

Clean-up of spilled vegetable oil in Durban continues

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) has been continuously monitoring the sites that were affected by the oil spill from the burned-out Africa Sun Oil Refineries factory a month ago in Durban.



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There is currently no more oil to be recovered from the Silt Canal, and an estimated 663,430 litres of oil has been confirmed as recovered during the containment and clean-up operation.

It has also been noted that all visible oil on the waters was removed from the Edwin Swail weir, the Amanzimnyama Canal and the Silt Canal, including the Bayhead area. Clean-up measures are currently taking place at the slipways, the contaminated rocks and canal walls. The Amanzimnyama Canal remains boomed-off as a precautionary measure as the Africa Sun Oil site is still cordoned-off by the Department of Labour (DOL).

Once the site is cleared by DOL, work will resume for the cleaning-up procedures of the facility itself. Environmental processes such as asbestos and other waste disposal will also resume. A request has also been made to Africa Sun Oil to appoint a specialist to investigate the state of the groundwater in the affected area.

Areas are safe

The areas remain safe as the oil spill was contained and managed within the Silt Canal and the Bayhead area. However, a few mangroves within the upper part of the Silt Canal and the Bayhead areas could not be saved as these areas are the gateway into the coastal waters. Scientific and research teams have advised that the affected mangroves in these areas should remain untouched as any interference thereof will do more harm than good, the natural process will allow their clean-up over a period of time.

No species mortalities have been reported thus far. Scientific advice obtained from specialists after numerous sampling and testing indicated that the spilled vegetable oil is considered non-toxic to marine species due to the fact that the oil was already processed and packaged ready to be distributed to retailers for human consumption. Notwithstanding the above, the marine specialist appointed by Africa Sun Oil has been requested to develop a long-term monitoring programme for the affected areas as a precautionary measure.

The Bluff Yacht Club has been opened up for boats to navigate after proper procedures were followed regarding the inspection of the boats and the walkways. Clean-up measures are expected to continue over the next few weeks.

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