

STORMWATER AND SEWER CONNECTION AUDIT BEGINS

A door-to-door audit of Knysna's stormwater and sewerage connections starts this week. The audit is a key project within the ongoing Knysna Estuary Pollution Action Plan, which was launched by the municipality in association with several other stakeholders last year to reduce pollution into the Knysna Lagoon.

Knysna Municipal Manager Lauren Waring, who is also the chairperson of the Knysna Estuary Pollution Control Task Committee, said the audit was aimed at detecting and correcting illegal stormwater and sewer connections as well as a determining the overall status of these systems in and around town.

"During the compilation of the Estuary Action Plan, the stormwater system was identified as one of the main sources of pollution into the lagoon. This was mainly because of illegal sewer connections that fed into the stormwater systems, as well as other unlawful connections to stormwater such as swimming pool pumps and rainwater outlets.

"As the Garden Route is an all-year rainfall area that experiences significant amounts of rain at a time, stormwater can be substantial in built-up areas. When it rains, up to seven times more water runs into the sewers than should be the case based on the water that is released from the Water Treatment Works. This extra water causes overflows of the sewerage system," said Waring.

The first phase of the audit will focus on areas in and around Central Knysna including Paradise, Heuwelkruin, the Knysna CBD, Lelieskloof, residential areas just above the Knysna CBD and White Location.

Auditing personnel will be in possession of a card that identifies them as such and will hand out brochures which provide some background information regarding the audit. When an auditor visits a property, he (or she) will identify himself to the person on the premises and request that he be taken around the outside of the buildings so that connections can be investigated. Details of all connections on the property will be mapped according to a pre-determined survey form, which will be completed in the presence of the premises representative.

Homes and premises of which all connections are legal and in order will be signed off. Any incorrect or illegal connections will be identified and the owner presented with a list of corrections that will have to be made to ensure compliance with the relevant bylaws. The owner will be required to rectify all illegal connections on the property, possibly with the assistance of a qualified plumber, within three weeks from the date that he or she was notified of the illegal and incorrect connections.

Non-compliant properties will be re-inspected about three weeks after the first site visit. Premises on which connections were corrected will be signed off. Owners who do not comply after the three-week amnesty period will be fined per illegal connection, according to the bylaw fine structure. The auditors will be accompanied by law enforcement officers, who will issue fines on the spot. Fines range from R750 to R1500 depending on the transgression.

Should there be no person on site when auditors visit a particular property, auditors will leave a slip on the premises requesting an appointment to visit the site for inspection.

Ms Waring appealed to all residents and businesses to co-operate with auditors, and to make every effort to ensure that stormwater and sewerage connections are legal and correct. "The correction of the stormwater connections in central Knysna will significantly reduce the impact on the Knysna Lagoon. This is a way in which every resident can directly contribute to the long term sustainability of our town. The fact is, our town is very dependent on the health of the lagoon and it is ultimately up to every resident and business to do its part in making this town work," she said.

The Stormwater and Sewer Connection Audit is performed on behalf of the municipality by consultants Royal HaskoningDHV. Auditing personnel have been carefully screened for security purposes and have been sufficiently trained in the relevant technical requirements. In some cases, law enforcement officers may accompany auditing

personnel. Regular reports of the audit results and actions to comply will be submitted to Council, and acted upon where applicable. Inquiries can be directed to the consultants at 044 302 4900.

Phase One of the Stormwater and Sewer Connection Audit will take place as follows:

Date	Area
22 April 2013 to 3 May 2013	Paradise and Heuwelkruin
6 May 2013 to 17 May 2013	Residential areas above Knysna CBD, Lelieskloof
20 May 2013 to 31 May 2013	Knysna CBD
3 June 2013 to 14 June 2013	White Location

The Knysna Estuary Pollution Action Plan was launched in November 2013 to reduce the pollution of the town's most valuable natural resource, the Knysna Lagoon.

Prepared by the municipal departments Planning and Development and Technical Services following a report by consultants Royale Haskoning DHV (formerly Stuart Scott International), the plan was in response to consistently high counts of Escherichia coli (or E.coli) that have been measured during monthly testing at culverts and places where river systems enter the estuary.

While unacceptable and by no means considered to make the situation less serious, the high levels of pollution at inflow points have not caused significant ecological damage to the estuary as pollutants are diluted significantly by immense amounts of seawater that wash in and out of the lagoon twice a day. For this reason, the lagoon also continues to be safe for recreational use.

The Action Plan addresses three main sources of pollution into the estuary: the sewer network including the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW), polluted river systems that run through informal settlements into the estuary, and the stormwater network which has illegal connections to the sewer network. Specific projects have been tied to each of the three causes.

Several projects have already been implemented over the past six months while several others are rolled out as funding becomes available. Detailed press releases and information regarding the Knysna Estuary Pollution Action Plan can be obtained at www.knysna.gov.za/lagoon/.

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