



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(For written reply)**

QUESTION NO. 4510 {NW5638E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 50 of 2022

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Mr H C C Krüger (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

What steps has she and her department taken to protect the wetlands in the Wakkerstroom area against illegal mining activities?

4510. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) has not instituted any enforcement interventions in relation to unlawful mining within wetlands in the Wakkerstroom region, Mpumalanga province. The authorities are mandated to intervene when unlawful mining takes place in areas such as the following:

- Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) by virtue of the One Environmental System which took effect in December 2014; and
- The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) regulates activities within watercourses. In this regard the definition of a “*watercourse*” which is defined in the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998) includes wetlands.

Furthermore, Environmental Management Resource Inspectors (EMRIs) and Environmental Management Inspectors have been appointed by the DMRE and the DWS respectively in order to

undertake compliance and enforcement in relation to environmental laws which they are mandated to regulate.

The exception to the above, however, is when unlawful mining is taking place in areas proclaimed as World Heritage Sites, National Parks or Ramsar Sites. With the limited information provided and after a cursory scan of the Wakkerstroom region, it does not appear that the unlawful activities mentioned in the question are taking place in an area for which the DFFE is the Competent Authority.

It should be noted that the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve is situated on land owned by the Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality which manages the area in partnership with the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency, the Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association and Birdlife South Africa. This area therefore, falls within the jurisdiction of the provincial and local governments. Steps to protect the wetlands in the Wakkerstroom area against illegal mining activities could therefore also be taken by the Local and Provincial governments.



MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DATE: 4/12/2022