

Press release

Environmental and health threats to be addressed by Ndlambe Municipality.

BRMRPA (Bushman's River Mouth Ratepayers' Association), an NGO striving to protect the Bushman's River and its environs, obtained an interdict in the High Court of Grahamstown on Friday 30 January 2009 against the Ndlambe Municipality. Judge Froneman ordered Ndlambe to stop the sewage spillage into the Bushman's River that has been occurring for some time. The Municipality failed to repair its sewer conservancy tanks and failed to regularly clear them thus causing raw sewage to flow into the Bushman's River. Residents of the area reported a terrible smell of sewage along the Bushman's River at Riversbend near the Sandbar restaurant where the broken and overflowing conservancy tanks are situated. Complaints regarding the overflowing tanks have been brought to the attention of the Municipality on a number of occasions during the past year but service delivery by the Municipality was erratic and often non-existent. Despite the sewage leak, officials of the Municipality had not reacted to calls to attend to the problem and often denied knowledge of the existence of the problem. Sewage on the banks of the River and in the water causes illnesses such as typhoid, cholera, dysentery, cryptosporidium cysts and giardia cysts. It also leads to the formation of cyano bacteria in the water which is an extremely toxic algae which can kill off both aquatic and bird life.

Unsuspecting holidaymakers were seen wading in the sewage flowing from the tanks where they were playing and fishing.

Lötter Wepener, the chairman of BRMRPA hailed the order as a step in the right direction. He said that the BRMRPA had now been engaging the Municipality for many months in order to get it to avoid sewage spillages into the Bushman's River which is used by many people for recreational and other purposes and all recreational users of the River are exposed to serious water borne diseases. Apart from the illnesses that can be contracted, the sewage contaminated water leads to skin, ear, throat and nose infections in humans and possible intestinal disorders.

Judge Froneman ordered that Ndlame is to ensure that the spillage from the conservancy tank must be stopped and that conservancy tank must be repaired and maintained. Wepener said that BRMRPA will muster all its resources to go back to court if the Municipality fails to comply with the order. "We are at our wits end with the Municipality and will seek the imprisonment of those officials who fail to comply with the court order" Wepener said. We have far too long been treated with contempt by officials of Ndlambe and will not tolerate this any longer. The judge ordered the Municipality to report back to Court as to what they have done to solve the problem, resulting in the Municipality not being able to shirk its duties but to now be held accountable both the BRMRPA and the court".

The court also ordered the Municipality to pay the BRMRPA costs of the application.

The other conservancy tanks in the town also regularly overflow, causing hygiene problems and a serious health risk. "We are ready to obtain assistance from the court to stop the criminal conduct and bad service delivery if the Municipality will not perform its duties for which we pay", Wepener said.

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