

To: Dean's Advisory Committee
From:
Date: October 13, 2006
Re: Student Venture Grant Application: Cost-benefit analysis of Cheetah Conservation Fund's Bush Project initiative against bush encroachment; or, How much bush can Bushblok clear if Bushblok could clear bush?

Intended use:

I am applying for the Venture Grant to help cover costs of an internship with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in Namibia to pursue research of single-species conservation efforts. An internship through CCF is the most effective method to carry out research or collect data on CCF. Through the internship, I have requested to do independent research with a focus on the CCF Bush Program, an innovative program located close to the CCF headquarters in Namibia that tackles the growing problem of bush encroachment. The data I collect when at CCF, subsequently compiled and analyzed as a thesis paper, would fulfill the senior thesis requirement for a degree in Economics.

Description:

As an Economics major, my senior thesis will be an economic analysis of wildlife conservation efforts. To achieve an understanding of the key components of successful wildlife conservation, I plan to look at single-species conservation efforts in the context of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in Namibia. CCF acknowledges that successful conservation requires local support and involvement and has set up programs aimed at promoting local support. The purpose of this research is to determine how CCF addresses the human dimensions of conservation through cost-benefit analysis of the CCF Bush program. CCF Bush, a habitat restoration project aimed at removing bush from the Namibian savanna, started in 2001 with a \$1 million dollar grant from the U.S. Agency

for International Development (USAID) and successfully completed phase II in May 2005. Bush encroachment, a substantial problem in Namibia and throughout semi-arid regions, is a part of the desertification process when impenetrable and thirsty shrubs envelop savanna grasslands due, in most part to overgrazing of cattle. The product of CCF Bush is Bushblok; a smokeless biomass fuel log made of compressed chipped bush, labeled with a CCF logo and sold in local and, more recently, international markets. CCF Bush is expanding as an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable answer to bush encroachment in Southern Africa.

While independent data collection and experience add to the analysis, data collected by CCF, as well as by the Namibian government, and alternative energy statistics will provide the base data for the analysis. My background in research methods, environmental economics and microeconomic theory will allow me to carry out analysis of this data. I am in e-mail communication with CCF Bush and CCF to assemble as much data information prior to my visit so that I may make the best use my time in Namibia. I am confident that a cost-benefit analysis is within my capabilities and feasible given the timeframe and assistance available to me.

Due to a limited period available for data collection and research in Namibia, I have already started my literature reviews pertinent to this topic. It is imperative that I have as much knowledge of the topic as possible before my departure to Namibia to give me a productive and beneficial experience at CCF. I have already requested that CCF send me papers on the Bush Program in addition to the studies available on their website, so that I will have a substantial knowledge of the program before I arrive. Upon return to Colorado College, I will analyze the data collected at CCF for my senior thesis to in

economics. Presentation of my research experience to the Colorado College community will follow the completion of my thesis in the form of an article to either the *Cipher* or the *Catalyst* and potentially a presentation to the environmental economics class offered eighth block as well as the Economic and Business Department Senior Research Symposium. I will also actively look into the opportunity to present my senior thesis and Venture Grant experience outside of the college.

From this research, I wish to identify the benefits of the CCF Bush program through a cost-benefit analysis. The model of the CCF Bush program as a sustainable, environmentally and socially sound answer to bush encroachment is one that should lead the way in managing bush encroachment throughout affected regions in southern Africa. An economic analysis of the program provides CCF with a strong backing to the already successful CCF Bush program. It allows me the opportunity to complete my senior thesis on an area that holds great interest to me.

Personal Background:

Dr. Laurie Marker, the co-founder and director of CCF, visited Colorado College last spring and spoke to my environmental economics class. After hearing her talk, and seeing her enthusiasm I knew that I wanted to learn more about what this ambitious and successful woman was stirring up in Namibia and across the globe. I made a point to introduce myself to her and warned her “you’ll be hearing from me in the near future.” When it came time to define my thesis question, after a brief stint researching trophy hunting and wildlife conservation, I remembered my fascination with Dr. Marker’s organization, Cheetah Conservation Fund and with the help of Professor Johnson in the

economics department, contacted her about doing economic research with CCF in Namibia. She has since put me in touch with Judith Walls, head of interns and volunteers, and Paula Martin, Administrative Officer for CCF in the US. This support system is a resource that I plan to use to my advantage and makes me confident that my proposal is feasible. My passion for the outdoors and wilderness led me to Colorado College where I have thrived. Colorado College has led me to this opportunity, which I will pursue with gusto.

Budget:

Airfare: Roundtrip Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) to Hosea Kutako

International Airport (WDH)

Program Fee: Cost of internship with Cheetah Conservation Fund: room, board,
research training/supervision, airport transfers in Namibia: \$55/day for 20 days

Research Materials: As requested by CCF - USB Flash Drive: \$60, Compass: \$20,

Blank CDs (10 Pack): \$20, various office supplies: \$20

Airfare: \$2,500

Program Fee: \$1,100

Research Materials: \$120

Incidentals: \$200

Total: \$3,920

Requested funds from Venture Grant: \$1,000

Requested funds from Skilling Award: \$500

Personal Resources: \$2,420