

Distressing lack of Knysna Estuary maintenance mars return to fishing grounds

Glory be: we were allowed to go out recreational fishing in our boats on June 13! I'm not sure why it took so long for Knysna to open up, as other Eastern and Western Cape spots around the Breede River and St Francis have been open since June 1. But that's another story...

I left Leisure Isle and travelled to The Heads, slowly pulling a lure. But the water was very cold at 14 degrees, so no action.

Then I nearly ran into that dangerous sandbank in the middle of the channel, as the first two - and main - estuary safety buoys are missing. The first has not been seen since before the lockdown.

I also noticed that the first main 'Non-baiting' marker (pole no. 3) at The Heads, is still unreadable, as is its explanation board. SANParks have been made aware of this with photographic evidence - how odd, as it must take years to get into this state.

I then travelled up to the Railway Bridge, hoping the water would be warmer. No luck: it was 12 degrees.

Coming back, you pass the large square buoy outside the SANParks offices, informing everyone going into Thesen's or going up to the Waterfront, via Knysna Yacht Club, that there is a no-wake zone and speed restriction. You guessed it: bleached totally white and unreadable!

Coming back to Leisure Isle, I saw that the main pole at the start of Ashmead Channel and also the start of the Leisure Isle Boat Club channel, was missing. This marker also advises against speeding and skiing.

I drove back to town and saw that the main K5 'Non-baiting' marker in George Rex Drive has still not had its advisory board replaced. We cannot complain about illegal baiting and boating under these conditions.

The above-mentioned markers are our main safety and conservation advisory indicators. I am well aware of SANParks budgetary constraints, but we are talking here of a few litres of paint and replacing some small notice boards.

I venture to say that if this was a privately-funded operation, there would be an audit of the situation and the result would undoubtedly be that "heads will roll".

SANParks employees were very active since lockdown telling everyone where not to hike and fish and walk their dogs. I just wish they had taken the opportunity to do some maintenance like the rest of us.

Arland Read, Knysna

(SANParks spokesperson Nandi Mgwadlamba promised to provide a response in this regard, which we hope to publish in the next edition. - Eds.)

