

## 7. Environmental Cluster

The topics included within the Environmental Cluster are:

- Natural Environment;
- Coastal & Marine;
- Water, Soil & Air Pollution; and
- Solid Waste Management.

In his foreword to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2005), the Minister of Environmental Affairs & Tourism made the following statement that :

- Our generation is undoubtedly the last to have the ability to stop this destruction of the living environment, and to do so before we cross the threshold of no return, beyond which the very future of humanity could be jeopardised.
- Preservation of biodiversity, like the struggle against climate change, requires radical changes in attitudes and lifestyles. This change in attitude and action is a matter of concern to each and every one of us.
- Our biodiversity heritage is valuable first and foremost in ecological terms, but it also has an economic value that is often underestimated. If intelligently mobilised, it can serve the cause of development and poverty alleviation.
- We have the responsibility to ensure that our country becomes and remains a living ark. Our communities must stand as the custodians of conservation and the guarantors of biological diversity.

### 7.1 Natural Environment

BCM has numerous unique and sensitive environments, many of which are pristine and of conservation importance. BCM is therefore committed to promoting conservation, thus leading to a healthy and a sustainable environment consistent with the national policy and legislative imperatives. These include the coastal areas (rocky shores, beaches, dunes systems, coastal forests and estuaries), fresh water resources (rivers, streams and ground water), inland forests and thicket biomes.

Buffalo City has 68 km of coastline which is an important natural asset, which includes 10 estuaries, conservancies, National Heritage Sites, rocky shores and 14 sandy beaches. Certain areas are near pristine, while other areas along the coast are currently over-utilised. The coastline has tremendous potential for the development of tourism, subsistence fishing, recreation and conservation.

There are many pressures on the biophysical environment in Buffalo City. These include (but are not limited to):

- increased development pressure, especially along the coastline, estuaries & rivers;
- demand for low income housing and associated services;
- proliferation of informal settlements;
- poor sanitation, especially informal housing and low income housing areas;
- poor operational state of certain wastewater treatment infrastructure;

- unlicensed and polluting waste sites;
- lack of proper waste disposal facilities;
- illegal industrial effluent discharges and other illegal dumping;
- poor storm water management;
- overgrazing on commonage and communal land.

The pressures described above have a serious impact on the state and quality of Buffalo City's natural environment. This results in:

- polluted water resources, including coastal waters, estuaries, rivers & groundwater;
- polluted air;
- damage to the landscape and loss of biodiversity in sensitive coastal areas, natural forests and other important ecosystems (thicket);
- increased invasion by alien plant species;
- erosion, particularly in the peri-urban and rural areas;
- loss of urban open space.

Buffalo City has an obligation and responsibility to manage the natural environment, as detailed in the respective legislation and policy.

## 7.2 Institutional

In response to the legislation, Buffalo City has set up an Integrated Environmental & Sustainable Development Unit within the IDP, PMS, IEMP & SD Department in the City Managers office. This Unit has an overarching strategic responsibility for the protection and management of the natural environment in Buffalo City. The Unit is strongly supported by the following BCM departments:

- Integrated Environmental Development;
- Environmental Health;
- Amenities (including Marine Services);
- Development Planning
- Land Administration;
- Waste Services;
- Water and Scientific Services; and
- Disaster Management
- Other Provincial and National Departments (DAAF – Coast Care, DEDEA – Eastern Cape Parks Board)

## 7.3 Strategic Planning

Buffalo City has completed the following strategic plans:

- **Integrated Waste Management Plan;**
- **State of the Environment Report**
- **State of the Coastal Zone Report**
- **State of Sanitation Report**
- **Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP)**
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan (ICZMP)**
- **Sanitation Policy & Strategy**
- **Municipal Open Space System**

These strategic plans provide guidance and determine how Buffalo City fulfils its responsibility with respect to the management and protection of the natural environment.

Buffalo City has also undertaken the following IDP air quality action plans:

- Created a dedicated atmospheric pollution control/air quality management unit within the organisational structure;
- Secured capital budget allocations of R 2 000 000-00 to establish two state of the art air monitoring stations measuring criteria pollutants and commenced with a passive air sampling programme;
- Appointed two environmental pollution officers with mandated functions related to air quality management;
- Engaged partnerships with Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Amatole District Council, Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Council, National Association of Clean Air and other interested and affected parties;
- Established an electronic data base, emission inventory which consists of industrial points, traffic line and urban area sources.