



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 1655 {NW1982E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 15 of 2022

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 29 April 2022

Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) In light of the fact that currently there is an ongoing land invasion at the forest of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park that threatens the fragile natural environment, with some reports stating that over 200 persons have already settled in the area illegally, and noting that officials of her department have acknowledged that they were aware of the potential invasions for months, what steps has she taken to prevent further invasions and protect the fragile natural environment;
- (2) whether she was advised by officials of her department of the potential invasions prior to 21 March 2022; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what legal steps are being pursued to address the illegal occupations?

1655. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) The Management Authority of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site was informed of the looming land invasion at the Futululu Forest section of the park on 16 March 2022. On 21 March 2022, an attempt was made by approximately 100 members of the communities to occupy the Futululu Forest. The situation was diffused peacefully and

swiftly after a multipronged approach, and systematic interventions were undertaken promptly. The Wetland Park Authority also held the following meetings with the traditional Amakhosi and communities:


- a) On 22 March 2022, the management of iSimangaliso contacted Inkosi Mkhwanazi to report the Futululu invasion incident by the Dukuduku community and to inform him about the urgent meeting arranged with all local traditional leadership. Then, Inkosi Mkhwanazi supported the idea and promised to send representatives as he was attending an Amakhosi meeting in Ulundi.
- b) On the very same date, the stakeholder engagement managers from Ezemvelo and iSimangaliso started organising a meeting with the leadership structures in the area, namely the traditional authority leadership, municipal ward councillors, land claimants' leadership, the Dukuduku Resettlement Trust Committee, farmers' representatives and representatives from the People and Parks structure.
- c) On 23 March 2022, the leadership met with iSimangaliso, community leaders and community members where they were informed of the illegality of the land invasions.
- d) iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo jointly briefed the leadership of the Futululu land invaders and made it clear to the leadership that such invasion is unlawful. The leadership was requested to warn their respective communities about the implications of their actions. The leadership was further informed that iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo would seek legal recourse which could lead to the potential arrest of individual instigators.
- e) The meeting further resolved that the leadership, together with the iSimangaliso and Ezemvelo team, should address the community members who were on site at the Futululu Forest, which was done.

In order to prevent further invasions and protect the fragile natural environment, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority submitted an urgent court application for an interdict against the illegal occupiers at the KwaZulu-Natal Division of the High Court of South Africa, Pietermaritzburg, on 11 April 2022. Currently, no illegal occupiers are settled in the Futululu Forest.

- (2) The Minister received a comprehensive report from the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority in the first week of April 2022. In response to the application for an interdict on 11 April 2022, the High Court granted an interim interdict barring the land invaders from continuing with their illegal activity. A case was also opened with the Mtubatuba Police Station under case number

155/03/2022. The Minister met with traditional authorities on 28 April 2022 and there is continued engagement with local communities on the matter.

Regards



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**MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 13/5/2022