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- *By DAVID MACGREGOR*
- *Senior Reporter*

MEC backs dredging appeal

Kowie can clear their silted canals

A LEGAL appeal against a provincial government decision to deny permission to dredge silted Kowie River canals and dispose of the spoil in nearby sand dunes has succeeded.



Picture: SUPPLIED **LIFEBLOOD: Port Alfred's exclusive Royal Alfred Marina has been in the spotlight over the dredging of the canals**

Dredging of Royal Alfred Marina canals and the lower reaches of the Kowie River ground to a halt two years ago following complaints to the department of economic affairs and tourism (Dedeat) that environmental impact assessments (EIAs) needed to be done on the dune disposal of silt, according to changes in legislation.

Dedeat agreed and the Royal Alfred Marina Homeowners Association (Ramhoa) hired top KwaZulu-Natal legal firm Shepstone and Wylie and jointly appealed the decision with the Ndlambe municipality.

They argued that because dredging had lawfully taken place periodically prior to national EIA regulations and listing notices they should be allowed to continue.

A letter late last week from finance, economic development, environmental affairs and tourism MEC Sakhumzi Somyo said they had considered the issue of “national importance” and had even consulted the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) before making their decision.

He said the DEA agreed with the argument submitted by Ramhoa and the municipality.

Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) environmental expert Nicholas Scarr, who lodged the complaint with Dedeat, said yesterday they had received the MEC’s letter but had not received any annexures. He said they would need to consider these before commenting.

Former marina resident Jerome Boule, who first raised community concerns with the PSAM over dune dredge disposal, said he was disappointed environmental affairs was “not doing right for the environment”.

Ramhoa chair Isabel Meyer said yesterday she was “delighted” they would be able to resume dredging again as the river and canals had suffered bad silting from heavy rains over the years “This has caused many people to look at our boating and fishing amenities with somewhat jaundiced eyes.”

Meyer, who owns the local Pam Golding estate agency, said home sales had been “scuppered” when potential buyers saw silt islands in the canals and realised it was almost impossible to use a decent size boat there. She said Ramhoa and the municipality would strictly monitor dune disposal to ensure best practice was adhered to, as the river was the lifeblood of the town.

“We want the river deep, clear and clean, with safe access to the harbour and canals.

“Sparkling, running water offers a safe environment to many species of marine life and this is to be encouraged and safeguarded. — davidm@dispatch.co.za

Source: Saturday Dispatch, 5th December 2015 by David MacGregor

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