

## **SECURING WILDLIFE: MARMANET FOREST WILDLIFE FENCE**

Deputy President, William Ruto says reducing interaction between humans and wildlife will allow productive land use, keep animals in their natural habitat and maintain a healthy ecosystem.

Speaking during the launch of Rumuruti/Marmanet Forest Wildlife Barrier fence, Mr. Ruto said a lasting solution to the perennial human-wildlife conflict will insulate animals in protected areas, enable planting of more tree species, while ensuring the safety of human population and minimizing damage to crops.

Laikipia County is blessed with abundant and huge assemblages of wildlife ranging from elephants, buffalos, giraffes, lions, rhinos, zebras and other wildlife species both within ranches and community conservancies. The rhino population in Laikipia County is about 52% of the national population of rhinos in Kenya.

The abundance of wildlife in the county, though positive as it attracts visitors, has had its own challenges of human wildlife conflict to the extent that Laikipia has been designated as one of conflict “hot spots” in Kenya.

In order to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts in the County, the National Treasury through the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife has allocated funds amounting to 200 million shillings and channeled them to Kenya Wildlife Service to carry out conflict mitigation through fence construction and maintenance, in conjunction with the County Government of Laikipia.

The construction of the fence will cover a total of 53 kilometers. The construction commenced on July 6, 2018. So far 13 Kilometers have been completed and powered. KWS anticipates that the whole length will be covered before the end of the year 2019 as all the required materials have been procured and delivered on site.

Alongside the Rumuruti –Marmanet forest fence, part of the funds will be used in fencing of Doldol Township Arjiju Primary School and Kijito Borehole in Laikipia North constituency covering a total of 12 kilometers, among other projects.

A perimeter stone wall will be constructed and used to secure the Kijito borehole at Doldol which is frequently damaged by elephants. The wall will provide reprieve to communities relying on this important water source.

In undertaking CSR projects, KWS aims to address four thematic areas that affect the social livelihoods of communities in different conservation areas (Water, Education, Health & community based wildlife enterprise projects).

In the recent past, KWS has completed several CSR projects in Laikipia County including 23km Loldaiga community fence, Dispensary laboratory at Gatundia, and an administration block at Sangaa primary school.

KWS been urging the People of Laikipia to identify opportunities that come along with the presence of wildlife such as areas where they can have community eco- lodges so that that they also benefit from this resource.

Present during the launch was Laikipia Governor Nderitu Muriithi who lauded the government for their action to resolve the human-wildlife conflicts experienced in the region.

Others present during the launch were the Permanent Secretary Tourism and Wildlife Ministry Dr. Margaret Mwakima, Laikipia West Member of Parliament Partrick Mariru, local leaders, Kenya Wildlife Service Ag. Director General Prof. Charles Musyoki, Deputy Director Parks and Reserve Mr. Julius Kimani, Ag. Deputy Director Devolution and Community Services Mr. Michael Kipkeu, among others.