



30 November 2023

THE REVISION OF BLACK AND WHITE RHINO BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT PLANS YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS



iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority and Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) invited a number of stakeholders around iSimangaliso for a consultation session on the revision of the Black and White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plans. This session was held at Mkhuzi section of iSimangaliso Wetland Park. This session was planned for 5 provinces that are KwaZulu Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and North West. This comes few weeks after iSimangaliso through GEF-7 project and DFFE conducted site visit to all iSimangaliso areas that have Rhino's, with a purpose of inspecting and updating the Law enforcement equipment to ensure the safety of Rhino's.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment decided to embark on this stakeholder consultation to ensure that inputs from all stakeholders on the development of Black and White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plans are included. This is also because the existing plans were developed by the panel of experts and Scientists with little if not non consultation of communities living in and adjacent to protected areas that are home to these creatures.

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment appointed a specialist to facilitate the session. Stakeholders that were invited are Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, iSimangaliso Wetland Park, and DFFE. iSimangaliso extended the invitation to communities and traditional leadership to come participate to this meeting. It was vital to invite communities as they are key role players considering that they are living adjacent the Mkhuze Game Reserve which is habitat of the Rhino. It is also a significant conservation value to have local communities proximal to Rhino's who are aware of the importance of protecting Rhino's as our heritage. The turn-up on the side of the communities was great and leadership was well represented. About 50 Community representatives who honoured the invitation and attended this session coming from Nsinde, Ngwenya, Jobe, Makhasa and Mngqobokazi Traditional Council.

During this session, four groups were created and given 3 sets of questions to answer. Groups were requested to appoint chairperson, scribe and one person who is going to report back during reporting session. They were asked questions such as what is the value of Black and White Rhino, Are they having any challenges or constraints in realising the value of Rhino and what can be the solutions to help communities realise the value of White and Black Rhino's.

This was a fruitful session as the communities were given an opportunity to give their comments on the revision of the Black and White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plans. The interaction between the participants was very progressive and informative. Communities were able to express themselves freely on the significance Rhino's have in their lives, citing issues of heritage, income generation through tourism, creation of job opportunities, education and awareness for their children. The interaction of participants was very progressive and informative. Communities were pleased as they felt involved on how best government seeks to protect these creature through their involvement in the crafting of the plans.

The last session will be between The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and other affected stakeholder which is going to take place online or through virtual platform. The whole process will culminate to the revised draft of Black and White Rhino Biodiversity Management Plans which is going to be submitted to the minister for the approval.

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Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

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