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# Restoring beaches while creating jobs

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AMANZIMTOTI and Umgababa are among the Durban South communities set to benefit from the national Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's (DFFE) Working for the Coast programme, which was launched by deputy minister Narend Singh in Durban recently.

The initiative, which focuses on job creation and environmental protection, has already deployed more than 1 200 participants along eThekweni's coastline, from Amanzimtoti and Umgababa to The Bluff and Umhlanga. Their work includes clearing litter, sweeping, maintaining walkways and gutters and protecting estuaries and dunes.

Singh said the project is about more than just cleaning beaches.

"It is about restoring pride in our coastal spaces, creating dignity through work, and protecting our natural heritage for future generations," he said.

## Tackle ongoing threats

The programme has its roots in previous coastal clean-up and rehabilitation efforts, particularly after the devastating April 2022 floods, when teams were mobilised to clear debris and repair dunes. Singh said the new phase is designed to tackle ongoing threats such as pollution, climate change and failing infrastructure.

DFFE has invested over R32 million into four coastal projects in the province that stretch from Amahlongwa in the south and Umfolozi in the north, creating 1 846 jobs. In eThekweni alone, 1 274



The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's deputy minister, Narend Singh. **PHOTO: Supplied.**

people have been employed under the Expanded Public Works Programme, with salaries, unemployment insurance fund and protective clothing provided by the department, while the municipality oversees recruitment and daily management.

The deputy minister highlighted that Amanzimtoti and Umgababa are central to these efforts, given their popularity as tourist destinations and the environmental pressures they face. By addressing litter, dysfunctional pump stations and poor waste management, Singh said the goal is not only cleaner beaches, but

also the potential to restore Blue Flag status to several stretches of the local coastline.

"Our participants are the heroes of this story. By keeping our coastline safe, clean and welcoming, you are proving that job creation and environmental protection can go hand in hand," said Singh.

He added that the Working for the Coast programme will continue working in close partnership with municipalities and communities to ensure long-term resilience and sustainable livelihoods along KwaZulu-Natal's shoreline.