

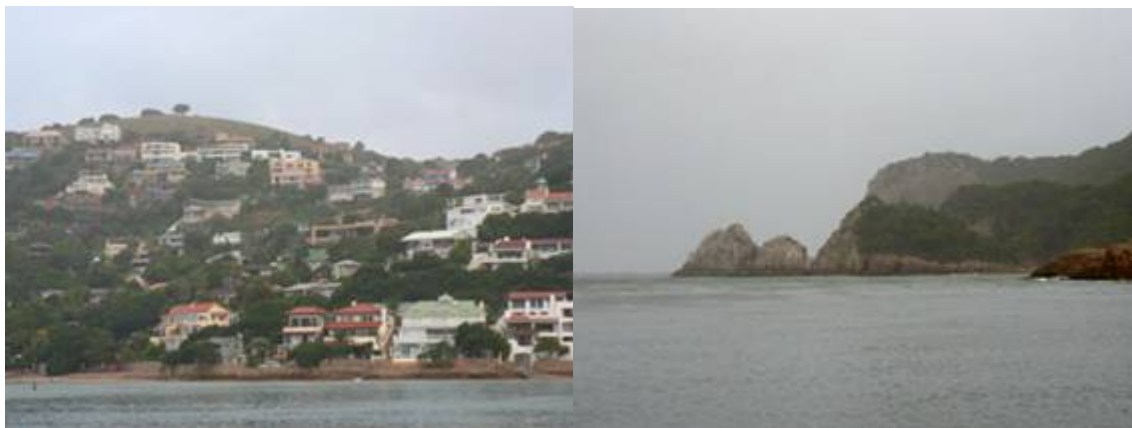
## World Wetlands Day @ Knysna

*Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Rejoice Mabudafhasi joined about 80 special guests in Knysna on February 2nd to celebrate World Wetlands Day 2007.*



With this year's theme being *Fish for Tomorrow?* dozens of celebrations countrywide drew attention to the role that wetlands play in maintaining healthy fish stocks. In Knysna government, civil society and the private sector joined forces to highlight concerns and action around estuary management with specific focus on the Knysna Estuary.

Mabudafhasi pointed out the importance of honouring South Africa's commitments to the various international conventions that address wetland and marine protection and management. She says that as part of its mandate her department has written the Integrated Coastal Management Bill which includes a requirement for a National Estuarine Management Protocol "that will ensure that estuaries in our country are managed in a coordinated and efficient manner." She says that the protocol will determine a strategic vision and objectives for achieving effective management of estuaries.



*Development pressures in and around the Knysna estuary pose the biggest threat*

Estuaries are important nurseries and feeding grounds for many economically important marine fish species, and healthy estuaries depend on good catchment management and use.

For SANParks' Peet Joubert who is responsible for the management of the Knysna Lake Area National Park, this is an important step for addressing his concerns around the current lack of regulations for estuary management. He says that while the Protected Areas Act introduced important new legislation, it also created a critical weakness in that to date there are no actual regulations that can be enforced. With the related withdrawal of the Lake Areas Development Act which previously guided and limited development and activities in the Knysna Estuary, the area was effectively left without an enforceable management plan.

Water Affairs and Forestry are contributing to the knowledge base required for correct management of Knysna with an Ecological Reserve study currently being conducted for the estuary. Catchment Management Agencies are also being established throughout the country that will develop catchment management strategies. In addition the Estuaries Programme of Cape Action for People and Environment will be developing and implementing an estuarine management plan for Knysna this year.

Considered South Africa's No. 1 estuary in terms of conservation importance yet facing severe development pressures, Knysna presents an ideal test case for new legislation around catchment management.



*As part of WWD07 celebrations, guests were treated to a dawn romp through Van Kervels Vlei, a unique and very old peatland near Sedgefield.*