



MOUTONSHOEK PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT COALITION

MEDIA RELEASE

Verlorenvlei Estuary faces mining threat once again

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The Verlorenvlei Estuary is once again facing a mining threat in its primary water catchment area – the Moutonshoek valley. This beautiful, secluded valley provides the bulk of the water supply for the Verlorenvlei catchment, supporting not only the birds and biodiversity which call this area home, but also a very important agricultural area. The threat to agriculture is also a major risk to the livelihoods of many people in this region.

BirdLife South Africa, WESSA and their partners worked for many years with the landowners in the Moutonshoek valley to establish the newly declared Moutonshoek Protected Environment. This area provides protection to a number of threatened vegetation types within the Moutonshoek valley, including certain plant species which occur nowhere else in the world. Added to this is the presence of endemic and threatened fish species, notably the Verlorenvlei Redfin, which occurs nowhere else in the world. The mine which is proposed for this area threatens to collapse this fragile freshwater ecosystem, taking the threatened species and livelihoods of local people along with it.

“This is a classic example of where not to locate a mine. At BirdLife South Africa we understand the need for utilising our mineral resources; however, surely an area with such significant biodiversity assets that result in the declaration of a protected area should remain a no-go zone for mining?” comments Dale Wright, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) Conservation Implementation Manager at BirdLife South Africa.

The Verlorenvlei Estuary is a recognised Ramsar site, a wetland of international significance, and an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, due to the high numbers and diversity of bird species and other wild animals it supports. South Africa is a signatory to various

intergovernmental treaties which require it to uphold these natural values. The granting of a mining right in the primary catchment of the estuary would suggest a flagrant disregard for the meaning of these international collaborative agreements.

“The South African government has increasingly pointed towards our natural resources and the associated tourism as a major opportunity for development in this country. Perhaps now is the time for them to put this into practice, rather than continue to rely on unsustainable developments such as mining to direct the course of our country”, adds Wright.

The Moutonshoek Protected Environment is an example of how partnerships and collaboration can ensure a sustainable future for South Africa. This protected area comprises multiple landowners, working together to form a landowners’ association and collectively determining the most appropriate manner to manage this important area. It is an example of conservation and agriculture working side-by-side to both protect South Africa’s natural assets and help ensure our food security and economic productivity in a sustainable/non-extractive way. This model of a new trajectory for South Africa’s development is now under direct threat from the Riviera Tungsten mine proposed for the area.

As with many such processes, the majority of people find out about the development only when it is too late to make any difference or raise their opposition. Our conservation partnership urges members of the public to make their voices heard through letters of support to us and the media to broaden awareness and participation. Wetland areas and catchments generally are in enough trouble already from drought and pollution without adding mining to their woes.

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For more information on the **Moutonshoek Protected Environment** please visit:
www.wwf.org.za/our_news/news/?24721/Moutonshoek-protected-environment