

Timber logging concession in Mutulanganga IBA

Title Mutulanganga IBA is the woodland area on the Siavonga Road just beyond the badly eroded Lisutu Village on the way to the lake. It is an important Forest Reserve and has a sizeable area of mopane woodland. This is one of the few areas of intact mopane woodland left in the Zambezi Valley. Mopane grows on soils which few other trees will tolerate ? namely clay, or in shallow sand over clay, but cannot compete on deep well-drained soils. When Mopane woodland is felled mopane scrub will succeed it. The root system remains intact, but there is the risk of grasses and fire taking over. Normally mopane woodland does not burn as the grass cover is discontinuous, but after felling this can change. Two companies has been awarded a timber logging concession in Mutulanganga IBA. The concession is for 5 000 hectares covering the Mutulanganga Local Forest #183 (3000 ha) and the Sikoongo open area (2000ha). The target species is Mopane with the goal of harvesting trees with 30cm diameter at breast height. The company has submitted an Environmental Project Brief to the Environmental Council of Zambia and the decision at the last ECZ sitting was deferred to May. Their plan is to harvest 40 trees per day and the project at full operation is expected to create '10 or more' jobs. The processing and value addition will be done in Lusaka. Image: VSmithUK / Flickr Image: VSmithUK / Flickr The estimated stocking rate of the area (*according to the EPB, and needs to be verified*) is 168 stems per hectare for the forest reserve and 123 stems for the open area. The goal of the project would be to harvest between 525, 000 and 560, 0000 stems for the life of the project (5 years). The company claims that this will have minimum impact on the forest cover in the project area. This will leave less than a third of the trees if the stocking figures are correct. Mutulanganga IBA is one of the areas in which the Zambian Ornithological Society (ZOS / BirdLife Partner) is working and was selected as an IBA on the basis of holding Globally Threatened Species and Biome-restricted Species. It is the breeding ground of the African Pitta as well as the seasonal host of the Barred Longtailed Cuckoo, Thrush Nightingale and River and Marsh Warbler. Other birds of interest are the Western Banded Snake Eagle, Crested Guinea fowl, Purplecrested Turaco, African Broadbill and Livingstone's Flycatcher. The Tonga people who live in this area are the people who used to live on the shores of the Zambezi River and were translocated to make way for Kariba Dam. They had to adapt from their fishing culture to a farming community in an area which is harsh and arid and not good farmland. ZOS has just started implementing a UNDP/GEF funded project to promote community based eco-tourism and biodiversity conservation. The project aims at improving the livelihoods of the people living in the area by initiating small scale funding for fishing and farming projects and developing the craft industry in the area through an organized marketing system. ZOS is also training bird guides to show tourists the important birds in the area. The project is financing the construction of an eco-tourism camp site which will be able to fund the community for future developments. ZOS has lodged an objection on the logging with ECZ as well as requested a meeting with the Minister

of Environment and Tourism to discuss the issue. ZOS has also sought help from other environmental NGOs to support the objection to the project. The timber project is likely to lead to negative ecological impacts and potentially negative socio-economic impacts too. Image: VSmithUK / Flickr