



## **ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK WELCOMES THE COURT RULING ON THE FUTULULU MATTER**

iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority welcomes the interim interdict granted by the Pietermaritzburg High Court on Monday 11 April 2022 which states that “the respondents and anyone acting through or with the respondents are interdicted from entering or invading, occupying and/or removing any vegetation and/or erecting any structures on the area known as the Futululu” The application was brought by iSimangaliso following the recent illegal incidents of invasion of the Futululu Forest which is a state land managed by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority. Efforts to engage the community and the illegal invaders through dialogue and meetings to find an amicable solution did not yield the desired positive results as some community members continued with the invasion and destroying the park fence hence the decision by iSimangaliso to seek court intervention. The presiding Judge Sibiya ordered that the order is to operate with immediate effect.



The illegal invasion is said to have started on 21 March 2022; the report was received by iSimangaliso that approximately 100 people were invading the Futululu forest section using the access point opposite the entrance of the South African Defence Force base known as 121 Battalion. The Field Rangers were immediately deployed to Futululu Forest. On arrival, Field Rangers informed the people who were invading the land that what they were doing was illegal. The invasion was not for farming purposes only, but stands were sold for residential purposes as well. The number of the group has been growing and being estimated at about 300 people at some point.

Since the start of these illegal activities, the Park Authority has held several meetings with community leaders in an attempt to find an amicable solution. Meetings involved structures such as Traditional Authority leadership, Municipal ward counselors, land claimants' leadership, Dukuduku re-settlement trust committee, farmers' representatives, and representatives from People and Parks structure, amongst others. The iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife jointly briefed the leadership about the Futululu land invasion and made it clear to the leadership that such invasion is unlawful. The leadership was requested to warn their respective communities about the implications of their actions. The leadership was further informed that iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo will seek legal opinion that may lead to the arrest of individual instigators.

iSimangaliso applauds the action taken by the local traditional leader Inkosi Mkhwanazi who called a meeting of the entire Dukuduku community on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 to address this matter. Inkosi wanted to listen to all the sides of the story from involved parties. Such interventions by the leaders are most welcomed as iSimangaliso believes that the relationship built with the community and continuous engagements through meetings should be used as platforms for engagement and raising any issues of concerns from both sides. Invasion of land by the community as means of drawing attention of iSimangaliso to any concerns of the community cannot be condoned. iSimangaliso has a dedicated stakeholder engagement unit whose primary focus is to engage with all stakeholders especially with the local communities neighboring the Park.

In a meeting held on the 11 April by the CEO of iSimangaliso Mr Sibusiso Bukhosini and Inkosi Mkhwanazi and his delegation, Inkosi Mkhwanazi raised the issue of opening the St Lucia estuary mouth as one of the concerns from the community. The community believes that artificial breaching of the mouth will help to address the problem of inundation of their farms with water. Although the meeting started on an adversary tone it however ended on a very positive note as all parties engaged in a frank, honest and open spirit.

The CEO of iSimangaliso is making a clarion call to all communities neighbouring the park and those who may be involved in the illegal activities to desist from such activities and rather opt for legally available avenues to resolve any challenges that may arise from time to time. "The iSimangaliso doors are always open for a dialogue and discussion to find an amicable solution" he further stated.

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**Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority**

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