



Dear Blue Fund committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present our signage proposal to you.

Outline

The eMdloti UIP seeks to upgrade the community through its commitment to cleaning, greening and security. The UIP works alongside the eThekweni municipality, supplementing its services. It is an independent, non-profit company funded by voluntary donations from community members.

The eMdloti Conservancy/ Marine monitoring area

The Conservancy is found on the South side of eMdloti extending from the Ski Boat club to Sixth Ave. (approx 1 km). The main reason for its protected status by eThekweni municipality is due to the success of the mussel project being carried out here by O.R.I. The mussel beds in this area are significantly healthier and denser than in unprotected areas close by. These mussel beds serve as nursery grounds for numerous other invertebrate species (offering protection for their larval stages), as well for fish. Scientific research in protected areas along the coast of South Africa has shown that the number of fish caught in fishing areas adjacent to these protected areas increases significantly (SABC Fifty -Fifty Aug 2016).

Changing Perceptions

The conservancy area has had a lot of negativity associated with it due to the no-fishing / harvesting policy in the area. The council was taken to High court by the fishermen last year who claimed that no-fishing in the area was illegal and racist. After a lengthy court case the judge ruled in favour of the marine monitoring area remaining in place with no fishing and harvesting being permitted in this area.



How can we get the public to take ownership of the conservancy and be proud of it?

1. Provide Information

Educational signage informing locals and visitors about the scientific work being done in the conservancy area would help them to feel more connected to the “cause” and be more willing to support it and take ownership of it. In this day and age with so much destruction to the environment it is good for people to see that there are people who care and want to make a difference and that they can be a part of it.

We would like to put up 6 educational signs, one at each stairway down to the beach along the conservancy. On **each** sign the request for people to respect the by-laws of the conservancy will appear, together with the eThekweni, UIP, Blue Fund and associated scientific institute logo.

The **scientific information on each sign is to be different**, keeping people interested as they walk along the promenade.

- Introduction to the conservancy, the bylaws and the projects underway. The importance of conservation in protecting our natural resources for future generations to enjoy. Emphasis to be placed on the fact that no fishing and harvesting in the area actually leads to improved and more sustainable fishing in adjacent areas by acting as a nursery for invertebrate larvae and juvenile fish (municipality/ ORI/ DAF/Blue Fund)
- The mussel project (ORI)
- The zooanthid project (UKZN , DAF)
- Dune rehabilitation (municipality)
- Whale Time project & citizen science (Blue Fund)
- Coastal Forrest projects & citizen science (UKZN)

We would also like to upgrade existing signage in the area so the look and feel is the same throughout the conservancy.



2. Provide a safe, clean environment – well managed and maintained.

The conservancy area has easy access, parking and ablution facilities. The area is patrolled by UIP sponsored security guards day and night. The UIP, together with the municipality have made huge strides in upgrading this area recently with huge financial investment. The community sponsored the upgrade of the ablution block and pump house. The surrounding area has been grassed and planted with indigenous ground covers, trees and aloes. The municipality have put sandbags at the south end of the car park to stop erosion by the sea and a large stairway down to the beach. Storm water drains were rebuilt. Dunes were built up and planted.

The future?

A well managed green-marine corridor stretching from eMdloti estuary to the Umhlanga estuary in the heart of a rapidly growing urban jungle. Show-casing beautiful beaches, a conservancy site, protected coastal forests and 2 estuaries. The stretch between 6th Ave eMdloti and Umhlanga estuary is unique in that it will remain undeveloped with the forest meeting the beach.

With the airport just 10 min away from uMhlanga, eMdloti and the new Sibaya precinct, this beautiful area can be developed with the eco-tourist in mind.

Green Coast have expressed an interest in making the eMdloti Conservancy site their pilot project. Vince Shacks (WESSA) envisions two more Green Coasts sites – one at Peace Cottage and one at Umhlanga lagoon (where an education centre is soon to be built). These 3 Green Coasts sites, strategically placed along this corridor, will work together to increase public awareness of the area as an eco-tourist destination as well as serve as stations to base security guards (with radio contact to each other and UIP bases) .

With team work between all role players i.e. Umhlanga UIP, Tongaat-Hullett, eMdloti UIP and Blue Fund there can eventually be guided walks between Umdloti and Umhlanga, rocky shore education, cycle and walking paths in the forest, birding, etc.



Through this several job opportunities will be created. The economy of the area will be stimulated by increased hotel, B&B and restaurant occupancy from eco-tourists looking for something more than glitz, glam and a good tan.

Conclusion

Blue Funds support of the conservancy will benefit scientific research, public awareness, ecotourism and community building .By partnering with us we can really make a positive difference, not only to eMdloti conservancy, but the area as a whole!