

NEWS

Illegal sand mining on the rise in KZN

The uMngeni catchment area is being particularly hard hit

NOMCEBO MYEZA

HAVE you ever wondered where your building sand comes from? If you are in the uMngeni catchment area, chances are it's from an illegal sand miner.

A recent study mapping sand mining along the uMngeni and uMsunduzi rivers has shown that sand mining has trebled in the past 14 years (2004/2005 to 2018/2019).

So what's the fuss around sand mining? To put it plainly, sand mining is disruptive to the environment. Undoubtedly, sand mining plays an important role in South Africa's growing construction industry and in no way are we contesting its importance.

The problem is the illegal mining of sand. Sand miners who have authorisation from the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) are obligated to rehabilitate the mined area once operations cease.

Illegal miners don't rehabilitate the mined area and this has ecological, social and economic impacts. Ecologically, the excessive scouring of the riverbed and bank increases river sediment loads, creating an environment unsuitable for many aquatic organisms. Similarly, an increase in sediment loads makes river water unsuitable for domestic uses by communities downstream.

The removal of riparian vegetation (vegetation between the land and the river) and the creation of access roads, compact the soil, reducing infiltration and increasing erosion rates. The removal of riparian vegetation also leaves the site vulnerable to colonisation by alien invasive species.

One can argue that sand mining is important for the economic development of the local community. While that is true, the study mapping sand mining in the catchment found that illegal miners are often not from the communities they mine sand in. In addition, illegal sand mining enriches a handful of individuals to the detriment of communities, legal miners and government departments.

The loss of possible government revenue (through taxes and royalties) is one of the greatest economic impacts of illegal sand mining. Illegal miners are not subject to royalties and taxes, allowing them undercut legal miners. Additionally, taxpayer funds are in some cases required to rehabilitate abandoned sand mining sites.

District roads are not designed for heavy vehicles and are damaged by trucks used in the transporting of sand.



Illegal sand mining takes a heavy toll on surrounding communities.

Additional funding is often required for the premature maintenance of damaged roads.

Abandoned mining sites pose a threat to children and livestock. The removal of sand from the riverbed creates unnatural river depths and currents which can and have led to the drowning of children and livestock. Oil spills, leakages from machinery and the in-situ maintenance

of machinery degrade river water quality. What's most surprising about the illegal sand mining in the catchment is the blatant non-compliance, which has led to the formation of the Illegal Sand Miners Association. Despite the existence of this association, we cannot assume that all illegal miners don't want to comply with regulations.

While we can't tackle illegal sand mining overnight, public awareness plays a major role in controlling the rampant spread of illegal mining.

So next time you get yourself a couple tons of Umgeni sand, inquire about where and how the sand was sourced.

Nomcebo Myeza is an environmental specialist interning at the Institute of Natural Resources.

WHAT TO DO TO BECOME A LEGAL SAND MINER

WHAT can one do to become a legal sand miner?

Firstly, one must get a mining permit or a mining licence with the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE).

A mining permit allows one to mine sand in a five-hectare area for a five-year period.

A mining licence permits one to mine a 30- to 40-hectare area for a 20- to 30-year duration.

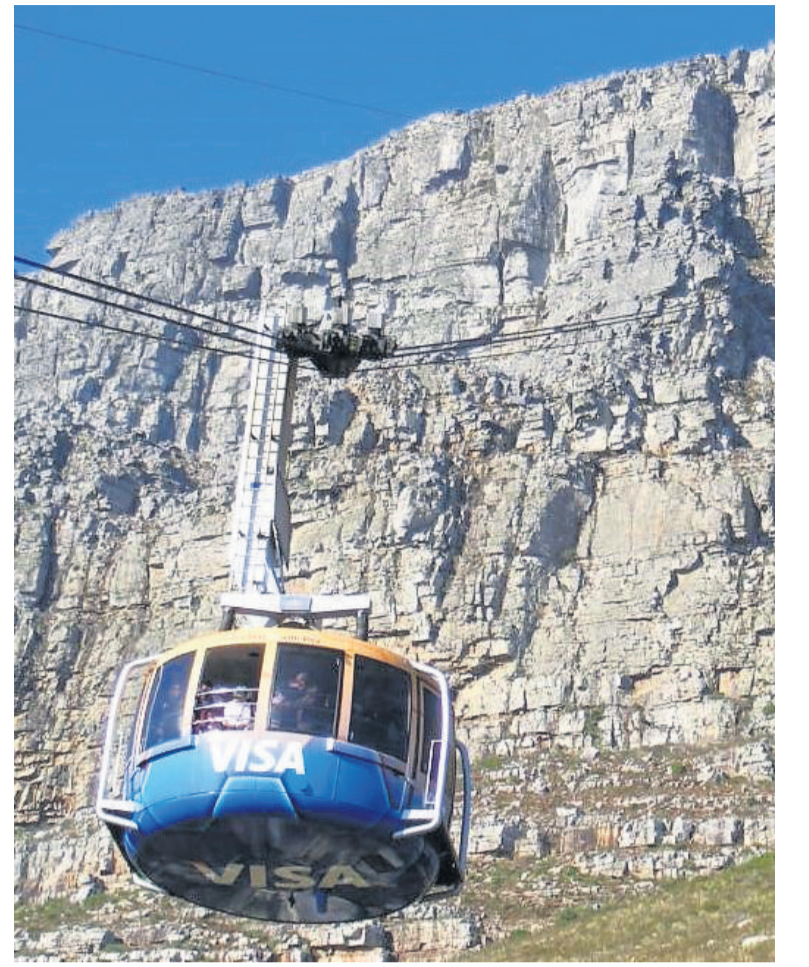
If sand mining affects water uses (impedes or diverts the flow of water in a river, alters the bed, banks, course or characteristics of a river, or disposes of waste in a manner which may detrimentally impact a water resource), the miner must get a water-use licence from the Department of Water and Sanitation.

In KZN, if sand mining is on traditional land, the miner must obtain permission from the Ingonyama Trust board by approaching the local inkosi who will relay the application to the Ingonyama Trust board.

A miner must obtain authorisation from the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries or the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs if they wish to mine in a protected area or in a national forest.

The Directorate of Small Scale Mining, which is within the DMRE, offers support to small-scale miners.

Small-scale sand miners can get more information on the support offered by the directorate from the DMRE website: www.dmr.gov.za/mineral-policy-promotion/small-scale-mining.



Up to 6 000 visitors a day take the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway. PHOTO: NEWS24

Challenges of managing waste on Table Mountain

DUNCAN ALFREDS

THERE is an ongoing battle to keep Cape Town's iconic Table Mountain clear of rubbish.

The Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company (TMACC) is actively engaged in recycling the rubbish that accumulates as a result of human activity on the mountain.

Up to 6 000 visitors per day (more than a million per year) are transported up Table Mountain via the cableway, data from the TMACC's 2019 report shows.

"At the cableway, many different types of waste are generated, of which 60% is recycled.

"Recyclable waste includes organic or food waste that is sent to a composting plant, and dry recycling (plastic, cardboard, cans, glass and paper)," Wahida Parker, the TMACC's managing director, told News24.

Six tons of food were sold at the TMACC cafe in 2017 and that resulted in significant waste that needed to be dealt with.

The company uses compostable crockery, cups and cutlery, and has now introduced biodegradable straws at all beverage outlets at the cableway site.

The company intends to increase its recycling capacity to 80% of all waste.

"We are certain we can reach our goal to recycle 80% of all waste on Table Mountain within the next two

years," said Parker. She added there is a difference in local and international tourists' attitudes towards waste.

"Local visitors are eco-conscious but this is probably more water-related, whereas foreign visitors are more waste conscious."

There is also a strategy in place to deal with waste on the mountain when Cape Town experiences its seasonal heavy winds.

"At the cableway, we have a team that is responsible for waste. This includes emptying waste bins and around our top station buildings. These bins are all fitted with heavy lids, preventing waste from blowing out. Waste is also brought down daily to the lower station to prevent large amounts of waste accumulating on top of the mountain during times when the cableway does not operate," said Parker.

The TMACC, which will place more recycling bins at both the upper and lower stations, increased its recycling capacity marginally in 2019 and Parker has advised other heritage sites on a strategy to manage their waste.

"At the cableway, we have found that sorting our waste in-house works better and we have contracted a company to remove it.

"Supplier involvement also plays a role, with suppliers either removing their packaging off site after delivery, or making it more recyclable."

HARD NUMBERS

CURRENCIES
RAND/S: 15,37/1
RAND/E: 19,81/1
RAND/EURO: 16,88/1

INDICES
ALL SHARE: 53 444,83
TOP 40: 48 032,83
INDUSTRIALS: 68 766,75

COMMODITIES
GOLD: 1 640,25
PLATINUM: 902
BRENT OIL: 52,78

INTERNATIONAL INDICES
FTSE: 6 796,40
DOW JONES: 26 681,44
NASDAQ: 8 873,38

NIKKEI: 21 948,23
PARIS CAC: 5 495,60
DAX: 12 367,46

Table with columns for JSE MOVES, MAJOR MOVEMENT, TOP MOVEMENT UP, TOP MOVEMENT DOWN, VOLUME LEADER, VALUE LEADER, NEW HIGHS AND LOWS, NEW HIGHS, NEW LOWS.

Table with columns for Closing 2020/02/27, Gold Mining, Platinum & Precious Metals, Support Services, Industrial Suppliers, Consumer Goods, Automobiles & Parts, Beverages, Food Producers, Forestry & Paper, Industrial Metals, General Industrials, Consumer Electronics, Personal Goods, Health Care Equipment & Services, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology.

Table with columns for ASPEN, Consumer Services, Food & Drug Retailers, Apparel Retailers, General Retailers, Banks, Equity Investment Instruments, General Financial, Asset Managers, Investment Services, Media, Broadcasting & Entertainment, E Media, Publishing, Travel & Leisure, Health Care, Life Sciences, Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology, Telecommunications.

Table with columns for TELKOM, Mobile Telecommunications, Nonlife Insurance, Full Line Insurance, Property & Casualty Insurance, Real Estate, Industrial & Office REITs, Alternative Exchange (ALX), AFX.

Table with columns for Exchange Traded Funds, Technology Hardware & Equipment, Alternative Exchange (ALX), AFX, Development Capital, Venture Capital, Specialist Securities, Asset Backed Securities.

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