

**30 April 2025**

**iSIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK’S REACTION TO THE PROTEST MARCH**

iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority confirms that on the 28th of April 2025, there was a protest march to iSimangaliso offices co-ordinated by a political party. iSimangaliso learned that this march was to demand the opening of the Lake St. Lucia Estuary mouth, and claiming of the land in Futululu protected area. To garner support, participants of the march from Sokhulu and Dukuduku communities were made to believe that iSimangaliso is blocking water from flowing out into the sea by closing the Estuary mouth, resulting in their farms being flooded with water.

During the march, it became clear that the majority of the marchers were misinformed by the organisers when they learned that in fact the St. Lucia mouth breached on the 10th of January 2025, and it remains open till today. Protesters marched to iSimangaliso offices but contrary to the usual common standard practice, marchers had no memorandum of demands to be handed to iSimangaliso. The march organisers just delivered a speech, and therefore there is no signed memorandum of demands, agreed upon, and to be responded to. Despite the fact that the march was on a public holiday when iSimangaliso offices are officially closed, iSimangaliso management made itself available to receive the memorandum of demands from the marchers to no avail.

This comes as no surprise as the reasons used by the organisers to mobilise people to join the march were frivolous, the real reasons for the protest march are only known by the politicians that coordinated the march. The truth is, the current challenge of climate change is a global phenomenon, severe rainfall in most parts of KwaZulu-Natal Province bears testimony to this sad reality and iSimangaliso is not immune from this reality. The current excessive water levels in the farms are due to ongoing heavy rains in the Province, and most of the affected farms are on the flood plain which exacerbates the problem.

The iSimangaliso Authority remains committed to the all-inclusive process of the Multi Sectoral Task Team that includes all representatives and affected parties including commercial farmers, subsistence farmers, community members from Sokhulu and Dukuduku areas, fishers, and others. This Task Team seeks to address all issues pertaining to the St Lucia Estuary and it will continue working hard towards finding a lasting solution. There was absolutely no reason for a march since these matters are being addressed working together with all the stakeholders.

**The Futululu Land Question**

Futululu forest is a State land managed by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority. The Cabinet Memorandum No5 of 2002 on Government's position on settlement of Restitution claims on Protected Areas, World Heritage sites and State forests under National Government is very explicit. iSimangaliso therefore implores all law-abiding citizens to respect the Legislation of this country or approach the designated legal institutions that act as an arbiter on these matters.

In the recent past, following the land invasion in Futululu, on the 16th of August 2022, the South African Police Service (SAPS) arrested land invaders of the Futululu protected area. A group of people had invaded the Futululu forest demanding to use the land for farming and residential purposes thus resulting in their arrests. This was not the first incident of illegal invasion. On the 21st of March 2022, approximately 100 people invaded the Futululu forest using the access point opposite the entrance of the South African Defence Force (SANDF) base known as 121 Battalion.

After numerous attempts to engage the community had not yielded positive results with an ever-increasing number of invaders, iSimangaliso sought a court intervention from the Pietermaritzburg High Court. On the 11th of April 2022, the Pietermaritzburg High court granted an interim interdict which stated 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 Futhululu Forest, within iSimangaliso Wetland Park, save with the permission of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority”.

The 11th of April 2022 ruling made by the Pietermaritzburg High Court remains in effect till today.

It is unfortunate that people who are supposed to be empowering communities with facts and truthful information are the ones that deceive the affected community members with an aim of achieving their own agenda. iSimangaliso remains committed to the process and will continue to inform the public of any developments regarding the St. Lucia Estuary and continue to convene the quarterly meetings of the Multi Sectoral Task Team.

The iSimangaliso would like to convey its sincere apologies to guests, business sector, and the public who were affected by the protest march. The circumstances were beyond iSimangaliso’s control as the march was organised externally and iSimangaliso was not informed formally .

For more information:

* [iSimangaliso Wetland Park - iSimangaliso welcomes the court order handed down by the Pietermaritzburg High Court](https://isimangaliso.com/index.php?option=com_zoo&task=item&item_id=1242&Itemid=1294)
* [iSimangaliso Wetland Park - iSimangaliso Wetland Park welcomes the court ruling on the futhululu matter](https://isimangaliso.com/index.php?option=com_zoo&task=item&item_id=1261&Itemid=1294)

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**Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority**

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