

Mtunzini

SOS Mtunzini news update NO. 5, 8 July 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.

So, where are we now?

- **13 Aug 2010:** Exxaro announce intention to mine.
- **5 Nov 2010:** Exxaro publish BID (Background Information Document) and period for comment closes on 10 Dec 2010
- **31 Jan 2011:** MRA (Mtunzini Residents Association) and Mtunzini Conservancy hold a public meeting to gauge the feeling of the town. The attendees unanimously decided to oppose the mine.
- **25 Mar 2011:** dBAR (draft Basic Assessment Report) published for comment with final comments deadline 20 May 2011.
- **14 Apr 2011:** Our appeal submitted to DAEARD (Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs and Rural Development) against decision to allow Exxaro to undertake a BA (Basic Assessment) instead of full S&EIA (Scoping & Environmental Assessment). We await the outcome. The outcome will determine our next steps.
- **10 May 2011:** Exxaro Public Participation meeting held on 10th May.

Contributions

Once again we thank you for your wonderful support, both financial and intellectual. Unfortunately this will be a long grind and we still need your ongoing support to fund and argue our opposition to this mine that, if it were to go ahead, will forever after blot our landscape and the entrance to Zululand.

The Mtunzini Conservancy is a Section 21 Company with s18(a) Tax status which means we can issue tax certificates. If you have any queries in this regard please contact me, Jim Chedzey on 083 326 0698, or one of the other Committee members.

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

What are we trying to achieve?

1. **Change the BAR (Basic Assessment Report) to a full S&EIA (Scoping &EIA) before a RoD (Record of Decision) is issued based on the BAR.**
2. **Through a comprehensive S&EIA ensure rehabilitation, the mining process, and the cost to the environment and community are thoroughly investigated and inform the DAEARD.**
3. **That as a minimum the Fairbreeze mine is not able to start until there is hard empirical evidence to show that the Hillendale mine has been successfully rehabilitated.**
4. **Ultimately we aim to stop the Fairbreeze mine, and finally sand mining on the Eastern seaboard which has high populations, sensitive environments, tourism, and commercial agriculture and forestry industries.**

MTUNZINI CONSERVANCY
FNB, branch code 220130.
Cheque Account no. 62093027475

Please fax proof of payment with your name (or business name), address, telephone number, and email address to:

- 086 512 6476 or
- email bwkewley@telkomsa.net

Public concern for Exxaro sand dune mining grows

The Zululand Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, Thula Mkhwanazi has recently said (Zululandnetwork, The Mercury Wednesday, June 8, 2011) that they would like Exxaro to follow the correct procedure and do a full S&EIA:

“We have serious concerns about what is happening at Hillendale where rehabilitation of the mined dunes has not been done. They cannot start new mining operations when they have not completed the rehabilitation of the Hillendale mining area.”

If you have any queries, please contact one of the SOS committee members:

**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**

Exxaro: Walking the talk or talking the walk?

It remains to be seen if the rehabilitation claims made by Exxaro in their glossy leaflet for the Hillendale mine can be realized. We require empirical evidence that the “rehabilitation” of these shattered soils will result in agriculturally productive land.

A recent insert in the FM (Financial Mail) of 15 April 2011 and paid for by Exxaro also tries to position Exxaro as a “green” mining company: the insert states “we aim for a zero-harm environment”. The Hillendale rehabilitation debacle and the proposed Fairbreeze mine are not consistent with this “aim” - just another classic case of “talking the walk” rather than “walking the talk”. This obvious disconnect will have detrimental consequences for Mtunzini and ultimately for the whole of Zululand, if Exxaro is allowed to replicate the Hillendale experience at Fairbreeze and then move north through Port Durnford and past Empangeni over the next 40 years leaving a trail of destruction.

Consider the following important issues:

Rehabilitation

It now appears, considering the history of the Hillendale mine, that it is impossible to rehabilitate the mined area and the slimes dams of sand mining operations to anything useful here in Zululand and we will suffer the same ugly fate as Hillendale. The Fairbreeze mine cannot be allowed to start until the Hillendale mess is restored and agriculturally productive land returned to the land owners.

The mining process

It appears the Hillendale and Fairbreeze mining process employed by Exxaro is really a cheap and nasty one with the maximization of profits being the only objective. There are sand mines overseas that do not generate slimes dams, i.e. all the fines/slimes are mixed back in with the tailings and placed back in the hole where they came from. This would eliminate the need for the 600 ha Fairbreeze slimes dam monstrosity – a worthy objective for a mining company with “green” aspirations. Is it just talk and no walk?

The impact of the mine

The indecent haste and the ease with which it was possible for Exxaro to shorten the authorization process to only the BAR has astounded us. Consequently, there has been no comprehensive and recent consolidated resource economics study of the impacted area to determine the goods and services provided by the existing ecosystem and those provided by the proposed mine. Is the price to be paid by the community and the ecosystem for Exxaro's expected R12 Billion profit too high? This question needs to be answered.

The legal process

As reported in SOS Newsletter 4 we have appealed the DAEARD (Department of Agriculture Environment Affairs and Rural Development) decision to allow Exxaro to do the quicker and easier BA (Basic Assessment) process, rather than the complete S&EIA (Scoping & Environmental Impact Assessment).

We reject Exxaro's argument that we are not prejudiced by the shorter BA and contend that we have indeed been seriously prejudiced by this decision which has been taken without our knowledge or input. Our argument is as follows:-

1) Our interests are severely prejudiced by the un-transparent decision to conduct a shorter, easier BA. Simply put, the shorter BA will probably allow the process to proceed to an advanced stage without the all-important Scoping step, i.e. lots of important (difficult?) stuff simply left out.

Scoping is arguably the most important step in the EIA process. It is hard to then understand how the professional EAP (Environmental Assessment Practitioner) employed by Exxaro saw fit to dispense with so important a step in this case - the high impact Exxaro Fairbreeze sand mine. The purpose of the Scoping step is to ensure that all important issues are considered, identify feasible alternatives, and then define a clear Plan of Study for the EIA. This dBAR (draft Basic Assessment Report) now has significant limitations because there is no Scoping step or Plan of Study and the following key issues are not covered:

- rehabilitation of the mined area and the slimes dams;
- the mining process and identification of alternative mining processes;
- the economic impact on the community and;
- the cumulative impact of mining ALL the ore bodies

This is clearly a travesty of justice.

2) Our appeal to the MEC against the BAR decision is not premature, and is in fact timeous. Any decision taken on the proposed Fairbreeze sand mining project where rehabilitation of the mined area and slimes dams, the mining process itself, and the economic impact on the community is not part of a Scoping step and part of a formal Plan of Study would be extremely irresponsible. So the sooner we can reverse the BAR decision, and get the process on a logical trajectory that does not prejudice us, the better. We would like to put the horse in front of the cart where it belongs!

3) Exxaro will not be prejudiced by the disproportionate cost they claim they will incur if the project is delayed by having to do a full S&EIA. There has been no comprehensive economic study done to determine the cost to the environment and to the community of: reduced property values; loss of agricultural and forestry and tourism jobs; the cost of being left with 3000ha of ruined landscape; and irreparably degraded high potential agricultural land, have not been determined. The relative loss of both parties is unknown and cannot be compared, commented on or used as an excuse to take a short cut.