

FLAMINGOS UNDER FIRE

Doomsday looms for city dam

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NEWS EDITOR

THE EVER-INCREASING water level of Kamfers Dam has again come under the spotlight, with Ekapa Mining pulling out all the stops to secure the future of the flamingo breeding island.

Concern has also been raised regarding the railway lines which run over increasingly unstable land.

"Ekapa Mining has thus far packed almost 5 000 sandbags around the island," explained Peter Hohne, the company's operations director and member of the Save the Flamingo Association.

If the water level continues to

rise, these urgent mitigation measures may be futile and it is possible that the island could be totally flooded by October, the start of the summer rain period.

This is only one of several threats currently facing the wetland, where the Lesser Flamingos have bred for two successive years – something that seldom happens at other breeding sites.

An estimated 13 000 chicks were produced last year at Kamfers Dam, which is one of only four breeding places for Lesser Flamingos in Africa and one of only six breeding sites internationally.

Kamfers Dam's flamingo island was built by Kimberley-based Ekapa Mining in September 2005.

The project has received recognition locally and internationally and has been the recipient of three prestigious awards.

The Save the Flamingo Association (STFA) was formed last year to address the threats to this wetland and its flamingos.

One of these is the massive Northgate housing development, which will see about 6 000 units built a few hundred metres from the wetland. The STFA appealed the former Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation's (DTEC) decision to authorise this development.

"This (authorisation) was despite a severely flawed environmental impact assessment," said Jahne

Hohne, chairperson of the STFA. The STFA, together with Wessa, Birdlife SA and Kamfers Dam's landowners, appealed DTEC's decision but the appeals were overturned. The matter will be taken on review, and DTEC and the MEC of Environmental Affairs and Nature Conservation will have to explain their controversial decision in court.

The STFA has appointed top environmental legal experts to draft its review application.

Another threat is related to the Homevale Waste Water Treatment Plant, which is currently pumping almost totally untreated sewage water into Kamfers Dam.

The STFA has commissioned experts to conduct analyses of the dam's water, and the results have been described as shocking.

"The water is of an exceptionally poor standard," said Dr Jan Roos, a water quality expert in Bloemfontein. "Very high levels of coliform bacteria in the water indicate that dangerous pathogens could be present, and these could affect the health of both the flamingos and the humans who live in the area surrounding Kamfers Dam."

The STFA has written to Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, and asked her to intervene to ensure that the water quality issues are urgently addressed.

"The Sol Plaatje Municipality does not seem to have the expertise or the financial resources to resolve the deteriorating water quality," Mark Anderson, Executive Director of Birdlife South Africa, said.

"Kamfers Dam is an internationally important asset. It is one of few places in the world where Lesser Flamingos breed and, with the effects of global warming now clearly visible, this wetland may become immensely important to ensure the future of this threatened species."

Hohne pointed out that Kamfers Dam was also a potentially important flamingo-watching destination and, if these ecotourists flocked to Kimberley, there could be important economic benefits to the city.

"The STFA is very concerned that the authorities do not seem concerned about these threats, as is evident by DTEC's approval of the Northgate housing development and the Sol Plaatje Municipality's inability to rectify the water quality issues at its waste water treatment works," Hohne said.

READ WHAT THE SOL PLAATJE MUNICIPALITY HAD TO SAY ON PAGE 8

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 Sun 10:15, 12:30, 15:15, 18:00, 20:30, 22:45
 Tue 10:15, 12:30, 15:15, 18:00, 20:30, 22:45

FIREBIRD
 Fri Sat 10:15, 11:45, 14:30, 17:15, 20:00, 22:45
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