coat patterns and whisker spots. These booklets help guests and guides match individuals from their sightings, improving data accuracy for citizen science contributions. Our research and monitoring team also relies on these booklets to confirm individual identifications during fieldwork.

2023 Musekese Camp recorded 175 carnivore encounters.

2024 With the addition of McBride’s Camp, reported sightings increased to 250 encounters.

This collaborative effort strengthens long-term monitoring, providing valuable insights and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of large carnivores in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem.



ID Booklets

To understand population demographics and support accurate identification, we have developed detailed ID booklets for all known lions, wild dogs, and leopards in our study area. These booklets are compiled and updated annually, using the previous year’s data from camera trap surveys, intensive monitoring, opportunistic sightings and citizen science reports. Each booklet serves as a living archive—a growing life history catalogue—where each known individual is profiled with key features such as coat patterns, whisker spots, and scarring for identification, and is classified by sex, estimated age, and social grouping (pride, pack, or coalition).

Over time, this catalogue builds a deeper understanding of each animal’s history—documenting births, dispersals, deaths, and lineage relationships. Some individuals disappear or die, while others grow older, shift territories, and produce offspring, enriching our dataset year after year. The booklets are also used by our research and monitoring team to confirm identifications during fieldwork, and by participating guides and guests to contribute reliable data through our citizen science programme.

This long-term identification framework allows us to address key ecological and conservation questions, such as:

- What is the distribution of the local carnivore population?
- How does the population structure and size change over time?
- What are the direct and indirect human-caused sources of carnivore mortality?
- Where and when are carnivores most at risk?
- What mitigation strategies are most effective in reducing those risks?
- How do interventions influence survival at both the individual and population level?

By linking individual life histories to broader ecological trends, the ID booklets have become a cornerstone of both our fieldwork and our collaborative, landscape-level conservation strategy.

HERBIVORE/PREY SURVEY

Understanding herbivore abundance and distribution is vital to restoring ecological balance and supporting large carnivore recovery.

In the GKE, decades of bushmeat poaching and frequent fires have depleted prey populations, and in turn, compromised the recovery of large carnivores that depend on them.

To address this, Musekese Conservation (MC) has conducted bi-annual distance sampling surveys since 2021 across the Musekese-Lumbeya (ML) region.

Following ZCP’s standardized protocols, we now monitor 25 line transects covering 128 km of key habitat.

This consistency allows our data to be integrated into landscape-wide analyses, contributing to a coordinated conservation strategy.

While full analysis is underway, early findings from 2021–2024 are already informing predator-prey research, guiding land and fire management, and identifying areas in need of targeted intervention.



KEY FINDINGS FROM WILDLIFE MONITORING

LION

Lion populations in the Musekese-Lumbeya (ML) region continue to show a steady upward trend. Densities have increased from 1.02 lions/100km² in 2022 to 1.67 in 2023, reaching 1.84 in 2024. In partnership with the Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP), seven prides are currently collared, with only one known pride—Mufolo Pride—remaining uncollared. Two of these prides were newly collared in 2024. The minimum known lion population has grown from 50 individuals in November 2023 to 61 by November 2024, reflecting a positive trend. Camera trap data further supports this trend, with lion occupancy expanding from 44% of the study area in 2022 to 58% in 2023 and 60% in 2024.

Conservation efforts to reduce prey depletion have also resulted in an increase in mean pride size, from 2.75 lions in 2022 to 4.4 in 2024. However, despite this growth, lion densities in ML remain lower than in other areas of Kafue National Park and comparable habitats elsewhere. Continued protection and monitoring remain critical to sustaining this positive trajectory.



LEOPARD

The Musekese-Lumbeya region remains a stronghold for leopards, as confirmed by our camera trap studies (in collaboration with Panthera) and extensive citizen science data collected by Classic Zambia and McBride’s Camp.

- The western ML region boasts the highest leopard density in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem (GKE), with 9 leopards (>1 year old) per 100km²—a density comparable to Sabi Sands, one of Africa’s premier leopard strongholds.
- The eastern ML region holds the third-highest leopard density in the GKE, at 6.5 leopards (>1 year old) per 100km².

Leopard occupancy data further reinforces the importance of ML as prime leopard habitat, rising from 82% in 2022 to 92% in both 2023 and 2024. These findings confirm ML as a key conservation area for this iconic and elusive species.



CHEETAH

Cheetahs are among the least frequently sighted large carnivores in the ML region. While Kafue National Park (KNP) is a stronghold for cheetahs in Zambia, the miombo-dominated landscape of ML provides fewer open habitats preferred by the species.

- Camera trap occupancy increased from 12% in 2022 to 15% in 2024, suggesting a gradual but limited presence.
- Camera trap methods primarily focus on lions, hyenas, and leopards, meaning these estimates may not fully capture cheetah distribution. With increased resources, MC aims to refine survey methods to improve cheetah monitoring.

Despite relatively low numbers, cheetah sightings increased significantly in 2023 and 2024, thanks to MC’s intensive monitoring program. In collaboration with ZCP, two cheetahs were collared in 2023, followed by five more in 2024—leading to a 525% increase in recorded sightings. These efforts have provided critical data on movement patterns and demographics, informing park management, conservation planning, and protection strategies.



WILD DOG

African wild dog numbers in the ML region steadily increased from 2020 to 2023, peaking at 106 individuals across nine packs. However, in 2024, recorded numbers declined to 75 individuals across seven packs. Key threats driving this decline disrupting pack dynamics include:

- Lion predation
- Snaring incidents
- Roadkills along the M9, which separates ML from Mumbwa GMA.

The positive population growth up to 2023 is reflected in camera trap occupancy data, which increased from 20% in 2022 to 58% in 2023. However, the 2024 decline is mirrored in a slight drop to 53% occupancy. While this may seem minor, ongoing roadkill incidents and snaring injuries remain serious concerns. Musekese Conservation will continue working closely with park management and resource protection teams to mitigate these threats and strengthen wild dog conservation efforts.



SPOTTED HYENA

Spotted hyenas remain one of the least common large carnivores in the ML region, with camera trap surveys estimating a density of 1.88 hyenas per 100km²—lower than expected for similar ecosystems.

While these numbers are not the lowest in Kafue National Park, they remain below average compared to other similar African protected areas.

The reasons for lower hyena densities in Kafue remain unclear, and Musekese Conservation, Panthera, and the Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP) are working to investigate potential factors.

Despite their low densities, hyena habitat occupancy has increased from 77% in 2022 to 80% in 2024. While the raw occupancy remains at a high percentage it could be attributed to the extremely large distances that spotted hyenas cover in the GKE. This can be explained by the potential need to travel larger distances in search of food in a prey-depleted landscape like the GKE.



RESEARCH AND MONITORING

2023 - 2024



Research Camp

1



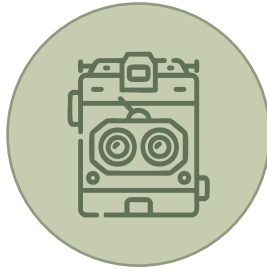
Research Field Days

346



Research Drives

363



Camera Traps Deployed

400



Number of Individual Leopards ID'd

106



Number of Individual Lions ID'd

66



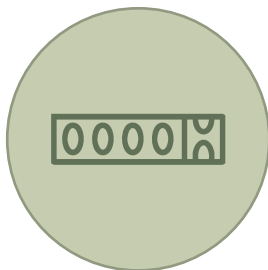
Number of Individual Wild Dogs ID'd

123



Number of Individual Cheetahs ID'd

14



Research KM Driven

26,829 km



Carnivore Sightings

400+

Recent Publications

Goodheart, B., Creel, S., Schuette, P., Droge, E., Becker, J. A., Banda, K., ... & Becker, M. S. (2024). Spatial risk effects from lions compound impacts of prey depletion on African wild dogs. *Ecology and Evolution*, 14(10), e70401.

Creel, S., Becker, M. S., Goodheart, B., Kusler, A., Banda, K., Banda, K., ... & Reid, C. (2025). Changes in African lion demography and population growth with increased protection in a large, prey-depleted ecosystem. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 7(1), e13256.

SPORT AND CONSERVATION

Over the years, Musekese Conservation (MC) has integrated sport into conservation, inspired by the Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge and the Tangila Trail Series. As Nelson Mandela famously said, "Sport has the power to change the world; it unites people in a way that little else does." This belief underpins MC's approach, using sport to foster teamwork, resilience, and endurance—qualities essential in conservation. Initially, gaining traction for these events was challenging, but interest has grown so significantly that internal trials are now required for participation. Since 2020, MC has actively competed in both events, strengthening fitness, camaraderie, and a culture of perseverance across our teams.

The Tangila Trail Series, hosted in Mkushi, brings together conservation organisations from across Zambia, with the annual Solomon Chidunuka Memorial Challenge as its highlight. Held in memory of a true hero in conservation, this competition honours Solomon Chidunuka's dedication and legacy, reinforcing the connection between physical endurance and conservation resilience.

The Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge, an international event supporting frontline conservation teams, has been a key part of MC's sporting journey since 2020. In 2023, MC proudly won the Wildlife Ranger Challenge at the inaugural KafueWild event, hosted by GKLL, and successfully defended the title in 2024, securing back-to-back victories.

2024 also saw MC enter its first-ever all-women's team, with four female scouts demonstrating strength, endurance, and determination. Their participation reflects MC's commitment to inclusivity and empowering women in conservation, paving the way for greater representation in the years ahead. Beyond competitions, sport has become a vital tool for community engagement. MC actively supports regular football and netball matches in local communities, strengthening relationships between conservation teams and local residents.

By embedding sport into its culture, MC continues to build a fitter, stronger, and more connected team, proving that fitness, teamwork, and conservation go hand in hand.

**TANGILA
TRAIL SERIES**



WOMEN IN CONSERVATION

Leading, Protecting, Inspiring

Conservation work across the Greater Kafue Ecosystem has long been perceived as a male-dominated field. But at Musekese Conservation, women are not just participating—they are leading. From anti-poaching patrols to legal advocacy, data collection, finance, HR, and community engagement, women are central to the programme's success.

Musekese Conservation is proud to employ women at every level of the organisation. Whether working in the field, supporting enforcement operations, designing community programmes, or shaping policy, these women challenge traditional norms and demonstrate the power of inclusive conservation. Their leadership fosters greater trust in communities, brings diverse perspectives to conservation challenges, and inspires the next generation.

As Zambia works to strengthen gender equity and increase women's representation in natural resource management, Musekese Conservation's approach shows what is possible. By investing in women, the conservation sector not only benefits from diverse talent—it also reflects the values of fairness, resilience, and community leadership that are essential for the future of Zambia's landscapes and people.

In 2024, our commitment to gender inclusion was reflected in the numbers:

Three women currently serve in Senior Management roles.

Eight women hold supervisory or junior management positions across departments.

Nine women have completed our intern-to-graduate pipeline, with many continuing into leadership roles.

Women now represent **20.8%** of all supported personnel.

Of the **169 students** reached through our Conservation Clubs this year, **58% were girls**, underscoring the growing interest and participation of young women in conservation education.

15 women fulfil Resource Protection roles as Rangers.

These milestones demonstrate that investing in women isn't just an equity issue—it's a strategic advantage for conservation success.



TOURISM & CONSERVATION SYNERGY

Musekese Conservation & Classic Zambia: Distinct but Aligned

Musekese Conservation (MC) and Classic Zambia (CZ) are separate entities. MC is a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) focused on conservation and research, while CZ operates as a safari tourism business. Their close relationship allows for collaboration on shared goals while maintaining distinct operations.

Classic Zambia & Conservation Levies

As a leading safari operator, CZ plays a crucial role in conservation funding. A portion of guest fees goes directly toward wildlife protection, research, and community projects, ensuring a sustainable impact.

Function	Musekese Conservation (MC)	Classic Zambia (CZ)
Core Mandate	Resource Protection, law enforcement, community engagement	Tourism operations and guest experience
Operational Focus	Resource Protection, Research Monitoring, Community Engagement, training, stakeholder engagement	Camp operations, hospitality, safari guiding
Revenue Model	Donor-funded (grants, philanthropy)	Tourism revenue (guest bookings)
Employment Base	Conservation staff, community scouts, support personnel	Tourism staff (guides, lodge staff, managers)
Shared Values	Accountability, Integrity, Respect, Collaboration	Accountability, Integrity, Respect, Collaboration
Points of intersection	Recipient of the conservation levy; conducts research and conservation activities within the same landscape as Musekese Camp; hosts guest visits to the research base and uses tourism as a platform to showcase conservation work.	Two of CZ's founders are also the founders of MC; operates Musekese Camp within the same sector of Kafue; integrates conservation messaging into the guest experience and supports MC through tourism-driven funding.



Tourism & Conservation: A Lasting Connection

Musekese Conservation's origins are deeply rooted in safari tourism, with its founding partners recognizing the critical role of tourism in funding and sustaining conservation efforts. While the Musekese Conservation programme has evolved considerably since its early days, our connection to tourism remains strong and is integrated into our daily approach.

Tourism’s Direct Support for Conservation

Since its inception, tourism-generated funds have supported anti-poaching efforts, ranger salaries, research, and donated equipment. As MC has diversified funding, CZ's contributions remain vital in bridging financial gaps, particularly in research and monitoring within Kafue National Park.

Visitor Engagement & Citizen Science

Guests at Musekese Camp can visit the MC Research Base, engaging in conservation activities through guided tours, interactive discussions, and citizen science projects. Wildlife ID booklets allow visitors to contribute to research, and CZ extends its impact through community outreach, such as the Kids of the Kafue initiative.

Wider Tourism Support

Beyond CZ, other tourism entities contribute to conservation. Busanga Safaris has donated camera gear, while Swiss African Foundation, Sur La Ri, and People and Places Travel provide financial support. The growing interest in eco-tourism highlights the powerful role of responsible travel in conservation efforts.

Looking Ahead

Our next phase of collaboration will focus on deepening guest engagement — not only by sharing stories of impact, but by creating direct experiences. This includes exposing visitors to the realities of field operations, building conservation-specific elements into their safaris, and hosting more trips dedicated entirely to conservation learning. By connecting guests more meaningfully to our work, we hope to cultivate lasting support and advocacy for the Greater Kafue Ecosystem.

COLLABORATION ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE

Collaboration Across the Landscape

An area as large as the Greater Kafue Ecosystem is complex—no single partner can tackle these challenges alone. It is crucial that we work together, coordinate efforts, and divide responsibilities to ensure a comprehensive and effective conservation strategy.

Musekese Conservation understands that successful conservation cannot happen in isolation. Protecting the Greater Kafue Ecosystem requires strategic collaboration with government agencies, conservation NGOs, local communities, and private sector partners. Our partnerships enable us to share resources, intelligence, and expertise, leading to more effective conservation outcomes across the landscape.



Partner	Role in Conservation	Collaboration with Musekese Conservation
Department of National Parks & Wildlife (DNPW)	Government agency responsible for managing protected areas and enforcing wildlife laws.	Joint patrols, scout training, policy coordination, and data-sharing initiatives.
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	Supports large-scale conservation initiatives in the GMA's and sustainable funding mechanisms.	Funding support, strategic conservation planning, and capacity-building for resource protection. Overall coordinating partner.
Greater Kafue Landscapes Limited (GKLL)	Co-management partner of Kafue National Park.	Aerial surveillance, intelligence-sharing, and logistical support for resource protection efforts.
Community Resource Boards (CRBs)	Represent local communities in natural resource management.	Employment of community scouts, revenue-sharing models, and conservation education programs.
Panthera	Focus on predator research and conservation.	Collaborations include the citizen science program, camera trap study, and SECR surveys to refine carnivore population estimates.
Zambia Carnivore Programme (ZCP)	Focus on carnivore research and conservation.	Joint efforts in collaring, intensive monitoring, den checks, and herbivore/prey transects provide critical data for population assessments.
Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP)	Supports law enforcement, strengthens prosecutions, and engages communities to combat wildlife and environmental crime in Zambia	Court room monitoring, IIU support.
Game Rangers International (GRI)	Wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, including elephant orphanage programs.	Collaboration on human-wildlife conflict mitigation and ranger training.
Classic Zambia	Safari tourism operator that integrates conservation awareness into guest experiences.	Conservation levy contributions, guest visits to the Research Base, and community outreach programs.
Mushingashi Conservancy	Mushingashi is a private conservancy within the Greater Kafue Ecosystem that supports additional law enforcement capacity across selected Game Management Areas.	Mushingashi operates in a neighbouring landscape, collaborating with Musekese Conservation through shared knowledge, joint community outreach, and aligned conservation efforts.

FUNDING & SUSTAINABILITY

Funding & Sustainability

Musekese Conservation's funding model has evolved significantly over the years. Initially, the programme relied heavily on tourism-based funding, with revenue generated from conservation levies and private contributions from guests. However, with the global decline in tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it became evident that a more diversified and resilient funding structure was needed to sustain conservation efforts in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem.

Diversifying Funding Streams: Tourism, Donors & Sustainable Revenue

Tourism funding will always be part of Musekese Conservation's DNA—without the initial investment from the sector, the organisation wouldn't be where it is today. However, we have long since moved beyond reliance on tourism alone. Since 2020, the steady addition of key donors, including the Tusk Wildlife Ranger Challenge, Swiss African Foundation, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and philanthropic supporters, has enabled MC to expand its conservation impact and strengthen its reputation. Long-term partners like the Lion Recovery Fund have also played a crucial role, providing continued support for over six years. This diversification has not only increased our credibility among global donors but also reinforced our commitment to securing sustainable funding for the future of conservation.

Financial Challenges & Solutions

Despite these funding successes, challenges remain. The rising costs of fuel, ranger equipment, infrastructure, and logistics mean that securing sustainable, long-term funding is an ongoing priority. Musekese Conservation continues to explore innovative financial solutions, including:

- Expanding grant funding from conservation-focused organisations.
- Strengthening partnerships with the private sector, including eco-tourism and responsible business initiatives.
- Engaging with sustainable financing models such as carbon credit projects.

Encouraging donor engagement and transparent reporting to build long-term trust and financial commitment. By continuing to diversify funding sources, Musekese Conservation aims to future-proof its operations and ensure that conservation efforts in the Greater Kafue Ecosystem remain effective and sustainable.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

TURNING GROWTH INTO SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

The coming years will be pivotal in ensuring Musekese Conservation not only sustains its growth but fully embraces the transformation we've begun. Expansion doesn't stop here. While growth is often measured in numbers, true progress lies in our ability to adapt, refine, and consolidate.

The past two years have tested our resilience and demanded agility in the face of rapid change. As we settle into expanded landscapes and a more complex operational model, it's essential that our structure, strategy, and mission remain aligned across the entire programme.

A key milestone in 2025 will be the recruitment of critical leadership roles—including a Resource Protection Manager, HR Manager, and Finance & Grants Manager. These positions will be central to reinforcing our operational maturity and helping Musekese Conservation transition from a rapid-response expansion phase into a high-performing, sustainable conservation organisation.

But leadership alone isn't enough. The people on the ground—our field teams, support staff, and community partners—remain the heart of everything we do. For Musekese Conservation to truly deliver on its mission, these teams must be equipped, supported, and empowered to lead conservation from the frontlines.

Our next phase will be about deepening impact, not just expanding reach. It will require embedding sustainability, efficiency, and cohesion into everything we do—ensuring that what we've built is not only protected, but strengthened for the long term.

Musekese Conservation has reached a defining moment. Now, we move forward—together, and with purpose.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

To get in touch, email us at: info@musekeseconservation.org

Visit: www.musekeseconservation.org

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WITH GRATITUDE

We extend our sincere thanks to all donors, partners, and supporters who make our work possible — including those who choose to remain anonymous or may not be listed here. Your belief in our mission drives everything we do.

Whilst much of the photography was captured by the Musekese Conservation team, special thanks go to the Classic Zambia team, Ed Selfe, Peter Lindsey, Pulse Media, Emmanuel Mwiche, Wilton Clark, Anthony Lostron and Matt Armstrong Ford for their generous contributions and support in helping us bring this report to life.

OUR DONORS



**Lion
Recovery
Fund**



