



**iSimangaliso**  
*Wetland Park*



**E Z E M V E L O**  
**K Z N W I L D L I F E**

Conservation, Partnerships & Ecotourism

**Media Statement**  
**For Immediate Release**  
**10 June 2022**

## **FATAL HIPPO INCIDENT IN iSIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK**

The iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority (iSimangaliso) and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (Ezemvelo) would like to confirm the fatal hippo incident which happened today, Friday 10 June 2022 in the early morning around 05h00 in the Western Shores of the Lake St Lucia (just before the bridge to St Lucia town).

According to the preliminary report three individuals, including an elderly female aged 59 years (who was fatally attacked by the hippo) allegedly went into the nearby wetland which is a habitat for dangerous wildlife such as crocodiles and hippos. These individuals were allegedly attempting to harvest Incema /African grass mat (Juncus) within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park without permission. The two other individuals escaped unhurt during the encounter.

Normally when the Incema season commences in May of each year iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo engage with nearby communities including the Dukuduku community (where the deceased comes from) to explain the process to be followed during the implementation of the Incema harvesting for that season. Part of this explanation includes making the community aware of the processes to be followed to ensure their safety from wild animals and to explain the duration of the harvesting season. This community briefing session also advises the community on how they will need to

group themselves as there would always be a dedicated Field Ranger with them for safety reasons. When the harvesting commences each individual is issued a permit specifying the dates of the harvesting season as well as additional conditions.

This year particularly, various meetings were held to discuss the possibility of Incema harvesting. Meetings were held at the Western Shores (Nkundusi, Mfekayi, and Qakwini) incema community leadership on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, and the second meeting on the 08<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 with the Dukuduku (Khula Village, Ezwenelisha, and Dukuduku South) incema community leadership. It was explained during these meetings that due to the high-water levels of the lake and surrounding wetlands which attract more dangerous animals it was decided that the incema harvesting season will not take place. The recent heavy rainfall in KwaZulu-Natal has contributed to high water levels in the Park.

It, therefore, came as a surprise when iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo officials were made aware in the early hours of this morning that there was an incident wherein an individual allegedly attempting to harvest incema within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park had been attacked by a hippo and subsequently lost her life.

iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo would like to express our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the deceased as such loss of life is always deeply regrettable.

The iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo together with the community leadership will visit the family of the deceased today to express our condolences and provide emotional support during such hard times.

**For media enquiries, contact Bheki Manzini on 060 533 2082 or Musa Mntambo on 083 284 9586**