

Bay coal clean-up

Dave Savides

AS work commenced on Thursday with a massive clean-up of Medway Road, the coal truck issue - like the dust - remains far from settled.

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) issued a statement on Tuesday last week, banning with immediate effect coal truck traffic via the Port of Richards Bay's east gate entrance.

This in response to a complaint received from the director and founder of Richards Bay Clean Air Association, Sandy Camminga, which led to the revised port access notice 'in the interest of the surrounding community and neighbouring businesses for a clean environment'.

The official complaint was backed by numerous community outcries.

The notice indicated that TNPA would host a collaborative four-day clean-up campaign, linked to Nelson Mandela initiatives, to cover truck cargo spillage on Medway Road, between the east gate and John Ross highway.

Work began on Thursday, when over 40 personnel wearing full PPE and masks

utilising a pay loader and Bobcat could be seen working at full pace throughout the morning, gathering, sweeping and bagging the coal spillage for disposal.

"The closure of the east gate and clean-up of Medway Road and the surrounding environment is welcomed. However, this is a small step in addressing the cumulative impacts of dust in Richards Bay, which are not limited to coal dust," said Camminga.

While tonnes of spillage was removed over two days, the bigger picture remains unchanged, with fully-laden trucks continuing to pour into the city, wreaking havoc on infrastructure, polluting the environment, and causing traffic blockages, especially in Alton.

In addition, the decision to close the port's east gate access may have directly contributed to massive traffic congestion on Friday morning, with trucks backed for kilometres on the N2.

Even if truck traffic ended now and coal was totally brought in by rail, it will cost millions of rands - which the city does not have - to repair roads, kerbs and other infrastructure damaged by the trucks.

Scan the QR code to watch footage from the clean-up operation on Thursday morning.



SCAN ME



The Port of Richards Bay's east gate has been closed to coal trucks, and rehabilitation work at the access began on Thursday



Illegal gill nets recovered by the APU are destined to be burnt

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Kosi Bay gill netting plunder

Since then, the stats show more successes: May - 13 nets (1.526km); June - 23 nets (2.191km); July - 20 nets (3.207km).

Past statistics show the trend: 2021/22 - 252 nets (24.6km); 2022/23 - 205 nets (24km); 2023/24 - 238 nets (19.5km).

Ongoing fight

The Kosi system comprises four lakes that stretch across 18km of estuary and are linked by a network of channels where Thonga traps (baskets) are legally laid in fish kraals by locals, as a sustainable food source.

But as they wait for the natural tidal flow to fill their baskets with viable catches, the gill netters, using kilometres of strong, machine-made nylon nets, are stealing more in a single night than they could hope for in a month.

The situation is untenable, and despite the noble APU efforts, the poaching tide continues apace.

Added to the trouble is the fact that the perpetrators are sometimes armed.

Regular visitors have noted the decrease in catches - and even the lower population of hippos and crocodiles as these are also targeted for meat.



These fish circulated online last week may or may not have been illegally caught

As part of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Kosi Bay consists of four interconnected lakes that drain into the Indian Ocean.

The lakes have distinct characteristics:

- Makhawulani (first lake): The closest to the estuary mouth, influenced by ocean tides and highly saline
- KuMpungwini (second lake): Features deep, clear waters and is known for great snorkelling
- KuNhlanga (third lake): The largest of the lakes, surrounded by swamp forests and coastal dunes. iSimangaliso operates a main campsite on its shores

Vandals disrupt city services

Conelia Harry

CONTINUOUS acts of sabotage targeting critical municipal infrastructure are adding to the city's severe service delivery challenges.

This is according to City of uMhlathuze Mayor Xolani Ngwezi, who condemned a recent incident believed to have been vandalism and sabotage of city infrastructure, where large boulders were found inside a manhole in Brackenham, resulting in a sewer blockage.

The disruption to services has left residents frustrated and Mayor Ngwezi has called upon community members to help protect the city's assets.

While there have been no findings as to how or why the large stones were lodged in the system, Ward 26 Councillor Ray Govender said many other destructive items have also been found inside the manholes.

"There has been a challenge with the manhole covers

being stolen, and despite them being replaced with concrete ones, the problem persists," said Govender.

"We had an issue in the Frondosa street area of Brackenham, and municipal workers found

items like concrete pillars, toys, clothing and bricks that had been thrown into the manhole.

"It is believed that people are dumping there, which is causing major problems for our residents and causing service interruptions.

"We urge community members to refrain from throwing items into the manholes as this causes blockages," he said.

Scan the QR code to watch footage of the recent incident.



SCAN ME



Ward 26 Councillor Ray Govender points to the boulders that were removed from the manholes in Brackenham



The livelihoods of traditional fishers is hugely threatened by the gill netters
Boundless Southern Africa/Flickr

Unizulu's KwaDlangezwa campus remains closed amid water crisis

Mbuso Kunene

AMID the ongoing water supply crisis in the City of uMhlathuze, classes remain on pause at the University of Zululand (Unizulu), set to recommence on Thursday.

In an official communique dated 23 July, university management advised students that, although the municipal water supply has been restored, water pressure throughout the pipe networks on the KwaDlangezwa campus remained very low.

"As an emergency measure, the university continues to have water delivered to storage tanks located around the campus," read the communique.

"In addition, the Moodle learning management system is currently unavailable

due to unforeseen circumstances. While effort is being made to restore the Moodle system and stabilise the water supply, the university management, in consultation with the SRC, has taken the decision to suspend on-campus teaching and learning activities until Wednesday, 29 July," said management.

According to the university, teaching and learning activities are expected to resume on Thursday, 30 July, but students and staff would be issued with further updates as the situation develops.

Classes were suspended last week as the institution is one of several service entities - including schools and clinics - to be affected by the ongoing water supply crisis affecting eSikhaleni.