

# Mtunzini

Advertise here and support SOS. Call  
Jim Chedzey for details: 083 326 0698

## SOS Mtunzini news update NO. 2, April 2011.

**SOS**Mtunzini (Save Our Sands) is the joint campaign of the MRA (Mtunzini Residents Association) and the Mtunzini Conservancy to address the proposed sand dune mining to the North and the South of Mtunzini. The **Mtunzini Residents Association** (Reg. No. 2003/022172/08) and the **Mtunzini Conservancy** (Reg. No. 2007/006455/08) are both Section 21 companies. The Mtunzini Conservancy has Section 18A tax status and can issue tax certificates for donations made.



A lot has happened since the 1<sup>st</sup> letter where we reported that we had decided to oppose the mine and had retained an attorney to advise us on the process. Clearly, for us, the desired outcome of this process, is that the mine should be stopped.

The BAR (Basic Assessment Report) has now been published, and the dates set for the public meetings. Please make sure that you attend the meeting. The dates are as follows:

**Date:** 10 May 2011

**Venue:** Mtunzini Town Hall

**Time:** 16h00 to 17h30 (Open Day) & 18h00 to 20h00 (Public Meeting)

Additional public meetings will also be held as follows:

- Mkhwanazi Community Meeting, 3 May 2011 at 10h00
- Zulu/Nzuza Community Meeting, 4 May 2011 at 10h00
- Nsingweni Community Meeting, 5 May 2011 at 10h00

Acer (Africa) are conducting the public participation process, and may be contacted at:

Tel. 035 340 2715

**Barbara Luise Chedzey**  
CFP®

Authorised Financial Services Provider

FSP No. 7615

Regional committee member: FPI (Financial Planning Institute)

t/a **BLC Financial Planning**

Tel.: 035 340 2898

Fax.: 0866133350

Cel. : 083 326 0699

Email : [jbchedz@global.co.za](mailto:jbchedz@global.co.za)

Comments on the BAR to be submitted to by the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

So, let's get started!

With the BAR (Basic Assessment Report) published, and having spent some considerable time on the 1400 pages of the report we note the following:

1. For reasons not clear to us, the DAEARD (Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Rural Development) has approved an application by Exxzro to conduct a BAR rather than a full EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) as we would have expected for an application for additional mining activities associated with an increase in production from 600 to 2200 tons per hour. The BAR represents a short cut with substantial financial benefits for Exxaro, while severely prejudicing the rights of the I&AP's (Interested and Affected Parties) in terms of the project not being fully scoped, particularly with respect to the cumulative impact of the additional activities required to achieve the increased production.
2. Of great concern to us is the mining process itself. It is a destructive, dirty, wasteful process. It completely shatters the soil structure into a slurry using hydraulic jets. The process generates residues which are pumped to two slimes dams 5km long, 1.4 km wide, covering about 600ha and with a height up to 37m above ground level, in dams to the south of Mtunzini and west of the N2. There is no evidence in the BAR, or elsewhere that we know of, to support the claim by Exxaro that such slimes dams can be successfully rehabilitated to economic timber production – or any other crop. It appears that the slimes dams could be a threat to safety, and blot our landscape forever. A literature search indicates that 30m high walls are at the upper safe limit for slimes dams. The planned Fairbreeze slimes dams will be 37m high in places.
3. There is also no evidence to support the claim by Exxaro that the soil hydraulically shattered by the process can be “reconstituted” and returned to the highly productive agriculture and forestry that is currently in place. The precautionary principle, as stated in NEMA (National Environment Management Act) must be applied here, and the status quo should prevail until there is substantial and unequivocal evidence to show that they can proceed at no long term cost to our environment and our community. If we do not get this right, there is a good chance we will be left with thousands of hectares of *Acacia karoo* and *Casuarina* spp. masquerading as a nature reserve because Exxaro have been unable to “reconstitute” the soil to its original form and fertility.
4. Exxaro claim that the existing Hillendale mine operation is supposed to provide all the answers with respect to rehabilitation of the mined area and the slimes dam, i.e. lessons learned at Hillendale will be applied at the proposed Fairbreeze mine. From our perspective, there is nothing to suggest that they have learned how to do anything at Hillendale. From recent visits to Hillendale, Google Earth images, and an aerial photo shoot there is scant evidence of successful, scalable rehabilitation work that has been completed and reported on and/or published in reputable journals.
5. The BAR states that Exxaro's Fairbreeze mining project will generate R1 billion profit per year for the shareholders of Exxaro. It will only generate R1.6 million per year in rates for the Umlalazi Municipality. By contrast, Mtunzini town currently pays R12 million rates per year to the Umlalazi Municipality. It can be reasonably expected that a high impact, dirty project of this nature will threaten the substantial investment base of the Mtunzini residents, currently valued at R1 billion (valuation roll). This could negatively affect the Umlalazi rates base, the life investment of property owners, and

Areas south of Mtunzini and west of N2 that will be covered over and destroyed by the slimes dams



Riverine forest and wetland that will be destroyed by the mining operation



Catchment and riverine forest



Riverine forest



Riverine forest

Area up to 100 m from Mtunzini that will be mined.



- curtail future expansion of the town and growth of the rates base.
6. We are keenly aware of the need to provide jobs in the area and this aspect is always a key consideration in weighing the merits of such a project. There will, in the short term, be construction jobs generated by the project. In the operational phase the Fairbreeze mine will not generate a net gain of jobs for the local community. If the negative effects on tourism, agriculture, and forestry are severe, as we expect and which is concluded by the specialist studies in the BAR, we can actually expect a net loss of jobs in Mtunzini. This is not recognized in the BAR.
  7. There is much mention made in the BAR of restoring, post mining, the rich biodiversity of the area and even some red data species. We find it hard to imagine how this claim can be made, when the very earth that sustains the biodiversity has been shattered and turned into slurry by high pressure water, separated into sand, fines, and the heavy metal content extracted. This is followed by very little effort to put any of it together again, i.e. the sand put back in the mine void and the fine residues pumped to the slimes dams obliterating a number of significant wet lands in the process. Then Exxaro sells the minerals for R1 billion per year net profit! No mention is made of what happens as a result of the extraction of all nutrients from the soil. The fact, as concluded in the specialist studies, is that the negative impact of the mine will be severe and there will be a great destruction of wetlands, water courses, and the natural drainage of the area, and with it the bio diversity.
  8. The Exxaro Fairbreeze mine is the thin edge of the wedge. When the Fairbreeze mine is exhausted in about 15 year's time, the open cast mining operation will move north of Mtunzini. The area running for 20 km from the Umlalazi River (Mtunzini's northern boundary) to the current Exxaro Hillendale mine will be mined in the same way. This will be known as the Port Durnford mine which will be an even bigger operation and which will devastate a much larger area of commercially productive land. Looking even further into the future an area north of Empangeni will also be mined by Exxaro (See Fig 1). This route is the gateway to Zululand, the KZN game parks and the Zululand Birding route. All eco tourism activities will be severely threatened by the transformation of the landscape, dust pollution over long stretches of the tourist route, and general loss of amenities. This will have a serious negative impact on avi-tourism, cultural tourism and the ordinary holidaymaker. See map in Fig.1 below.
  9. A very serious omission from the BAR is the inclusion of a resource economics study of the area by a reputable specialist to determine the ecosystem goods and services, and to put a cost to losing some of them relative to the benefits of the mine to the area. A scoping report and a full EIA would have highlighted this critical deficiency.



Figure 1 Map showing proposed Exxarominng areas

As can be seen from the Google Earth image, dated August 2010, there is little or no sign of rehabilitation on the slimes dam or on the mined area.

The Hillendale mine showing effect on environment, and lack of meaningful rehabilitation after 6 to 8 years of operation



Slimes dam from south



Slimes dam surface



Mined area from south



Mined area looking north



Mined area showing erosion and



Figure 2 Google earth image of the Exxaro Hillendale mine

### **So, where are we now?**

We are faced with a proposed mine that has changed from a production of 600 tons per hour to a monster mine of 2200 tons per hour. The fact that DAEARD granted Exxaro's request to do a BAR instead of a full EIA has resulted in this project not being properly scoped. This means that:

1. Alternative, cleaner, mining processes that do not generate mountainous slimes dams have not been considered at all.
2. Rehabilitation of the mined area and the slimes dams has not been properly interrogated.
3. The cumulative impact of this much larger mine together with the future impacts of the Port Durnford mine and the mine north of Empangeni has not been considered.
4. A proper resource economics study of the area to determine the value of ecosystem goods and services should be conducted to determine if there will indeed be a net benefit from the mine compared with the current land uses.
5. There appears to have been no consideration of the tragedy of slimes dams placed on delineated wet lands and across river catchment areas.
6. Negative conclusions in specialist studies appear to have been ignored or glossed over in the BAR.
7. The BID document and the BAR are confusing with respect to water use licenses, mining rights, and authorizations with respect to slimes

attempts at rehabilitation

dams, the various ore bodies, primary wet plants, and water storage facilities. It is not clear which licenses and authorizations Exxaro actually possess and which they do not have, as this is stated differently in separate places.

In summary, the BAR produced by Exxaro for consideration by DAEARD does not appear to adequately address the issues that are of great concern to us. All the high negative impacts are mitigated away as if by magic, i.e. Exxaro appear to a “mine at all costs” . attitude. We consider that a mine of this nature, location, and size needs to be properly scoped and subjected to a full EIA.



Mined area showing erosion and attempts at rehabilitation

### **Action Taken**

We have therefore decided, as a first step, to appeal the decision by DEARD to allow Exxaro to conduct a BAR instead of a full EIA on the grounds that this permission was wrongly granted. Our notice to appeal was lodged on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011 with the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for DAEARD.

Thank you for your support in our fight to save Mtunzini and ultimately the wider Zululand area as well.



Slimes dam from the north

Watch 50/50 9<sup>th</sup> May 19h30 SATV on the proposed Exxaro Fairbreeze mine.

### **Contributions**

Unfortunately it does take money to participate effectively in the mining authorization process so we do still urgently need your contributions to fund our efforts to stop the mine. As Confucius said, I think, “many hands make light work”! Every little bit helps.

Contributions may be made to Mtunzini Conservancy at any branch or via the internet to.

**FNB, branch code 220130.**

**Cheque Account no. 62093027475**

Use your business name or surname and initials as reference.

Please fax both pages with proof of payment to 086 512 6476

If you have any queries please call:

- **Stan Whitfield** 083 655 8983
  - **Barbara Chedzey** 083 326 0699
  - **Doggy Kewley** 083 630 1839
  - **Wendy Forse** 082 722 3333
  - **Jim Chedzey** 083 326 0698
- 

Copyright © 2011 Mtunzini Residents Association and the Mtunzini Conservancy