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Media Statement for Immediate Release

## **EDTEA INSTRUCTS ZAC MINE TO EXPAND WATER SAMPLING POINTS FOLLOWING SLURRY MATERIAL SPILL INTO THE RIVER**

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, EDTEA, has instructed Zululand Anthracite Colliery mine, ZAC, to expand its water monitoring sampling points beyond the initial four areas that it had identified.

In order to fully assess pollution into critical riverine system, the Department directed that the sampling must be extended from the initial Umvalo to Mfolozi river, to include the estuarine zone of Isimangaliso Wetland Park.

On 24<sup>th</sup> December, ZAC mine reported that it experienced a slurry material spill due to the dam wall failure. The dam capacity is 3 183 m<sup>3</sup> and an estimated half of the stored slurry material spilled into the nearby Mvalo River.

EDTEA MEC Ravi Pillay says that whenever an incident of this nature occurs, the first reaction of government is to protect the public health and the environment.

“The Department officials have been on site to observe the clean-up processes and establish more facts about the extent of the spill and the potential threat to the public health and the environment. We note that ZAC mine has reported that no claims of damages, death or loss of livestock have been reported to them following the incident. While appreciating that report, we will however follow our own procedures and investigations”, says MEC Pillay.

Officials of the Departments of Water and Sanitation, Mineral Resources and Energy, which is the competent authority, as well as EDTEA, have already conducted site visits.

The Department of Water and Sanitation issued a written directive following a verbal one, while EDTEA is continuing to interact with all other relevant authorities.

During the site visit, the teams from the said Departments have reported that:

- No more spill could be observed as the rains had ceased;
- Clean-up operations are in progress through largely manual labour, with excavator moving out the material up to the dump;
- Mvalo river downstream has dried up again, while upstream Mvalo river, the traces of the slurry are visible but none of them downstream;
- Water monitoring (both ground and surface water) is taking place and mine is awaiting results from the laboratory.

“I have directed that my Department sets up a Joint Operations Committee in the meantime to further probe the matter. I have already written to my relevant national counterparts, Ministers of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment Barbara Creecy, Water and Sanitation Senzo Mchunu and Mineral Resources and Energy Gwede Mantashe as well as Mayors of Zululand and Ulundi Municipalities to fully apprise them of the latest developments”, concludes MEC Pillay.

EDTEA officials last visited the site on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January. Another follow-up site visit was conducted yesterday, 5<sup>th</sup> January by officials of the Department of Mineral Resources and will be followed up by a joint site visit next week after the initial report into water and environmental contamination has been received.

**Ends:**

**Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.**

## **ADDITIONAL NOTES ABOUT ZAC MINE**

ZAC mine is situated in the Zululand District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal under Ulundi local municipality, where the largest part of its operations and offices are situated and Nongoma, where the shafts are located.

It opened its operations in 1985, and operates an underground, deep level, narrow seam operation, using both continuous miners and drill and blast mining techniques. The current life of mine is said to be up to 2027.

The mine operates within the traditional authorities and communities from the following areas:

- Inkosi yakwaMlaba
- Inkosi yakwaMandlakazi
- Inkosi yakwaZungu; and
- Inkosi yaseMatheni

All communities under these Amakhosi were notified of the incident.

Ends.