

## Seekoei Estuary Public Meeting

Venue: Aston Bay community hall      Time: 16:00      Date: 15/03/2023

### MINUTES

#### 1. Welcoming:

Councillor Benson welcomed all present and explained the purpose of the meeting - to give feedback to the residents on what the KLM has done till date with regards to the Seekoei estuary and to look at the way forward. Residents also had the opportunity to ask questions to the panel which was addressed by various officials.

Prof. Tris Wooldridge gave historical background information on the Seekoei estuary and the current situation of the estuary and what led to the current situation and proposed a way forward on addressing the current situation at the Seekoei estuary.

**Q1:** The estuary and mouth management plan was said to be on the website but people can't find it on the website?

*The estuary and mouth management plan is on the municipal website, web not user friendly but will be addressed.*

**Q2:** The recommendation in the estuary management plan should be implemented. The KLM needs to start with implementing the things that they can implement and what where the recommendations made in the management plan.

*The recommendations from the management plan are :*

- *Removal of the causeway*
- *To restore the natural function of the estuary*
- *Removal of parking area and Aston bay hall*
- *Taring of the alternative road*
- *Water monitoring to be done on a monthly basis*

**Q3:** The recommendation in the management plan has not been implemented. The illegal dams in the catchment area needs to be removed. The effluent from the WWTW is entering the estuary.

*KLM has been trying to contact DWS to assist with removing illegal dams in the catchment area. The minister is investigating the claims of the illegal dams. The KLM has been unsuccessful in getting DWS to come to these meetings regarding the Seekoei estuary.*

*There is no raw sewage entering the estuary. E.coli can be generated from a variety of sources not only the WWTW. The limit of E.coli in recreational water must be less than 250 cfu / 100ml. There are challenges with controlling E.coli levels and loadshedding has worsened the WWTW effectiveness. Generators will be procured to assist with improving the plants effectiveness during loadshedding.*

**Q4:** Did DWS apologise for not attending the public meeting? The illegal dams will not be a short-term plan, what can be done in the short-term?

*DWS did not apologise for not attending the meeting.*

*Short-term solution that can be implemented are:*

- *Removal of alien vegetation in the catchment area to improve freshwater entering the system.*
- *Upgrading of the causeway to improve water exchange between the upper and lower sections of the estuary.*
- *Investigating the possible illegal dams in the catchment area. DWS meeting to be requested and also address it at IGR meeting.*

**Q5:** The water results must be made public to the community. The WWTW was not functioning optimally in December 2022 and that raw sewage was entering the estuary.

*The water results will be made public on the municipal website*

**Q6:** The E.coli levels in the estuary might also be attributed to the agricultural activities in the catchment area? Farmers are spraying fertilizers on their fields and adding chicken manure on their fields. Will that have an effect on the estuary? With the last breach, a lot of fish entered the estuary. The Kouga area has been struggling with a drought for the past 8 years. Will good rains help to improve the situation?

*The manure and fertilizers will have an impact on the estuary and water quality. Rains washes away nutrients and they end up in the rivers and streams and eventually the estuary. Seepage water may also enter the estuary. The addition of freshwater helps to keep the mouth open and good rains will definitely help to improve the overall health of the estuary.*

**Q7:** The Green Drop report from 2017 – 2019 was not looking good for all the WWTWs in Kouga. The water quality from the report is not up to standard and that according to the report the MM is the accountable person. According to the law, landowners are responsible for clearing alien vegetation on the properties and that the KLM must ensure that the community complies with this law. Was a toxicology test done on the fish that died-off in March? If not, why not? Was the cause of the fish die-off due to high salinity?

*NMU responded that although a toxicology test may help pin down reasons for fish dying, the primary causes of fish deaths in February/March 2023 are probably linked to high summer water temperatures and high organic levels in the water and sediments that lead to low oxygen concentrations.*

**Q8:** There are a lot of bacteria in the environment, some good some bad. There are bacteria that uses oxygen and others that do not. Support the solution presented in the management plan. The causeway needs to be replaced with a suspension bridge to improve water exchange in the estuary.

*The KLM goes to the DEDEAT when an emergency breach is required. The mandate lies with the department. The KLM has asked permission that the estuary be given over to KLM to manage going forward.*

**Q9:** Concerned about all the lies coming from the Municipality. He went to the Humansdorp WWTW and it is not up to standard. Has photo evidence to prove this. The effluent from the plant is being used for irrigation and that the effluent can enter the underground aquifers. The catchment ponds of the WWTW are not lined and that is an issue.

*All the WWTW in Kouga was in a bad state. The WWTW in Kwanomzamo has been vandalised by the community. The situation became so bad that the staff could not be on site at night due to safety concerns. No funding has been granted from the department to rectify the vandalism. Contractors were brought in to manage certain WWTW in Kouga. With the next Green drop report the Municipality is aiming to get above 50% for all WWTWs. R300 million has been allocated towards upgrading the WWTWs. The community close to the WWTW in Kwanomzamo will be relocated to a more suitable area. Land has already been procured where they will be moved.*

*The WWTW is licensed for irrigation purposes.*

**Q10:** How was the current Seekoei estuary committee chosen? Why must residents complete the PAIA from to request the minutes from the committee meetings? When will the next committee be chosen? Who determines the draw down charge? Surely the catchment ponds must be lined?

*The Seekoei estuary committee was selected in August 2019. The committee are made up of the following sectors: Kouga Municipality, DEDEAT, DWS, Department of Transport & Public Road, Aston Bay Representative and Paradise Beach Representative. The estuary management plan is up for review in 2023 and a new committee will be chosen. Quarterly meetings are held by the committee and Cllr. Benson is the chairperson of the committee. Whenever information is requested, the legislation requires that the PAIA form be completed to get access to information.*

**Q11:** All farm dams are full of algae when looked at from a satellite photo. Farmers need to address this issue.

**Q12:** Does not agree with the media statement released by KLM. The WWTW's water can be useful to keep water levels optimal in the estuary and to add freshwater to the system, however the water needs to be clean coming from the WWTWs. The removal of illegal dams will not happen in the short-term. The solution that is recommended in the estuary management plan should be incorporated into the IDP.

*The estuaries are tabled in the IDP, however the infrastructure (causeway) is not. I&E to look at upgrading/ redesigning the causeway or the removal of the causeway and a section of the carpark.*

**Q13:** The water coming from the WWTWs has a green colour to it and is running into the Swart river. Did own water test and got a count of >15000 E.coli from water entering the Swart River. The

estuary's water level is not as shallow as it was in previous years. Has anyone gone to look at the water running into the estuary? When is the next Green drop audit happening?

*KLM will investigate the E.coli count of >15000 cfu. The KLM is actively monitoring the water coming from the WWTW and along the Swart River up until the Seekoei estuary.*

*The KLM had a visit from the Green Scorpions and the Human Rights Commission in January. The DWS did come for an inspection at the WWTWs. The effluent from the WWTWs has improved. The Kwanomzamo new WWTW will be up and running in July 2023. The last Green Drop report was done in 2017 and the next one will commence in 2024.*

**Q14:**What is the COD (Chemical oxygen demand) in the estuary? What is the COD of the water leaving the WWTWs? If the COD of the water coming from the WWTWs is good then the problem does not lie with the WWTWs. The COD count should be less than 20mg/L.

*Will be tested with new sampling and results added.*

**Q15:**Why has the rotten material on the sides of the causeway not been removed completely?

*The rotten material accumulates on the sides of the causeway due to wind action. The KLM used to super sucker to remove the material but the super sucker is not designed to work with salt water and could therefore not remove all the material on the sides of the causeway. The KLM also used TLBs to remove the material but was also not very effective. A more effective solution is required to completely remove the decaying material.*

**Q16:**Why does KM not use the concrete channel? The concrete channel behind the carpark and Aston Bay hall can add freshwater to the estuary.

*Unfortunately the channel cannot be opened due to the channel becoming an ecosystem in its own right and the department will not give permission to clear channel.*

*The concrete channel was designed by scientist. CSIR wrote the report on the channel. The channel was doomed from the word go, sediment accumulated in the channel and had to be maintained on a constant basis.*

**Q16:**Was part of one of the estuary committee meetings, why can he not get the minutes from that meeting?

*A document will be put together which contains all the questions asked at the meeting and that the document will be shared with everyone in attendance as well as the minutes of the meeting. The KLM will get the email addresses of all the residents in attendance in order to send them the document. The KLM website is unfortunately not very user-friendly. Residents can ask for the document from the respective Ward communication groups. The document will be ready by end of March. The KLM will publish the water result to their website.*

**Q17:**Linn Hill posed the question whether there is a page on the Municipal website where residents can submit suggestion?

All attendees will be contacted for email addresses and further correspondence clarified. Can use [ward2@kouga.gov.za](mailto:ward2@kouga.gov.za) for now.

*The meeting was concluded and the meeting adjourned at 19:30.*

