

**STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT FOR THE ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK WORLD  
HERITAGE SITE (N914)**



**SOUTH AFRICA**

**BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**DECEMBER 2019**

**IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY**

**Identification No:** N914

**Name of property:** iSimangaliso Wetland Park

**State Party:** South Africa

**Province(s):** KwaZulu-Natal

**Criteria:** (vii)(ix)(x)

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

This report is the State Party of the Republic South Africa's response to the letter of 03 September 2019 and 23 October 2019 respectively from the Director of the World Heritage Centre. The letter of 03 September 2019 brought to the attention of the State Party information received from third-parties regarding (i) reported water use from Lake Sibaya (ii) prospective mining activities close to the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage property and (iii) forest destruction within the property and further requested a report on the state of conservation of the property by 01 December 2019.

This state of conservation report highlights the key current threats faced by the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site including the efforts and progress currently made by Management Authority in providing strategic mitigating measures.

## **2. RESPONSE TO THE CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM THE WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE, PARAGRAPH BY PARAGRAPH**

### **2.1 PROSPECTING RIGHTS APPLICATION, EYAMAKHOSI RESOURCES (PTY) LTD**

As previously reported in April 2019, a proposed prospecting application was lodged by Eyamakhosi Resources Pty Ltd within a portion of Reserve No.4 of farm No.15823 (approximately 500 hectares) below the Maphelane section in the kwaSokhulu Area. The State Party has formally objected to the proposed prospecting application and currently awaiting a response from the competent Department of Minerals and Energy.

The State Party reiterates its commitment to the protection of the world heritage property and will in terms of Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention inform the World Heritage Centre of further developments in this regard.

### **2.2 INCREASING WATER USE TO LAKE SIBAYA– REF: CLT/WHC/AFR/2019/257 OF 04 MARCH 2019.**

The State Party received a letter dated 04 March 2019 (Ref: CLT/WHC/AFR/2019/257) regarding information received from third parties on the threat of increasing water use on Lake Sibaya. In response, the State Party in April 2019 provided the World Heritage Centre with a consolidated report.

The State Party wishes to inform the World Heritage Centre that the iSimangaliso Wetland Board as the management authority is in the process of appointing Environmental specialists to provide scientific evaluations of the proposals that exist on alternative agriculture activities and their impact on the water resource. The scientific evaluations will further provide advice to the different industries on more acceptable manners of pesticide control etc, sustainable economic opportunities that exist in order to address the challenge of depletion of the water resource as well as water pollution issues arising from the use of agricultural herbicides/ pesticides.

### **2.2. THE DESTRUCTION OF SWAMP FOREST– REF: CLT/WHC/AFR/2019/257 OF 13 NOVEMBER 2017**

Following the report provided to the World Heritage Centre in April 2019, the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Board has convened numerous meetings with community leadership (Traditional Councils, Land Claimants and other affected government departments) to find sustainable solutions and to bring the

situation under control. This intervention by the management authority is an on-going initiative and the State Party will continue to update the World Heritage Centre on further developments.

### **2.3 STATE OF LAKE ST. LUCIA ESTUARY**

The report submitted to the World Heritage Centre in April 2019 provided an overview of the management strategy for the Lake St. Lucia Estuary. As outlined in the world heritage property's Integrated Management Plan (2017-2021) and subsequent Estuarine Management Plans, ecosystem restoration is central to the rewilding strategy of the management authority for the next five years. An important focus of this work is the ongoing restoration and monitoring of the Lake St Lucia estuarine system. Another area of rewilding is the restoration of ecological processes, ecosystems and landscapes in order to make them more resilient to threats such as climate change and invasion by alien species. The restoration of natural systems in an effort to improve the resilience of the world heritage property (for example, restoration of the Lake St Lucia estuarine system, interconnection of wetlands, and dune rehabilitation at Sodwana and St Lucia).

Currently there is an inclusive task team that comprises of the Sokhulu Farmers committee UCOSP representatives and iSimangaliso representatives to deal with these challenges. This task team meets regularly to strategize on the various options that need to be considered to address these socio-economic challenges without compromising the ecological gains that were as a result of the St Lucia Estuarine Zone restoration.

To date the St Lucia Estuary Mouth has not been artificially breached and the State Party continues to deliberate on how it can assist the community that is currently farming in a floodplain of the Msunduze River without compromising the efforts gained and achieved from the Global Environment Fund (GEF) restoration project.

In order to deal with the socio economic problem emanating from the flooding, an Environmental Service provider was appointed to advise the management authority. The report purported that the only possibility of considering breaching the mouth could only be for maintenance purposes. A Maintenance Plan (see attached) was developed and approved by the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF). The newly approved maintenance plan, pertaining to the breaching of St. Lucia mouth is currently being consulted (see attached).

**2.4. GRANTING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MINERAL RESOURCES OF SOUTH AFRICA**

The Environmental Authorisation mentioned in the letter dated 23 October 2019 from World Heritage Centre was received by the Management Authority. The proposed Exploration Drilling within Offshore Block ER236 is positioned 75 kilometers (41 nautical miles) south of the nearest point of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park Marine Protected Area. The management authority provided comments during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) commenting process objecting to the proposed exploration drilling.

The State Party will in terms of Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention inform the World Heritage Centre of further developments in this regard.

**3. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE PARTY WHICH MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROPERTY'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE**

There are no other issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value.

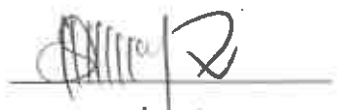
**4. IN CONFORMITY WITH PARAGRAPH 172 OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES, DESCRIBE ANY POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTION(S) INTENDED WITHIN THE PROPERTY, THE BUFFER ZONE(S) AND/OR CORRIDORS OR OTHER AREAS, WHERE SUCH DEVELOPMENTS MAY AFFECT THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE OF THE PROPERTY, INCLUDING AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY.**

There are currently no major restorations, alterations and/or new constructions intended within the property with potential to negatively impact the Outstanding Universal Value of the property.

**5. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT**

The State Party agree to the full State of Conservation report being uploaded for public access.

**6. SIGNATURE OF THE AUTHORITY**

  
Date: 20/12/2019