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## 2010 Blue Flag Workshop coming up!

The 2010 Blue Flag workshop will be held in Cape St Francis in the Eastern Cape from **Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 April 2010**.

This annual event brings together representatives from municipalities and other groups or individuals involved in coastal management.

High on the list of discussions at the workshop will be:-

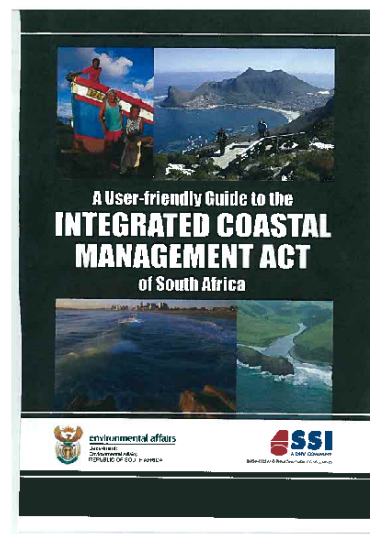
- Blue Flag activities for Soccer World Cup
- Revisions to the Blue Flag criteria most especially relating to water quality
- Environmental education activities
- Promotion and marketing of Blue Flag
- The new ICM Act and implications for municipalities.



Invitations to the workshop have already been sent out. Should you wish to find out more or attend the workshop, please contact Alison Kelly at [alisonk@wessa.co.za](mailto:alisonk@wessa.co.za)

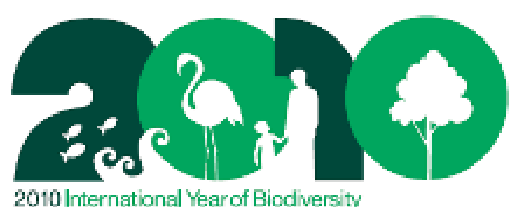
## NEW COASTAL LEGISLATION IN PLACE

The Integrated Coastal Management Act (ICMA) came into effect on 1 December 2009. The ICMA is a specific management act under the umbrella National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) and is the first legal instrument, in South Africa, dedicated to managing our coastline in an integrated fashion and ensuring the sustainable use of the coast's natural resources. The Act offers a new approach to managing the activities of people in the coastal zone. To download a copy of the document, visit [www.blueflag.org.za](http://www.blueflag.org.za) or [www.polity.org.za](http://www.polity.org.za)



## IMPORTANT DATES IN THE BLUE FLAG CALENDAR 2010

21 – 23 April	National Blue Flag workshop, Cape St Francis
15 June	Deadline for full status applications for 2010/11 Blue Flag season
29 July	South African National Jury meeting
18 September	International Coastal Clean-Up Day
29 September	International Blue Flag Jury meeting
30 September	Deadline for pilot beach applications
1 <sup>st</sup> week October	Confirmation of full status beaches from International BF
29 October	Blue Flag National Launch, Port Elizabeth (to be confirmed)
1 November	Start of 2010/11 Blue Flag season



## 2010 International Year of Biodiversity

This year was declared to bring international attention to the importance of biodiversity, and the losses that the planet is currently suffering. Biodiversity refers to the variety of living organisms on the planet. It is the interaction between these living organisms, and between these organisms and their non-living environment that make up the eco-systems of the world, without which our lives would not be possible. It is through these eco-systems that we have air to breathe, food to eat, medicines, fuel and many other benefits. These benefits are known as “eco-system services”.

It has been recognised that human activity is largely responsible for an unprecedented rate of biodiversity loss, and it was therefore agreed at the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties

to the Convention on Biological Diversity in April 2002, “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national levels as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth”.

*Celebrating this special day could form part of the Blue Flag environmental education activities!*



## FROM AFRICA TO ASIA – report from Alison Kelly

On behalf of the International Blue Flag programme, I recently travelled to four Asian countries to work with government ministries around the feasibility of establishing Blue Flag in the region. The workshops formed part of the South Asia Seas Programme (SACEP) initiative. The four countries were India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Maldives.

What was very obvious was that despite the West coming out of a recession, South Asia is enjoying an economic boom with significant growth and development clearly manifest in most of these countries. Part of the growth agenda is a desire to see increased income from tourism and this is why the potential of Blue Flag is being explored.

All of these countries are also experiencing huge environmental pressures which require sustainable coastal development strategies to be put in place. One would image in much the same way as the South African government formulated the Government White Paper in the late 1990s and then embarked on the Coastcare programme of which Blue Flag was a part.

The South Asia region is fascinating. Bangladesh, my first stop, is one huge and fertile delta of two major rivers (I did not know that the Ganges flows into the sea in Bangladesh!) and as a low-lying country, is subject to annual monsoon floods and cyclones. While all I got to see in Bangladesh was the capital Dhaka, and the inside of many government buildings, I was told that Bangladesh has the world’s longest unbroken sea beach (over 100km long) at a place called Cox’s Bazaar.



Workshop in the Maldives

While you may be envious on hearing that I went to the Maldives, all I saw in the Maldives was the capital island Male (drove twice around it – took about 20 minutes each time) and the inside of the workshop venue. The workshop was absolutely fabulous. There were four different government ministers present for the workshop, there was broad representation from a wide variety of stakeholders (was good to meet up with environmental managers of hotel resort islands) and a vibrant and exciting discussion took place. I have, of course, offered to go back and help them with their plans to introduce Blue Flag to the Maldives. Of the four countries and with the most well-developed tourism industry, the Maldives is possibly the most likely to start Blue Flag in the short-term. They certainly do have great challenges facing them. I remember watching President Nasheed on TV appealing for reason and restraint at the recent Copenhagen climate change talks. President Nasheed also held a cabinet meeting underwater to highlight the threat of global warming to this low-lying Indian Ocean nation. Ministers spent half an hour on the sea bed communicating with white boards and hand signals and in the process, signed a document calling for global cuts in carbon dioxide emissions. *This must surely match Richard Leakey burning the stockpile of ivory in Kenya as a marketing event!*



Most of the Maldives is no more than a metre above sea level!

If you want to see the underwater meeting, go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk> and open the South Asia pages.

I was only able to visit beaches in India, in Goa Province which is on the south-west coast. As everyone says, Goa is NOT India and this certainly appeared true. Goa is an old Portuguese settlement and a very beautiful area. It was here that I visited 2 beaches. I do have to smile as one of our greatest challenges here in South Africa is keeping dogs (and their more-often-than-not angry owners) off the beaches. In India the beaches were lovely but there were stray dogs, goats, cows wandering around mostly foraging in the piles of litter that is dumped in the back beach area apparently from the beach shacks that line most of Goa's beaches. These beach shacks are temporary huts erected right on the beach and which offer restaurants, accommodation, etc. during the peak season. When the monsoon season comes, most of these shacks are taken down and then reconstructed once the rainy season is over. The scenes behind many of them left much to be desired – it was a Goat's Paradise.

From an environmental perspective it was interesting to note that coastal and marine management issues that South Africa currently faces are also common in this region, e.g. over-fishing, climate change impacts, sand mining, overpopulation and its impact on limited coastal resources, compromised estuaries, etc.

*So, what future Blue Flag in the South Asia region?* With possibly the exception of the Maldives, there are real challenges for all the other countries not least of which is water quality. Data on bathing water

quality is largely absent for most of the main tourist beaches and each country will need to start monitoring its water quality as an essential part of the feasibility phase. From the workshop presentations, there are obviously hundreds and hundreds of beautiful beaches in countries such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh yet one has to ask whether it is important to develop these largely unspoilt beaches in order to meet tourism – and Blue Flag needs. On already existing beaches, the need for waste management programmes and the development of infrastructure were very obvious.



## World Beach Index

Here is some homework for the tourism departments in each of the municipalities implementing Blue Flag. There are a number of websites that on the so-called World's Best beaches and yet, when one visits them, beaches in Africa – and certainly South Africa – are largely absent.



[www.thebestbeaches.org](http://www.thebestbeaches.org)

On this site, as with many of the others, you can post information on your best beach. Let's see whether we can get all our South African Blue Flag beaches listed on at least one of these "Best Beaches in the World" websites. If you need a good picture of your Blue Flag beach, drop Alison a line and she will send you the best we have in the Blue Flag photo archives.

And while we are talking about promoting our Blue Flag beaches, some feedback from the International Blue Flag control checks that Malcolm Powell did on his recent visits to most of South Africa's Blue Flag beaches.

In his capacity as the FEE Board member responsible for Blue Flag, Malcolm visits beaches around the world and after visiting our Blue Flag beaches, he commented that on most of them, signage promoting that the beach is a Blue Flag beach or even road signs directing beach visitors to the nearest Blue Flag beach is largely absent.



In the early days of Blue Flag in South Africa, these signs were far more prominent – where have they all gone to? And can we get them back?

Do you have any news for future issues of this Blue Flag newsletter? Please send it to [alisonk@wessa.co.za](mailto:alisonk@wessa.co.za) and we will happily put it in future issues.

