

To: All Media/ News Editors
Media Advisory
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PARTNERSHIPS KEY TO PROTECTING THE RHINO POPULATION

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mr Siboniso Duma recently had a meeting with the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy to discuss an array of issues and solutions at Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park (HiP). As the rampant poaching of rhinos continues to threaten the very existence of this species, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs has demonstrated its commitment to protecting the rhino population through concerted effort and partnerships that have resulted in species conservation over the years.

Last month, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) released the annual rhino poaching statistics which revealed increased poaching activity in KwaZulu-Natal with half of the 448-rhino poached in the past year being from KZN.

It is concerning that rhino poaching continues at this scale. "We must all appreciate the importance of Conservation and its value to our tourism sector - a major job creator. As the government, we declare war on rhino poachers who are stealing our precious assets. It is, indeed, our collective responsibility to fight rhino poachers. We thank our personnel at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife who, together with law enforcement agencies and conservationists, work tirelessly under dangerous conditions to protect our wildlife. We also commend communities for working with us to protect our rhino population" said Duma.

The meeting outlined a multi-faceted approach that will curb rhino poaching. The implementation of technology and tracking devices was discussed as a key method to detect and monitor poachers through the early detection, trap cameras, and Operations Control Centres (OCC).

Law enforcement agencies will work tirelessly to prevent poaching by increasing patrols in high-risk areas, intercepting illegal shipments of rhino horn, and arresting those who participate in poaching. To this effect, the SAPS Special Task Force and Tactical Operations Teams have been deployed at Hluhluwe iMfolozi Park.

Ezemvelo's Technical Services unit, together with the HiP Park Management, conducted a physical assessment of the perimeter fence on the South-Western boundary of the Park, an estimated total of 38.2 km. The estimated cost for fixing the South-Western Boundary fence was estimated at R9.5 million. This cost was based on an estimate of R247,000 per kilometre. All procurement processes have been completed. The contractor was awarded on 24 February 2023.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal is exploring rhino dehorning as an effective measure; Rhino dehorning has been used historically as a tool to reduce the threat of poaching in parts of Southern Africa. It ought to be undertaken together with other elements to really be effective (Perimeter fencing; appropriate field ranger resourcing, multipronged law enforcement effort [SAPS, crime intelligence, secret service, NPA, investigation] staff vetting, community work, etc.

ENDS

ISSUED BY THE KZN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS.

