

**For Immediate Release****Saturday, May 25, 2019****RE: FREE PARK ENTRY AS LAKE NAKURU STARTS REBIRTH JOURNEY**

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has started implementing a raft of measures to turn around the fortunes of Lake Nakuru National Park under a Rapid Results Initiative in the next 100 days. To mark the launch that brought together various stakeholders, KWS Director General, Brig. (rtd) John Waweru, offered Kenyan citizens free entry to the park tomorrow (Sunday May 26, 2019), and called for support to the initiative meant to turn around the fortunes of the facility.

“I am making a passionate appeal to residents of Nakuru in particular and indeed all Kenyans to join hands with us in the next 100 days to change the current status of Lake Nakuru National Park.”

“As citizens, we all have a stake in this ecological gem and therefore should feel obliged to soil our hands to revert it to its former pristine status, if not better. I know there are many dynamics in the task ahead but I strongly believe that together we shall succeed,” Brig (Rtd) Waweru said.

Nakuru County Governor H.E. Hon. Lee Kinyanjui pledged his government’s support to facilitate transport for the free entry and for the Rapid Results Initiative. The Governor said the county government was implementing a number of measures to prepare the growth of the town to city status, including the Lanet Airstrip construction and solid waste management systems. The function held at Sarova Lion Hill was attended by various stakeholders, including the Nakuru County Commissioner Mr. Erastus Mbui, Nakuru County Trade, Tourism and Investment CEC, Mr. Raymond Komen, the Nakuru Tourism Association chairman, Mr. David Mwangi and Lake Nakuru National Park Action Committee chairman, Mr. Job Lebor.

Brig. (Rtd) Waweru called on Kenyans “to join hands with Kenya Wildlife Service “in revitalizing our beautiful and attractive Lake Nakuru National Park” noting that “this initiative is very close to my heart as the Director General of KWS and even in my private capacity as a citizen of our great nation, Kenya.” He said: “Kenyans have poignant memories of the once world attractive Lake Nakuru that was always silhouetted by dexterous long-necked flamingos. Even our town here was synonymous with flamingos.”

Before the launch of the initiative, the Director General dispatched a team of research scientists to carry out a situational analysis of the park with a view to identifying areas that “needed special attention to bring it back to its former glory”. The team worked closely with stakeholders, mainly drawn from Nakuru County and came up with the following thematic areas to be addressed in the Rapid Results Initiative:

- Spatial plan for infrastructure
- Replacement and upgrade of essential Park infrastructure
- Tourist product diversification and introduction of new visitor products
- Seasonal product pricing
- Targeted marketing and communication strategy
- Demolition of temporary structures
- Maintenance of the main gate as a monument

- Incorporation of NAWASCO, County government, WRA and NEMA into the park action committee as a subcommittee to address waste management in the park
- Flamingo recovery plan
- Comprehensive water quality and quantity monitoring in the lake
- Installation of an automatic weather station
- Management of species and habitats
- Waste water management; and
- Enhancement of community outreach programs

### **Anthrax Outbreak in the Park Officially over**

At the same time, the Director General declared the recent anthrax outbreak in the park officially over noting that the last buffalo death was recorded on May 10 “and we do not expect any more deaths to occur. The worst is behind us.” He noted that the park management would continue with the monitoring and will report any suspicious deaths for urgent action by the veterinary team. “Our partnership with the local administration and Department of Public Health as well as Directorate of Veterinary Services to educate the local communities about anthrax and our surveillance and monitoring efforts have paid off,” he said.

The total mortalities to date is 145 buffaloes representing 3.54% of the estimated population of 4,100 buffaloes in Lake Nakuru National Park and two buffaloes in Soysambu. No other species has been affected. The Director General noted that management would undertake other long-term measures to mitigate such disease outbreaks, noting that prolonged drought is a risk factor in anthrax outbreaks. “This results in depletion of pasture, forcing animals to graze closer to the soil that is potentially infested with anthrax spores. The Park has previous history of anthrax outbreak in July 2015.” Amongst the long-term measures management is considering is translocation of buffaloes from the park to avoid depletion of pastures during prolonged dry spells, which are becoming more frequent.

### **Background**

Lake Nakuru National Park covers an area of 188km<sup>2</sup> and is an important ecosystem supporting high diversity of waterfowl, large mammal and floral species. The park is designated as a Ramsar site, an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a World Heritage Site. It was set up as the first rhino sanctuary in Kenya and has been a successful breeding habitat. The Park hosts a number of threatened mammal species, including, lion, leopard and the Rothschild giraffe. Five globally threatened bird species are also found in the park.

Despite its significance as one of the KWS premium parks and features among the leading tourist destinations in Kenya, the park is facing various threats and challenges. The threats include; deforestation in the catchment areas, pollution, recent rise in lake water levels leading to destruction of park infrastructure and habitat loss, human wildlife conflicts, accidental fires, invasive species, disease outbreaks and overpopulation and decline of some species. All these have affected the integrity of the park. To sustainably conserve the park and maintain its ecological integrity, the threats need to be addressed and thus this launch of the Rapid Results Initiative.

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