



Stakeholders join forces with wetland park

Muzi Zincume

VARIOUS stakeholders joined representatives from iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, WildOceans and the Department of Education to conduct a clean-up in the Kosi Bay section of the park last Wednesday.

iSimangaliso has three major lake systems with RAMSAR status, eight interlinking ecosystems, most of South Africa's remaining swamp forests, and Africa's largest estuarine system.

The park's environmental education officer, Sifiso Vumase said all of these are threatened by plastic pollution.

"Some of these natural attributes contributed to the outstanding universal values upon which the park was inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage list in December 1999.

"iSimangaliso partnered with stakeholders to remove trash from beaches, lakes and other water sources in Kosi Bay. This also enabled iSimangaliso to raise awareness on the ecological and tourism impacts of littering," he said.

He said they were educating children about the importance of conservation by forming a multi-stakeholder

approach to addressing littering.

They invited pupils from Threfall Primary School who joined WildOceans and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife teams to collect litter in the wetland park's Kosi Bay section; Bhanganek, Kosi Mouth, Lake 1 and Lake 3.

"Upon analysing the collected trash, it appeared beer bottles, cans, cigarette butts and plastic bags dominated the refuse.

"We appreciate the effort of all who pitched up for the common goal of cleaning up the coastal areas and beaches of iSimangaliso.

"Such collective efforts underscore the belief that every bottle, every straw and every piece of trash cleaned up can lead to cleaner, healthier ocean and lake systems."

Commenting on the tourism attributes, Vumase said, "We offer various ecotourism activities and some of them are coastal based where littering has been identified as one of the conservation threats. It was important for us to participate in the coastal clean-up to ensure clean and healthier coastal areas while indirectly raising awareness on the impact of littering on marine organisms and tourism."