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For immediate release

Samara's fight for the Karoo

Samara Private Game Reserve, in the heart of the Karoo and situated on the plains of the Camdeboo Mountains, is a piece of Heaven on Earth. Since 1997, Samara has made it their mission to rehabilitate the Eastern Capes' Great Karoo and have been successful in reintroducing a number of species into the reserve to ensure their survival on the Great Plains. Species' such as the rare Blue Crane, the Cape Mountain Zebra as well as the endangered Cheetah, just to name a few, can now call the area home once again.

This incredible landscape that was once wild and untouched, is being rehabilitated and restored to its natural state, to once again house its diversity of wildlife and endemic plant species. Samara has been working closely together with a number of wildlife and conservation organizations in order to keep up with the uncontrollable forces of nature which prove to threaten our natural diversity.

Now, the restoration of the Karoo is once again being threatened by a process called hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking'. For almost two years, Mark and Sarah Tompkins, owners of Samara Private Game Reserve, succeeded in keeping Bundu Oil & Gas, an Australian shale gas exploration company, off their property. They feared the company's activities would jeopardize the delicate ecological balance of the Karoo as well as the water systems on which the Karoo is so dependent.

'Fracking' is a method in which drillers blast millions of litres of water, sand and chemicals at high pressure in underground rock formations to create cracks for gas and oil to escape easier.

Supported by SANParks, and together with Derek Light, Samara has fought for the safety of the Karoo against fracking. According to Derek, a Karoo attorney who represents farmers and conservationists against the method, the biggest risk is the water and the contamination of that water. Farmers', communities and Environmental NGO's livelihoods will also be largely affected.

According to Derek Light, "Instructed thereto by Mark and Sarah we have twice been successful in warding off the applications of Bundu to secure exploration rights in the region. They have renewed their application excluding Samara. Falcon and Shell have joined the scramble for exploration rights, the total area of which will cover approximately 230 000 square kilometers if granted. We now represent a large number of interested and affected

people and will continue opposing this process. We cannot allow ecologically unsustainable exploitation of fossil fuels and the degradation of our environment. We are grateful to Samara for their continued support of this cause."

The bid to explore over 230 000 square km for 'fracking' will have serious harmful environmental and agricultural impact and poison the already limited water supply in the Karoo. It takes only 1 litre of hydrocarbon gases like shale to pollute 1 million litres of water. Hydraulic fracturing also requires millions of litres of water, in a semi-desert environment and produces vast volumes of flammable, toxic drilling mud which then has to be stored somewhere.

Sarah Tompkins, who attended the Shell meeting in Graaff Reinet on the 28th of January, says "It is inconceivable that Golder Associates on behalf of Shell have been granted 120 days only to do an EMP which covers the vast area of 230,000 square kilometers.

Samara Private Game Reserve is committed to maintaining the natural habitat and to restoring the bio-diversity of the reserve. Community projects, conservation projects and restoration projects are on going in Samaras' Private Game Reserve, to educate and inform the public and the Karoo communities of the importance of preserving the unique natural habitats of the Karoo.

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