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Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife urged to fill almost 400 vacant field ranger posts

THE DA in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) calls for the urgent filling of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) field ranger vacancies after a written parliamentary reply which has exposed that 378 posts – out of a total of 996 – are currently unfilled.

The reply, from Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA) MEC, Reverend Musa Zondi, to questions by the DA reveals only 11 of these vacancies are funded and approved by Premier, Thami Ntuli – in accordance with Provincial Treasury guidelines – and are currently in the recruitment process. The DA acknowledges EKZNW interventions, including polygraph testing of staff, which have contributed to a decline in rhino poaching. However, the wildlife entity cannot win the war without field rangers at the forefront.

Despite a decline in poaching, the threat to our rhinos remains severe;

- In 2022, 244 rhinos were poached in KZN;
- In 2023, the figure increased to 325;
- In 2024, 228 rhinos were lost and;
- 2025 has already seen 13 rhinos poached – a figure that is likely to rise unless urgent action is taken.

Not only is each rhino killed a blow to conservation, it is also a loss of part of KZN's identity and tourism economy. The preservation of our province's natural heritage is dependent on an adequate and well-supported field ranger corps. The DA urges MEC Zondi, his department and Provincial Treasury to urgently:

- Fast-track the filling of the 11 approved field ranger posts and;
- Urgently submit and approve further requests to fund and fill the remaining 367 vacancies.

These critical posts must be treated as a provincial priority to protect our rhinos which are not only of great value to KZN, but to the entire world.

HANNAH LIDGETT | DA KZN Spokesperson on EDTEA