

DESIRED STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1 PUBLIC OPINION

The process of developing any Environmental Management Framework (EMF) is largely a technical one, relying heavily on an assessment of scientific data regarding the environmental resources in and adjacent to the study area. This approach culminates in a GIS database that can be queried at different levels to assist in environmental decision making, particularly in respect of EIAs.

However this approach, while required in terms of regulations, can only be regarded as barely adequate if it is not extended to include the desires and aspirations of the public who are the primary “users” of the environment.

In the current study, an EMF for the Richards Bay Port Expansion Area and Industrial Development Zone, it became evident that the users of the environment were not just the people who worked and, in a limited number of cases, lived within the study area, but should include all those whose lives are potentially affected by developments and activities in the study area. It was therefore deemed desirable to try and understand public perceptions of the role of environmental resources in their lives and livelihood strategies and, importantly, their views on what would constitute a desirable state of the environment for them.

1.1 Methodology

Previous attempts to engage the public, either as individuals or as representative organisations during the Status Quo research phase of the project had proved fruitless. This is described elsewhere in a previous report. A fresh approach was therefore devised, which was undertaken in the following steps:

- a) A simple questionnaire was designed;
- b) The questionnaire was mailed to every person on the I&AP database with a request for a response to be submitted by fax or email;
- c) An abbreviated questionnaire was placed in the Zululand Observer, with a similar request for a response to mailed or faxed.

In addition to the above steps people were encouraged to distribute the questionnaire as widely as they wished.

The responses on the completed questionnaires were collated and the results are reflected in *Section 1.1.3* below.

1.1.1 Questionnaire

The questions posed were the following:

1. How much do you rely on natural resources for your livelihood? Please give details.
2. Which natural resources are important to you and what would you like to see preserved / maintained? (eg: open spaces, air quality, areas around the port and IDZ, flora and fauna areas / breeding grounds etc). Please give details.
3. How important is the development of Richards Bay Port and the IDZ to you? Please give details.
4. The aspects listed below are considered important and may have to be “traded off” against each other. Please rate each these aspects in order of importance for you. Place a tick in the box that shows the rating you give to that aspect.

Aspect	Very important	Important	Not important
Low rate increases			
More industry			

More open space			
More jobs			
Access to water bodies			
Reduced pollution			

5. Any other comments / concerns?

1.1.2 Responses received

1.1.2.1 Responses to date

Sixteen responses have been received so far to a questionnaire distributed to the database of I&APs and published in the Zululand Observer. These responses have been collated and are summarised below. They represent the response of those members of the public who are sufficiently concerned about environmental issues to respond to the invitation to respond. A more extensive survey might reveal other concerns and issues, but it is our opinion that the issue raised are a reliable guide to the views of the community of Richards Bay.

1.1.2.2 Further responses expected

It must be noted that as the project proceeds additional responses are expected from members of the public. Also the members of the Dube Tribal Council have requested 2 000 copies of the questionnaire which they have undertaken to distribute, administer and collect. These are expected to be received during the first week of February.

1.1.3 Analysis of responses

The questions posed are shown in bold. The responses are tabulated below each question.

1.1.3.1 Question 1

How much do you rely on natural resources for your livelihood?

	#
Not at all	2
Some	3
A lot	13

Additional responses submitted

- Industrial Development
- Mining Sector
- Sugar Cane Farming
- Timber Industry
- Tourism and Recreation
- Mondi – main raw material is renewable plantation fibre
- Employed by Provincial Conservation organisation – entirely dependant
- I depend on the relative peace and quiet, the open spaces, water and clean air for my well-being
- Richards Bay offers little in the way of cultural activities, but offers open spaces
- Clean air, water and healthy fauna
- Good quality water resources
- Clean air
- Green open spaces enhance the freshness of the air. Polluted air will be used by trees and vegetation
- A lot of my work is based on land use evaluation for the Environmental Impact Assessments. The rest is on rehabilitation of rural and agricultural development, including the propagation of indigenous decorative and medicinal plants.

- A lot of my recreational activities centre around birding and dendrology.
- Poor air quality affects asthma, odours such as those emitted by some industries not only continue to discomfort in terms of smell but also sleep patterns are also affected.
- I do a lot of fishing and the fish caught is used for my own consumption
- I really rely on natural resources for my living, for the future of my kids in terms of air quality and for recreation purposes: clean water and beautiful lakes etc.
- It is important to preserve our natural resources such as our wetlands and natural bush habitat as Mzingazi Lake is dependant on underground water which is the source of drinking water for the entire population of City of uMhlathuze and beyond.

Summary

It is clear that the majority of the people who participated in this questionnaire seem to rely significantly on natural resources for their livelihood. Some of the occupations mentioned were: agriculture, timber, mining and conservation. Another important factor is the Lake Mzingazi provides drinking water for the City of uMhlathuze and is a resource that must be protected at all costs.

People also place a high value on natural resources for their lifestyle, whether it be for recreational purposes (such as fishing, birding and dendrology), enjoyment of the wildlife and landscape, as well as direct sustenance – catching fish for food.

1.1.3.2 Question 2

Which natural resources are important to you and what would you like to see preserved / maintained? (eg: open spaces, air quality, areas around the port and IDZ, flora and fauna areas / breeding grounds etc)

Responses

- A balance of all aspects ensuring sustainability of the resources
- Open spaces between housing and industry
- Open areas in Port and IDZ
- Aquatic areas (Streams, pans, wetlands)
- Grasslands and forests
- Water resources – reduce water consumption, provide buffer zones, reduce groundwater pollution through sanitation supply
- Air Quality – reduce air pollution from existing and planned industry
- Identify land for port and industrial expansion through SDF, LUMS & EMF
- Preserve open spaces for ecological linkages
- Open spaces and air quality are very important
- Water quality in the local rivers and harbour is very important
- Open spaces, air quality, flora and fauna areas, breeding grounds are very important
- Open spaces are relatively common in RCB and it is considered essential that a significant portion of these should be preserved. I was involved with the MOSS report compiled by John Laing in the 1990's and this identified areas to be conserved. The City has compiled an Environmental Services Management Plan that identifies areas to be conserved and managed. (See Map attached). The City must keep to this plan and conserve open spaces. The area has lost huge tracts of ecologically important and aquatic habitats, wetlands, mesic habitats etc with the development of the harbour and the city, most of what remains should now be conserved.
- Open spaces is one facility Richards Bay offers. The bad crime situation will be overcome and hence this must not be used as an excuse to destroy green areas.
- Air quality is not negotiable; it must be maintained at a good quality. It is not NICE TO HAVE! The heavy industries in the area have resulted in air quality being rather poor, hence any new industries must only be established if they will not add to the air quality problem. Placing them outside the immediate uMhlathuze area will assist.
- If one preserves open spaces, surely one will also preserve breeding areas, flora and fauna.
- The city should grow into a mega-city should the port obtain container terminals and this development will then spread into the surrounding areas which means that the green areas can be preserved. I.e: the development does not have to be concentrated into a tiny area.
- The polluting industrial development in East Germany, parts of Russia, etc have shown how important it is to manage the environment and develop intelligently.

- Water Quality
- Cleaner Air – the toxic particles in the air are really bad. Notice the plants near Foskor (dead).
- Flora and Fauna – people living in green belt areas should be moved to formal living areas.
- Safe open spaces
- Air quality – Industries to be regulated
- Indigenous flora and fauna to be maintained
- Open access to natural areas
- Air quality
- No littering / pollution of the environment and water
- Open spaces are the lungs of the city
- Breeding grounds – encourage the ecosystem
- Flora and fauna – increase the ecological heritage
- Open spaces
- Flora and fauna areas
- Breeding grounds
- Wetlands conservation is a must in terms of water resources
- Improving air quality standards and setting overall industrial emissions cap, including those blown out to sea to limit anthropogenic influences on sea bio diversity.
- Protecting of environmentally sensitive areas by ensuring that such areas are not isolated by development. As the isolation of the area ultimately leads to the development of the area.
- Marine life should be protected against pollution
- Natural vegetation should be protected
- Dune rehabilitation should be undertaken
- Air quality
- Trees: air is needed as a source of living, if we have polluted air we will be destroying a healthy environment for ourselves and future generations and that is not sustainable development. I would like to see trees being preserved because Richards Bay as an industrial area with a number of companies who emit particular matter, some of the particulate matter gets caught on a tree before it reaches the residential areas.
- I do a lot of fishing, the fish caught is for my own consumption
- Air quality is important to monitor/comply with threshold limits as determined by the act for good quality of health.
- The area around the port should be properly controlled with regards to pollution going into the sea and wetlands, to the natural flora and fauna and bird life. A good example of this is the Foskor gypsum dam which will probably be in the way for future expansions of the port.

Summary

It is evident that people wish to preserve existing "green areas" and open spaces which act as buffer zones between residents and industrial zones. The general response indicates how important clean air is for health and wellbeing for the inhabitants of Richards Bay. It is also imperative that the flora, fauna and ecological heritage is preserved, as the biodiversity of the area has dwindled considerably and is under constant threat of being eradicated. People are concerned about pollutants affecting the water and the environment as there are people who enjoy the wildlife and birdlife as well as people who catch fish for consumption.

1.1.3.3 Question 3

How important is the development of Richards Bay Port and the IDZ to you?

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Not at all	1
Some	5
A lot	10

Additional responses submitted

- Richards Bay Must have a world class infrastructure to remain competitive as an industrial hub
- It will give a major injection to the Richards Bay and KZN economy.

- Major catalyst and very important infrastructure. It must happen ASAP
- Need economic development for SA and job creation locally
- IDZ can be planned to minimize environmental impacts
- It is very important to give growth to the economy of Richards Bay and it will enhance career development for our future generations
- It will create much needed jobs
- Development often leads to economic opportunities
- Development also leads to a large rates base therefore in theory my rates should decrease
- It will create sustainable and decent jobs. Environmental issues will be considered so that accumulative affects can and will be easily understood.
- Would not like development to damage the environment
- Prior to the planting of eucalyptus and sugar plantations the Fernwood Soil Form Maputa Series Soils supported pristine Lala Palm Savannah, interspersed with extensive wetlands and climax riverine forest. It is important that where possible, these conditions be re established.
- The more improved and the greater the Port capacity, the more industries will be attracted
- It would be in Richards Bay best interests to increase Economical growth
- The port and to a lesser extent the IDZ, are important as catalysts to economic growth in the area. Without the port, Richards Bay would be a quiet village today. The port should grow hugely and this will result in the city ultimately achieving mega status. The IDZ will assist, but it is not the driver. This driver will be the deepwater port attracting the container terminals (and other terminals) handling all of the KZN and most of the Gauteng containers when Durban has reached its maimum development.
- This is important in terms of increasing the economy and wealth of the area in which I live, but I don't rely on it for my personal business.
- The economic growth of the town is dependant on the growth and development and its facilities.
- The Port is also an important facility that could service import and export from the greater Gauteng area. A container terminal and passenger terminal is essential to pick up the overflow from Durban Harbour etc.

Summary

The development of the Port and IDZ is of great importance to the people of Richards Bay. One of the most significant issues to arise from this study is that people are very eager to see an increase in jobs to sustain the community and to grow the economy. It was also noted that people feel quite strongly that the harbour/port could be established in such a way that would raise the status of Richards Bay and make it a major role player in terms of trade and shipping. What is equally important however is that the port and IDZ is developed in a responsible manner, in other words, environmental impacts must be minimal.

1.1.3.4 Question 5

The aspects listed below are considered important and may have to be "traded off" against each other. Please rate each these aspects in order of importance for you. Place a tick in the box that shows the rating you give to that aspect.

Responses

Aspect	Very important	Important	Not important
Low rate increases	2	12	2
More industry	3	12	1
More open space	4	9	3
More jobs	8	7	1
Access to water bodies	12	4	
Reduced pollution	13	3	

Summary

In order of importance:

1. Access to water bodies and reduced pollution are rated as of the highest importance
2. More jobs and more industry are important
3. Keeping rates low is important
4. Maintaining / creating open spaces has importance

1.1.3.5 Question 1

Any other comments / concerns?

- The loss of biodiversity in the area is of great concern, due to various developments. Richards Bay can't continually offer "trade-off", as the area is RAPIDLY running out of areas to "trade-off".
- Richards Bay itself is reaching spatial capacity. Further residential and commercial development will probably be immediately west of Empangeni, centred around the proposed Waterstone Development.
- Open spaces as far as former apartheid buffer zones are of limited importance but riparian and wetland zones are important. Also increasing the urban density does not necessarily imply that the urban foot print needs to be increased
- As a Councillor at Richards Bay, it has always been my concern that the road infrastructure National, Provincial and local, does not coincide with the Port Development plans. In fact it is totally inadequate for the traffic demand. Historically in and out loads to the Port area has damaged and broken up local roads. The suggestion is that loads to the Port area has damaged and broken up local roads. The suggestion is that a special roads levy should be introduced through Port for abnormal load trucks.
- The whole issue about service delivery in a small craft harbour and the responsibility like refuse removal and traffic control should be addressed. Closer co-operation between the City of uMhlathuze (Councillors and officials), the Chamber of Business and the IDZ board should be promoted. In fact a structured committee representing members of these bodies should be formed to fast track development.
- Increase in heavy industry also reduces power surely, I'm not condemning increased industrialization however Richards Bay is extremely windy, therefore wind turbine farms is a valid and feasible means of sustaining development by supplementing the grid.
- Groundwater pollution and recharge is of concern as Richards Bay is notorious for its high water table and poor soil.
- With the development, existing recreational activities should be protected, as well as the areas where they are practised.
- I don't believe we need more open space, but those which is left and worthy of conservation and necessary to maintain a "sense of place", should be conserved. Access to water bodies should be readily available to ratepayers and all of these important waterfront properties must not be allowed to be intensely developed by private developers and the public excluded because the developer is catering for the exclusive use by a few moneyed individuals. A balance needs to be kept.
- Access to Lake Mzingazi has to be well managed as it should be a conserved area and the water quality not compromised as it is part of the local water source.
- More industry will allow further growth and development. However, only suitable non-polluting industries can be accepted otherwise air quality will deteriorate further, and chase all the skilled persons away.
- If the large cities such as London and New York can keep their open spaces for their residents and visitors, why can't we?

Summary

1. The people of Richards Bay have much concern about the spatial capacity for development in the area as the space is very limited. They do not want to see important wetland/riparian and conservation areas traded off for more industrial development, these spaces are very precious and valuable to the public.
2. The locals have expressed the desire that access to water bodies (eg: Lake Mzingazi) remains open to the public and not just moneyed individuals. Also that these water bodies are well managed and conserved to ensure their longevity and maintaining a clean water table.
3. There is still unease regarding the polluted state of the groundwater table and clean air in Richards Bay. Initiatives to clean these up would clearly be welcomed.

4. People are concerned that the waterfront will be developed privately and they will not have access.
5. The suggestion was also made that the development of wind turbine farms could be highly beneficial in assisting with the large consumption of power used by industry in Richards Bay, as it is a very windy zone.
6. There is concern regarding the road infrastructure in and out of the port and that it is insufficient and that measures need to be introduced to sort out these problems and damage to the roads.
7. The suggestion for closer co-operation between City of uMhlatuze, Chamber of Business and the IDZ board was made in order to manage the harbour, traffic and refuse removal situation.

1.2 Conclusions

In considering the outcomes reported above it becomes clear that the overwhelming concern expressed by residents of the area is that any future development should:

- Respect the opportunities offered, and constraints, imposed by the environment in terms of its capacity to assimilate change;
- Preserve and secure the remaining environmental assets, especially those associated with open spaces and recreational areas;
- Promote and secure a sustainable livelihoods approach to development planning, especially for – but not limited to – those sectors of the population who are most vulnerable;
- Take cognisance of the important implications for development of climate change; and
- Proactively use the planning for the IDZ to ensure environmental and ecologically efficient development that benefits all sectors of society.