



**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. 817 {NW917E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 8 of 2023

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Mr N Singh (IFP) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

(1) Considering that over the past eight months various public beaches in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal have been closed due to sewerage spills causing high levels of Escherichia coli (E. coli) in the water, and in view of the fact that, during the December and January festive season eight beaches were closed in the Western Cape (details furnished), how is her department working with municipalities in the affected areas to ensure that public beaches (a) meet and (b) maintain the required E. coli levels?

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

(1) The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) published a set of Recreational Coastal Water Quality Guidelines in 2012 that municipalities must adhere to and that are aimed at protecting the environment and human health. In terms of section 30 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1988 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA), if an incident results in coastal water quality that exceeds guideline values in the above-mentioned water quality guidelines, the municipality in question must report the incident immediately to the

DFFE and provide full details of the cause of the incident and the measures taken to mitigate the incident. In the case that abnormally high levels of E. coli have been detected, the DFFE advocates higher levels of beach water quality monitoring by municipalities at affected beaches and recommends the closure of such beaches. The DFFE also encourages municipalities to be transparent and to inform the public about the quality of their recreational coastal waters.

- (a) If beach water quality exceeds the guideline value of 500 counts of E. coli per 100 ml of water, municipalities are obliged to close public beaches as a precautionary measure until the cause of the incident has been remedied and the beach water quality has been restored to acceptable levels.

- (b) The DFFE acknowledges that municipalities are dealing with multiple challenges, including issues of inadequate sanitation and sewage treatment, as well as diffuse pollution, that may impact negatively on the quality of our coastal waters. Where requested, the DFFE also provides technical advice to assist municipalities in their efforts to return their coastal water quality to acceptable levels, as per the 2012 national guidelines.



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

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