



LAKE ST. LUCIA MOUTH BREACHES NATURALLY

Mother nature has done it, lake St Lucia mouth has breached naturally to much relief of so many stakeholders. The morning early hours high tide combined with the high levels of water pushing from Umfolozi and Msunduzi rivers made it possible for the mouth to breach naturally today on 14 April 2022. High levels of rain received in KwaZulu-Natal in the past few days have served as a catalyst in resolving the issue of the mouth. Opening or not to open the mouth has been a topical issue recently with various interest groups airing their views about whether to breach artificially or to wait and give time for natural breaching.



Recently naturally opened mouth at St. Lucia

In January 2021 the multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral Task Team recommended to iSimangaliso that the system needed breaching as a short-term intervention to address ecological challenges of the estuary. The hope was that in the process the social and economic challenges raised by various stakeholders were also going to be addressed. Unfortunately, the mouth closed again naturally after about 6 months of being opened.

The recommendation of the symposium and opening of the mouth was later opposed by another interest group who wrote to Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy airing their discernment of the decision. Minister appointed a panel of experts to investigate and submit the report to her. The report has recently been submitted to the Minister and she is studying the findings and the recommendations contained in the report and will make the report and its recommendations public in the near future.

With an understanding that the issue of the mouth is a contentious matter, iSimangaliso has been in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including key scientific experts, tourism operators, conservation managers, NGOs, rural community representatives, fishers, farmers, and business owners. It is against this background that the recent action by a group of people who were invading Futululu forest citing the reason that they want iSimangaliso to artificially breach the mouth cannot be condoned as iSimangaliso has been very transparent and consultative in addressing the opening of the mouth issue. Hence the application and granting of the interdict by the Pietermaritzburg High Court, interdicting invasion of the Futululu Forest which in a state land managed by iSimangaliso.



(Left) Chief Executive Officer of iSimangaliso Wetland Park Mr Sibusiso Bukhosini being briefed about the mouth

Inundation of farms in Dukuduku, Sokhulu and Commercial farmers farming in the flood plain is a cause for concern to the Management of iSimangaliso, hence the continuous engagement with all the stakeholders and interest groups.

iSimangaliso will continue monitoring the estuary in line with its Integrated Management plan which is an official approved guiding document. Whereas the inundation of farms with water is another major concern for both commercial and small-scale farmers it is too early to predict whether the current natural breach will bring the long sought relief.

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Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

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