

THE 'CALAMITY' - TESTING SAMSA'S ACTION PLAN

On 31 October 2006, at about 06:15, I received a phone call from a South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) official asking me to get to Richards Bay as soon as possible. A large ship had run aground 12 miles south of Richards Bay and contained 405 containers, some of which were loaded with dangerous goods.



Photo: O. Parak



Photo: R. Jantlari, AFP

Disaster archive: The Jolly Rubino ran aground near Cape St Lucia in September 2002

My heart may well have skipped a few beats but fortunately I was forewarned that this was a paper exercise that would require stakeholders to role play, the aim being to test SAMSA's action plan as detailed in the "South African National Contingency Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Pollution from Ships".

The morning was spent in SAMSA's offices accessing information about local conditions and planning for possible clean-up operations and other contingencies. The JRC (Joint Response Committee) then met and this was followed by a press briefing. Happily the salvors were able to report that they had successfully floated the vessel at 16:00 and the successful exercise was terminated with a de-briefing by Referee, Mr Bill Dernier.

I believe this exercise underlined the critical importance of team work between all possible role players and the need to keep "local contingency plans" updated with valid contact details and information about local conditions. SAMSA, DAEA and municipalities, with the support of DEAT, need to put this on their list of urgent things to do for the New Year!

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KZN OUTSHINES COMPETITION TO CLAIM BLUE FLAGS

KwaZulu-Natal has collected the lion's share of the 24 new Blue Flag beach certificates which were handed out at a ceremony at the Bay of Plenty in Durban late last year.

Eleven beaches in KZN - seven in Durban - received full Blue Flag status. They are:

- Bronze Beach
- Umhlanga Main Beach
- North Beach
- Bay of Plenty
- South Beach
- Addington
- Anstey's Beach

Hibberdene Beach, Ramsgate Beach, Marina Beach and Lucien Beach on the South Coast also have full status.

South Africa was the first country outside Europe to be awarded these quality assurance flags. There are 3 500 such beaches in 42 countries.

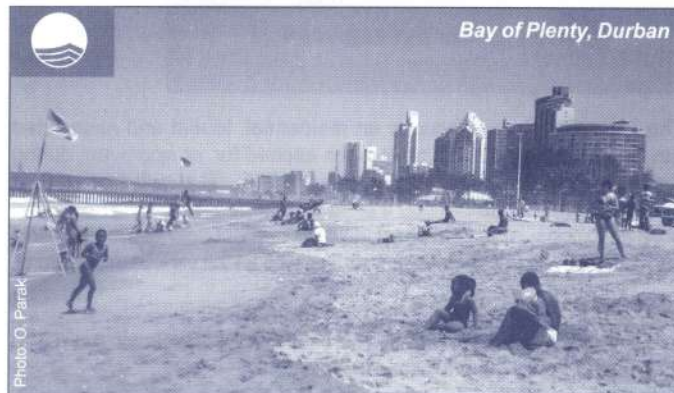


Photo: O. Parak



"Ulwandle", which means "sea" in Zulu, is produced by the KwaZulu-Natal Coastal & Biodiversity Management Unit

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BILL TO OPEN COASTLINE TO ALL

Cabinet has approved the Integrated Coastal Management Bill for release for public comment. The Bill was gazetted on 15 December 2006 and will be open for public comment for a period of 90 days.

The Bill, which took seven years to reach fruition, is the implementation of the White Paper for Sustainable Coastal Development which was approved by Cabinet in 2000. While the White Paper was the result of many specialist studies and one of the most extensive public consultation processes the country has seen, the Bill is said to be a watered-down version of what was internationally regarded as one of the most progressive coastal policies in the world.

The Bill is likely to make provision for provinces to make a "set-back line" on sections of the coast, below which no development can take place. This is not only for ecological and aesthetic reasons, but also to protect infrastructure from expected rising sea levels due to global warming.



Photo: E. Essopp, Cape Times

Sea change: Developments like these in Bantry Bay, Western Cape could become a thing of the past when the new Bill makes provision for a buffer zone 100m above the high water mark

A key element of the Bill is the right of public access to the coast, which has been increasingly cut-off by luxury housing and golf course developments. Local authorities will be required to map out public access routes, if necessary across private property. Existing rights of way will have to be preserved pending the local authorities' completion of the demarcations.

The text of the Bill can be downloaded from <http://www.deat.gov.za/>

A NOVEL APPROACH TO COASTAL ZONE MONITORING

Launch Site Registers

Effective management of publicly-owned coastal resources is a high priority of contemporary governance. In KwaZulu-Natal, coastal zone management has been enhanced by the introduction of the Boat Launch Site Monitoring System (BLSMS) in 2004, the first-ever province-wide monitoring initiative for boat launch sites in South Africa. Although compliance with the launch register is mandatory under the National Environmental Management Act, the dedicated participation by most launch site users has ensured the success of the monitoring system to date.

Some of the pertinent trends to arise from the analysis of the 2005 data are as follows:

- A total of 36 boat launch sites participated in the BLSMS, including 10 sites within the jurisdiction of the National Ports Authority (NPA) and the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park Authority (GSLWPA).
- A total of 42 335 individual launch records were received.
- Recreational/private fishing (45% of recorded launches), charter SCUBA diving (30%), charter fishing (12%) and traditional commercial linefishing (6%) were the most common motivations for launching.
- Half of participating sites were utilised infrequently (< 50% of available days). Eight sites were utilised regularly (> 70% of available days). Only the Sodwana Bay launch site was utilised on 100% of days in 2005.
- For most participating sites, daily usage levels were well below their respective daily launch limits.
- Usage of boat launch sites was overwhelmingly a daytime activity.
- Weekend periods experienced higher boating effort than weekdays.
- A total of 134 439 fish from more than 135 species was recorded caught. Slinger (18% of catch by number), kob (10%), king mackerel (9%) and dorado (8%) were the most commonly-caught fish.

Anyone wishing to find out more about the BLSMS should contact me at the Oceanographic Research Institute.

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COASTAL DEVELOPMENT IN KZN

The 562km stretch of KwaZulu-Natal coastline varies in character due to the interaction of topographical, hydrological, biological, oceanographic and climatic elements. This coastline hosts various human activities: urban and rural settlement, port development, industry, tourism and recreation. Recently, however, there appears to have been an increase in residential property development activity on the coast. This has motivated for the creation of an inventory of coastal developments and a critical analysis of the effects of spatial development on the environment and other human activities.

The building boom in full swing: Residential estates along the KZN North Coast



The inventory project focuses on residential, tourist and associated development projects that have been applied for, or approved, during the period January 2000 to December 2005. The collected data is mapped using GIS to provide a clear spatial perspective. The project goes on to consider the drivers of the development activity, the legislative and policy environment that supports it as well as the various implications.

Preliminary analysis of the data, taken from the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) register and the Development Facilitation Act (DFA) Application Filing System, **has revealed:**

- The highest number of project applications are for the Hibiscus Coast and Ilembe regions, 43% and 29% respectively.
- 70% of the applications are residential, 10% are tourist and 8% are a combination of residential/tourist/commercial developments.

The importance of such an exercise is that it considers the cumulative effect of all development activity taking place on the coast.

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FREE OFFER!

Incorporating a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP)

As a sequel to the SCLP project in the Hibiscus Coast Municipality, the Coastal Management Unit of DAEA commissioned the creation of a guideline for municipalities showing how the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach can add value to the IDP.

The draft was presented to the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs and it has endorsed it. The guideline is freely available and is relevant to all municipalities, but coastal municipalities have been given the opportunity to receive a free 1-day training seminar for officials and councillors on the use of the SLA in their IDPs. The offer of this training seminar was made last year at meetings in the coastal district municipalities where it was enthusiastically accepted.

Training dates for the first quarter of 2007 have been finalised and all local municipalities in the Umkhan-yakude, Uthungulu, Ilembe and Ugu Districts will be invited.

For more information contact Rod Bulman on (033) 386 4465 | rod@phelamanga.co.za

KZN BOAT LAUNCH SITES

Why we extended rather than renewed licenses



Late last year the DAEA decided to extend licenses for boat launch sites by two years rather than renew them for five years. **We did this because:**

- We need to complete at least four years of monitoring before we can effectively use the KZN Boat Launch Site Monitoring System for decision making; and
- We need to set up and fast track a compliance programme (or "Black Book") that we can use in decision making.

We hope that Government will be in a position to make even better management decisions at the end of these two years.