



Press Statement:

September 30, 2021

RE: Two arrested in operation to curb illegal sand mining in Lwera

NEMA has commenced an operation targeting illegal sand mining in Lwera and other parts of the Lake Victoria Basin. The exercise is specifically being undertaken in the districts of Mpigi, Gomba, Butambala and Kasanje in Wakiso district.

The Lake Victoria Basin is endowed with alluvial deposits that contain sand, a material that is on high demand by the construction industry. The deposits of sand are deeper on the western side of Lake Victoria especially around the areas of Lwera and Bukatata.

Unregulated sand mining has prevailed in these areas in spite of the negative impacts of the activity on the environment such as fragmentation of the landscape resulting in open pits that are habitats for invasive aquatic plants like the water hyacinth and the Kariba weed. The open pits are also a habitat for disease carrying vectors, such as mosquitoes; destroy access roads and the land that originally used for grazing and cultivation has been rendered unproductive.

So far, two suspects have been arrested and taken into custody at Kololo Police Station and will be prosecuted in court. A total of 3 trucks have been impounded from the Kasanje area in Wakiso district, while from Lwera around the areas of Nabyewanga, one excavator has been impounded and taken to Nabyewanga Police station. Five other excavators and dredgers were abandoned by the suspects who fled from the scene and are still at large.

Despite the high demand for sand to support the construction sector and major infrastructural development projects such as roads, dams and bridges; sand mining is an activity that must be regulated in order to ensure sustainable extraction of the resource. Only licensed entities that have been subjected to a full ESIA process are allowed to extract the resource on a commercial scale. Conditions in certificates of approval for sand mining include specifics of the maximum permissible depth of the resultant pit, a clearly demarcated area from where the sand will be extracted; and a compulsory requirement to restore the area before moving to another.

Ends

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