

DEDEAT MEDIA RELEASE

King William's Town; Tuesday; 17 January 2012

For Immediate Release

DEDEAT GREEN SCORPIONS YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS DURING FESTIVE SEASON

The zero tolerance drive to intensify environmental protection especially for rhino protection has resulted in no incident reported on rhino poaching during the festive season in the Eastern Cape.

The compliance and enforcement unit "Green Scorpions" of the department of economic development, environmental affairs and tourism (DEDEAT) has intensified its operations to protect the integrity of the environment and to ensure compliance with environmental legislation in the province.

With investigations conducted in the provincial public and private game reserves, a particular focus was made in the establishments where repeated rhino poaching incidents have occurred in the past.

The operations have realised findings on illegal activities which entail:

- 58 illegal developments in the Wild Coast Coastal Conservation Area;
- 19 cases of illegal sand mining in the wetlands & rivers;
- 16 cases of driving off declared roads in the Coastal Conservation Area;
- 2 cases of illegal camping along the coast;
- 2 cases of illegal hunting of other protected species
- 2 incidents of accidental oil and fuel spillages;
- Illegal cutting of 30 large indigenous trees;
- 2 cases of cycad theft; and
- Recovery of 54 cycads.

A skirmish encounter involving the environmental protection officers from the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) in the Great Fish River Nature Reserve and the poachers led to several injuries suffered by the officers and theft of an automatic firearm. The firearm was later recovered by the Green Scorpions in partnership with South African Police Service (SAPS) and ECPTA field rangers. Six arrests have been made.

"The positive results achieved by the Green Scorpions showcase our robust efforts to eradicate the environmental transgressions in the province. Working in partnerships with the law enforcement agencies for resource mobilisation to fight the scourging organised crime remains the cornerstone for intensifying our activities in the near future", says DEDEAT MEC, Mcebisi Jonas.

The public education drive is also a key ingredient to the communities about the importance of restoring the integrity of the environment. This has been evidenced by incidences of disrespect, verbal abuse and racial remarks suffered by the officers due to lack of appreciation concerning the importance of environmental restoration.

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“We would like to appeal to the public to be vigilant and also to work closer with us in fighting for protection of our indigenous species. Working together through forging partnerships with communities is our ammunition in fighting the perpetrators for the benefit of all,” says MEC Jonas.

ENDS/

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