

New hazmat dump for PE

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After more than a decade of deliberations and red tape, a second highly hazardous landfill for Nelson Mandela Bay has been approved by the Department of Environmental Affairs. The site will be located in the Grassridge area next to the wind farm on the road between Motherwell and Addo.



Image source: www.pexels.com

But its positioning has already raised concerns, most vocally from the Addo Elephant National Park, a healthcare non-government organisation and conservationists. An integrated environmental authorisation for the site was issued by the department on October 16 and appeals against the decision close on Thursday.

Coega Development Corporation spokesman Dr Ayanda Vilakazi said the authorisation was for the establishment of a regional general and hazardous waste management facility. The plan is for the new waste site to eventually take over from the Aloes highly hazardous waste site – operated by Enviroserv – once that facility runs out of space, and will take five years to set up.

Vilakazi said the management of the waste site would be put out to tender. He said the total expected volume of hazardous and industrial waste that would be handled by the new landfill was 74,400 tonnes. This included chemical waste, heavy metals, mercury, paint, solvents, batteries and heavy-industry waste products.

Vilakazi said it took the CDC many years to identify a suitable site and get the application approved. Enviroserv said it had no intention of closing down the Aloes facility yet. According to the Environmental Affairs authorisation, the new waste site is only intended to start operating once Enviroserv's site closes down.

The Aloes site receives between 5,000 and 6,000 tonnes of hazardous waste every month. Enviroserv's general manager of treatment and disposal solutions, Ryno Gouws, said they were aware of the tender to operate the new waste site. "We will not be bidding as the Aloes landfill still has a life span of about 20 years."

Addo Elephant National Park spokeswoman Fayroush Ludick said they would lodge an objection against the new site. "We are of the opinion that it is much too close to the park's boundary," she said. "We are in the process of preparing a formal response."

Bayworld herpetologist Werner Conradie said he was not aware of the approval of the Grassridge site for the new landfill. He said the area was the last remaining habitat of the highly protected and endangered Albany adder. "As it stands the Albany adder only occurs in the Grassridge area and is of real conservation concern."

"The [waste] site will impact on the Grassridge area."

According to the authorisation, activities at the new site must start within five years. The first applications for the waste site – filed in September 2010 and December 2012 – were turned down because of concerns raised by the Bay municipality over road use. But the site and specialist studies conducted in 2006 were also found to be outdated.

According to these reports, trucks were expected to make 100 to 250 loaded trips a day on the Motherwell to Addo road to deliver waste to the new site. Engineers revised this estimate later, indicating the amount of hazardous waste was declining and the number of trips might be much lower.

The municipality did not respond to a request for comment on the approval of the Grassridge site. Representatives from the Sundays River citrus-growing industry have constantly raised concerns over the safety of the road, which is used for the transport of export fruit as well as by tourists.

Experts drawing up the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the new landfill conceded that the impact would be "potentially moderate to high". The EIA described the visual impact of the site as low, saying it was barely visible from the road and would be in a valley.

Experts looking at air pollution recommended that more be done to address the potential impact, including the generation of volatile organic compounds which might be linked to cancer. Igazi Foundation spokesman Cole Cameron said the blood diseases NGO was concerned about the new development.

"While the Igazi Foundation recognises a waste site is necessary for all cities, we are gravely concerned at the decision to locate another hazardous waste management facility in fairly close proximity to a rapidly expanding, high density, urban area."

"This eastern edge of the metro, populated by previously disadvantaged South Africans, already has an alarming rate of cancers," he said. "We will be watching that this does not exacerbate matters."