

MEDIA RELEASE

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Authorities in Knysna have rolled up sleeves to tackle sources of pollution.

On the 30th August, a team including the Municipal Manager of the local Knysna Municipality, visited potential pollution hotspot areas in the Bongani catchment, Bigai catchment and CBD to discuss remedial actions. They noted illegal access routes and dumping at various spots in Knysna as a concern. The significance of this action is to clamp down on all pollution points and protect the Knysna estuary at all costs.

Positive, proactive engagements are underway by various stakeholders forming part of the Knysna Authorities Pollution Committee. This action is over and above monitoring the estuary for ecoli counts. Sampling of nutrients in the Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) effluent - including ammonia, PH level, nitrates, suspended solids as well as chlorine - is also monitored closely.

Park Manager for Knysna, Megan Taplin says 'high readings of ammonia are a concern to SANParks for the survival of both plant and animal life in the estuary.' She adds 'we are working with our partners to do more than just sample for ecoli in the Knysna estuary but monitor all potential polluters. Our partnerships with the Municipality allow monitoring of solid waste and systems leading to the Waste Water Treatment Works. Oil and grease influx to the WWTW and sewer system is also being monitored by the municipality.'

There is recent evidence of high loads of oil entering the system and ending up at the WWTW. Authorities will renew monitoring and investigation efforts to find the source of the oil along the networks and will soon find and fine the culprits.

A positive move is the number of interventions planned for the estuary which include a freshwater specialist who will be appointed by the Municipality. The specialist will assess the Bongani river system from source to sea including the state of the wetlands in the area and suggest rehabilitation measures for the Bongani catchment. This will assist to address pollution in the system from source to estuary.

There are also numerous interventions to keep solid waste away from the estuary including planned awareness campaigns, regular clean-ups and the rollout of cargo nets to other culverts. A pilot launch of the net was initiated at the culvert on Vigilance Drive last year. SANParks and KM will enter into a Service Level Agreement where SANParks teams will clean the nets regularly. In addition, 50 ladies employed by the Knysna Municipality pick up litter further up the catchment on a daily basis.

A joint survey of the industrial area by the Knysna Municipality (KM), Garden Route District Municipality (GRDM) and SANParks will soon be finalising findings and necessary actions for business owners in the area.

Residents and business are requested to not dispose of oil and grease in main drains or storm water systems.

Knysna Municipality's technical director, Pravir Hariparsad says 'if we can determine the trends of when the oil and grease enter the WWTW, we will get better understanding of the trend which might make it easier to track the polluter.' He has further committed the Municipality's resources to address incidents and also proactively work hard at interventions to keep pollution away from South Africa's number 1 estuary in terms of biodiversity significance. 15 points are monitored in the Bongani daily to unlock any problems and readings

have dropped steadily as a result of these interventions. Hariparsad has also emphasized the importance of reporting blockages in manholes by residents. The Municipality has a hotline 044 302 6331 (office hours) and also an app (knysna.comunity.me) to report blockages and spills.

The Garden Route District Municipality took water samples at 14 points on the 16th of September 2019. Non-compliant sites include the Ashmead Channel, the Bongani outlet, Queen Street, the Station culvert and the site close to the Knysna Angling & Diving Association.

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