



MINISTER’S VISIT ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK

In the recent visit to iSimangaliso Wetland Park, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Ms. Barbara Creecy learned that the current financial year iSimangaliso created job opportunities to help alleviate poverty and gave opportunities to SMME who are predominantly from Umkhanyakude district which is one of the Presidential poverty nodes in the country with high unemployment rate.

During her 2 days visit, Minister Creecy had an opportunity to do site visits to a number of infrastructure projects currently being constructed across the Park.

iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority is set to open new office building; the Minister checked the state of readiness. In addition, she also visited the new lodge built in Charters Creek to check the progress. Commenting during the site visit, the Minister said, “iSimangaliso represents the only major economic development opportunity in the area and our own social economic studies indicated about 40% unemployment in the broad community and 50% youth unemployment over the last year about 5000 job opportunities were created and most opportunities were at entry level”.



Minister Creecy also made time to visit Hluhluwe Imfolozi Park (HIP), she was accompanied by Mr Siboniso Duma MEC (EDTEA). The motive behind her visit was to address Rhino poaching challenges, check for required assistance for anti-poaching and HIP fencing update and progress.

The Minister went to the river crossing in HIP where the Park manager led discussion on predetermined strategic fence points to aid comprehend the matter at hand and later explored the nerve center to view operation. In the afternoon, she then went to iSimangaliso Wetland Park where she first visited the flooded community farms at Monzi and had discussions with farmers. She continued her journey to the Park to check project implemented in the Park, stakeholders engagements, implementation of commercialization, progress on the implementation of the panel of experts recommendations and other conservation related matters including the mouth and back flooding, Job opportunities created in the Park, progress on land claims and other range of infrastructure development.

On the last day of her visit, she met with stakeholders, beneficiaries and all other community members to get their views particularly in terms of the estuary mouth that has been a subject of discussion for so long. Community members and stakeholders

shared a common concern about the estuary mouth, their farms are inundated with water and that cause starvation since they depend mainly on farming for living.

One of the community members share her story and suddenly felt in tears due to the serious effect of back flooding and inundation of water in their farms. The inundation of farms is a very critical concern for both commercial and small-scale farmers and it too early to predict whether the current natural breach will bring the long sought relief. However, iSimangaliso working with Stakeholders developed an implementation plan to sort out the issue that is catastrophic to the livelihood of communities living in and adjacent to the Park.

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Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

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