



# Korente Vette High Altitude Clearing Project



A natural river gorge flows below the Korentepoort Dam and provides water from the dam to Riversdale and many agricultural activities downstream.

The gorge has become overgrown with invasive trees which reduces water and slows the flow of water down stream. This is a challenge for uses who often need water quickly.

Clearing the gorge required combined planning and funding from many partners.









With funding from SANBI secured, under the PYEI project, the leadership of the Irrigation Board, the experience from the Grootvadersbosch Conservancy and the support of the community, we started to plan an approach to clearing the gorge.





## Step 1: Securing the area against fire

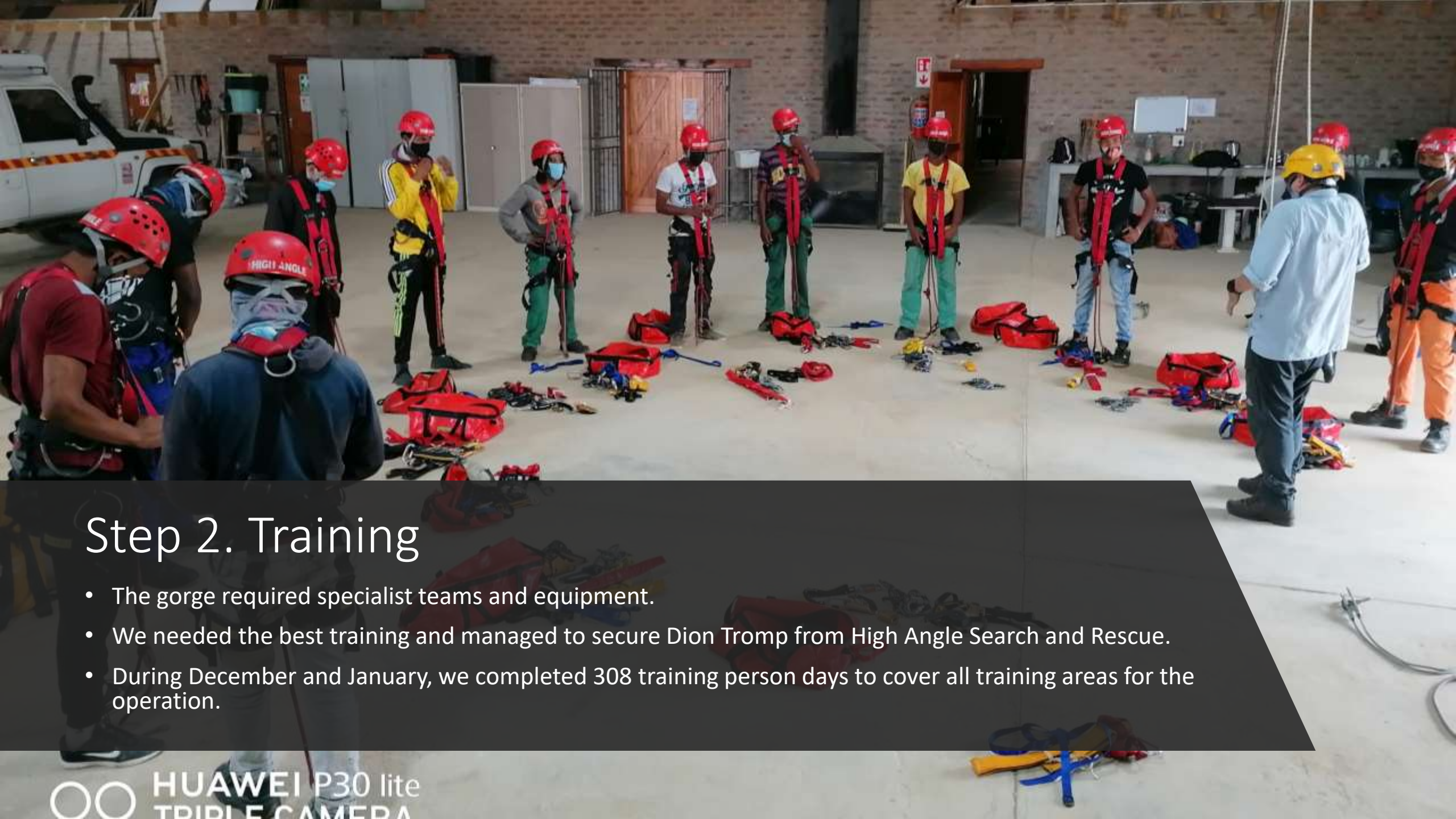
- Removing the biomass in the gorge would be a priority so we needed to make the area safe for burning.
- This meant creating firebreaks to protect plantations, infrastructure and the mountains from an unwanted fire.











## Step 2. Training

- The gorge required specialist teams and equipment.
- We needed the best training and managed to secure Dion Tromp from High Angle Search and Rescue.
- During December and January, we completed 308 training person days to cover all training areas for the operation.



HUAWEI P30 lite  
TRIPLE CAMERA





“The training was like sweet cakes! I heard that it is easier to teach someone who knows nothing than to teach someone who thinks they know everything. So because we knew nothing, there was only one way to learn and one way to do things.” Le Cardo Pick



An aerial photograph showing a person rappelling down a steep, rocky cliff. The person is wearing a yellow helmet and a colorful harness, and is positioned in the center of the frame. The cliff face is covered in dense green vegetation, including ferns and small trees. The person is rappelling down a rope that is anchored to a rock. The background shows more of the cliff and the surrounding forest.

## Step 3: Practicing the skills

The team was well trained under Dion Tromp but we wanted to give them some easier areas to become familiar with the equipment and the real terrain.

We completed two gorges along a river that were challenging but not too steep so that we could be sure the team would be safe and confident on the ropes when the terrain got really steep.





Before



After

“On day 2, after a long day on our first contract, we could all stand next to the river and look back at what we did and look together at our hard work and thank each other for a good days work” Lee-Cardo Pick



## Step 4. Clearing areas that could be accessed without ropes

There are areas in the gorge that could be cleared with normal teams so, while the rope team was honing their skills, we got other teams into the gorge to cut and remove biomass to the edges. This would eventually be burned.









# Step 5. Controlled burning

With the fire breaks in place, we started to prepare for controlled burns around the dam. This required getting permits to conduct burns under safe conditions. This would mean that when we did burn in the gorge, there would be no chance of a damaging fire spreading out.







## Step 6. Planning the operation in the gorge



In order to maximise the time for the team on the ropes, we decided that the rope team would camp at the dam during the week. This meant that they would make as much progress within the project as possible.

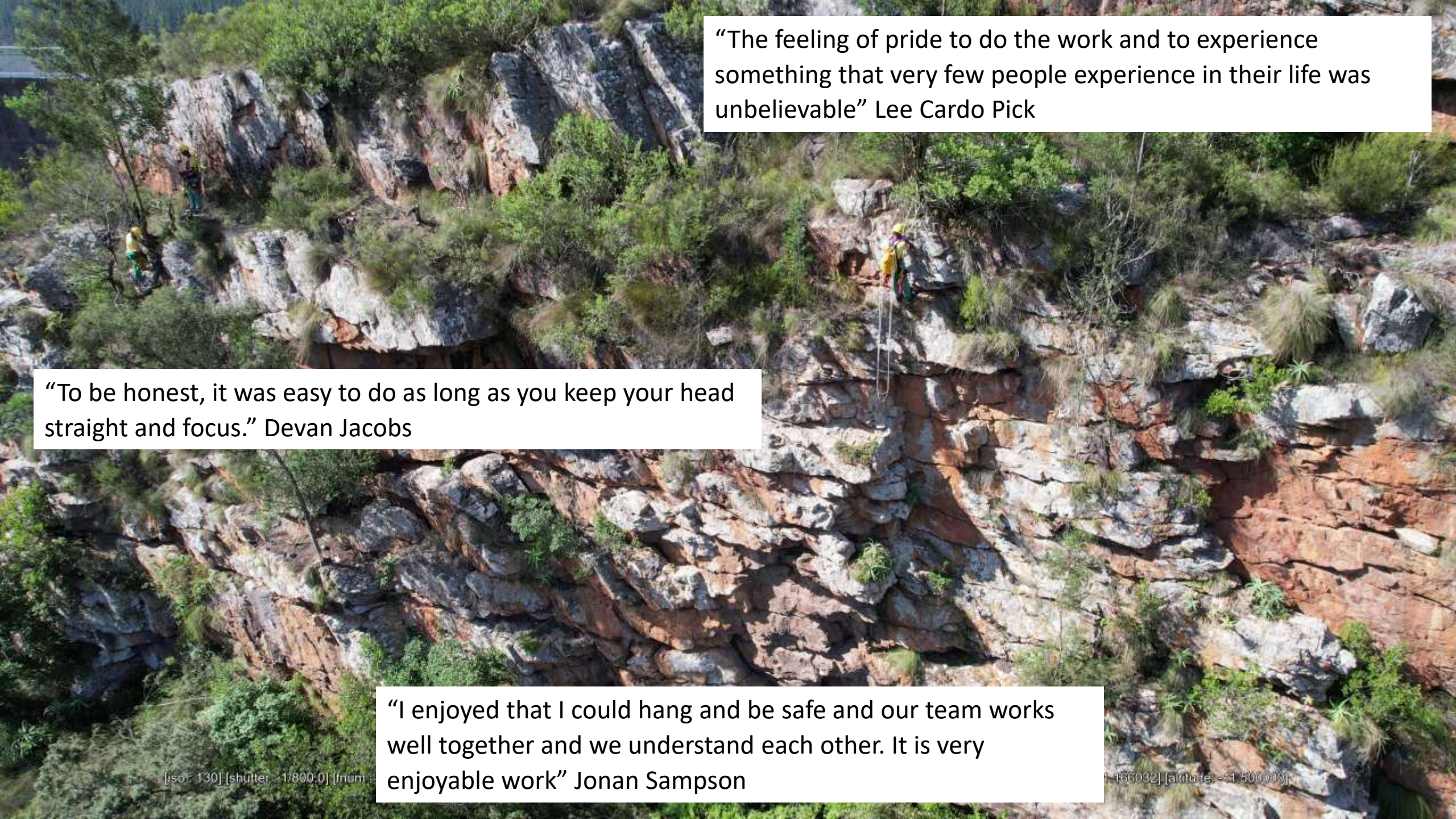
This required sourcing equipment and making logistical arrangements. We also spent much time discussing safety and operational issues for working at the site.



## Step 7. Clearing in the gorge

With the correct  
planning, training and  
practice completed, the  
team started on the  
ropes in the gorge.





“The feeling of pride to do the work and to experience something that very few people experience in their life was unbelievable” Lee Cardo Pick

“To be honest, it was easy to do as long as you keep your head straight and focus.” Devan Jacobs

“I enjoyed that I could hang and be safe and our team works well together and we understand each other. It is very enjoyable work” Jonan Sampson





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Well done to the team for the successful implementation of the project under SANBI.

We look forward to continuing with the good work in the Korentepoort Dam gorge. Now that the PYEI funding through SANBI has concluded, we will continue with the project under a new funding source.

