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Re Sewage

The primary consequences of ongoing sewage pollution for the region's tourism are severe, impacting public health, business revenue, and the overall reputation of the coastal resorts.

1. Loss of Recreational Value and Safety Risks

The widespread pollution directly compromises the usability of popular tourist areas, making them unsafe for recreation:

- **Health Risk:** Coastal lagoons, which are described as warm, shallow, and ideal for children's swimming and paddling, are severely contaminated by failing sewage plants and crumbling infrastructure, posing a **significant health risk**.
- **Unsafe Water Quality:** Water quality testing frequently shows pollution levels far in excess of acceptable standards, especially during the peak December/January holiday season.
 - South African guidelines define *E. coli* levels exceeding 500 cfu/100ml as "unacceptable" and a health risk. However, Margate Beach recorded levels greater than 2,900 cfu/100ml (the maximum measurable extent of the lab test) on multiple dates during the holiday period.
- **Beach and Lagoon Closures:** The sewage crisis has led to **repeated closures of tourist beaches**. Margate beach has been closed occasionally due to sewage pollution.
- **Deterioration of Coastal Use:** The contamination of many beaches is resulting in the **loss of the coast for recreation**. Lifeguards at Ramsgate main beach warn people against entering the lagoon due to the health risks posed by contaminated water.
- **Visible Pollution and Odor:** The raw sewage discharge into rivers, such as the Bango River near Oslo Beach, turns the water into "filthy, fly-infested water with a **toxic stench**". Businesses and residents complain they cannot eat or sit outside due to the terrible smell.

2. Economic and Business Impact

Tourism is critically important to the region, and pollution directly undermines the economic viability of the coastal towns:

- **Main Income Source:** Tourism is identified as the **main source of income** for the string of small coastal towns on the South Coast.
- **Business Loss:** The pollution is "not good for business" because tourists do not want to visit the area and deal with the smell. The severe contamination leads to **direct consequences for economies and livelihoods**.

- **Fear of Holidaymaker Illness:** Businesses are particularly concerned that holidaymakers, who support the coast financially, will get sick.
- **Undermining Coastal Appeal:** The continuous pollution of lagoons and beaches is undermining the "idyll of the south coast".
- **Concealment of Results:** A group of citizen scientists who regularly test water quality in lagoons are deliberately "tight-lipped" about the results, stating they **do not want to damage tourism**.
- **Long-Term Deterioration:** The sea water quality along the south coast has "definitely seen deterioration" over the last 30 years, according to a laboratory managing member with extensive industry experience. The long-standing infrastructure failure has been described as slaughtering a "tourism golden goose".

3. Reputational Damage

The sewage crisis threatens the region's status as a desirable destination:

- **Risk to Status:** The ongoing sewage issue means activists fear the region's beaches may **lose their Blue Flag status**.
- **Maintaining Tourist Status:** Clean water is essential for safeguarding health, protecting marine ecosystems, and ensuring the South Coast remains a top tourist destination.
- **Food Safety Concerns:** Activists warn that it may no longer be safe to eat fish or anything caught off the seashore.

Regards

Dr P J Lofstedt

