TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION…….....1
THE ST LUCIA – MFOLOZI CONNECTION: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE…….....2
Introduction…….....2
The Historical Record…….....2
Period prior to 1911 (before sugar cane was first planted in the Mfolozi floodplain) …….....3
Period from 1911 to closure of the combined Mfolozi and St Lucia mouths in 1950…….....7
Period between the closure of the combined mouth in 1951 and Cyclone Domoina in 1984….....9
Period after Cyclone Domoina in 1984 until the start of the current drought in 2002…….....14
Period 2002 until present – impact of a major drought on an altered ecosystem…….....17
Synthesis And Conceptual Understanding…….....19
Acknowledgement…….....20
References…….. 20
THE MFOLOZI FLOODPLAIN: WATER AND SEDIMENT PROCESSES……22
Introduction…….....22
Catchment Hydrology and Sedimentology…….....22
Evolution and Functioning of the Mfolozi Floodplain…….....24
The Mfolozi River upstream of the floodplain…….....28
The delta region…….....29
The Mfolozi floodplain……..... 29
The estuarine area……..... 30
The blocked-valley pans……..... 31
The lower swamp constriction……..... 31
St Lucia Bay…….....32
The Narrows and adjacent floodplains…….....32
Land Transformations in the Mfolozi Floodplain…….....33
Responses to Transformations in the Mfolozi Floodplain: A Conceptual Understanding……..36
Final Comments…….....41
References…….....42
MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS FOR THE MFOLOZI FLATS AND ESTUARY AS A COMPONENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ISIMANGALISO WETLAND PARK…….....45
Abstract…….....45
Introduction……...45
Environmental Influences Affecting Estuarine Sedimentation……....46
Climate and rainfall 47
Tropical cyclones 47
River floods 47
Meteorological forcing 48
Ocean swells 48
Coastal subsidence. 49
Long-term fluvial processes 49
Human influences in coastal plains…….....51
Mfolozi Floodplain and Estuarine Processes prior to 1930……....51
St Lucia and Mfolozi Estuary conditions prior to 1930…….....54
Modern (post-1930) Mfolozi Flat Processes and the St Lucia 'Problem'…….....55
An assessment of subsidence in the Mfolozi Flats 55
Consequences of human manipulation on river dynamics 58
Responses to Cyclone Domoina……....58
Mfolozi flats 58
Summary of Results as Related to a Management Strategy…….....61
References…….....62
ANALYSES OF THE HYDROLOGICAL LINKAGE BETWEEN MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI ESTUARY AND LAKE ST LUCIA 64
Introduction……....64

Impact of Pulses of Freshwater into Lake St Lucia……...66
Hydrological Features of the St Lucia System during the Recent Prolonged Drought……66
Mass Balance Model of the System……...69
Impact assessment of the overtopping…….....…….…….....70
Model summary…….....…….....…….....71
Diverting Mfolozi Flow into St Lucia during Mouth Closure…….…….…….……71
Methods……..72
Inflow measurements 73
Outflow measurements 74
Stage measurements of the swamp 75
Swamp storage 76
Terrain model accuracy…….…….…….…….…….…….....80
Statellite data points from Google Earth…….…….…….…….…….....81
Stage storage relationships 83
Error analysis of the vegetation component 85
Spatial distribution of storage capacity 86
Discussion……....89
How important is the Mfolozi/Msunduzi water to St Lucia? 89
Is enough water available in the Mfolozi/Msunduzi rivers for it to be significant? 89
Characteristics of the floodplain storage area and the Back Channel bottleneck…….....90
From science to management…….90
Recommection of the Mfolozi River to St Lucia…….…….……..91
Reconnection proposal 92
Expansion of the linkage to accommodate larger flows from the Mfolozi River ..... .96
Management of the lower Mfolozi River ..... .96
Conclusions……96
References……...97
ON THE ROLE OF THE MFOLOZI IN THE FUNCTIONING OF ST LUCIA: WATER BALANCE AND HYDRODYNAMICS 99
Introduction……99
Summary of Key Findings…….....100
Water balance 100
Functioning of the Back Channel……..104
Mouth configuration 104
Water level ..... .105
Inlet Hydrodynamics……105
Sediment Transport (Silt Dynamics) …….. 108
References……109
LAKE ST LUCIA: OPTIONS TO SECURE FRESH WATER INFLOWS AS SUGGESTED BY REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE MFOLOZI FLOODPLAIN SUGAR INDUSTRY 110
Introduction……...110
Problem statement and mitigation process……...110
Probable Causes of Insufficient Freshwater entering St Lucia 111
Reduction of freshwater inflow 111
Sedimentation 111
Change of climatic conditions 111
Rise in sea level 111
Options for Securing Freshwater Inflow into Lake St Lucia 111
Transfer water from Pongolapoort Dam 111
Rehabilitate and complete Mfolozi-St Lucia Link Canal 112
Rehabilitate a portion of the Mfolozi floodplain…….....113
Review operating rules and Water Reserve allocation for Hluhluwe Dam…….....113
Construct a dam on the Mfolozi River…….....113
Construct a dam on the Mkuze River…….....114
Rehabilitation of catchments…….....114

Construct a desalination plant……..... 114
Rehabilitate the entire Mfolozi floodplain……..... 115
Do nothing……..... 115
Overall System Analysis and Ongoing Management Tools…… 115
Conclusions…… 117
KEY ROLE OF THE MFOLOZI RIVER IN THE GREATER ST LUCIA WATER REQUIREMENTS AND A PRELIMINARY HEALTH ASSESSMENT FOR THE SYSTEM .. 118
Introduction……... 118
Summary of Historical Data on the Mfolozi/Msunduzi Estuaries……... .118
Hydrological data……....119
Salinity…….....120
Mouth closure 121
Sediment loads 122
Water level variation……....123
St Lucia's Ecological Water Requirement (Reserve) Study in 2004…….....125
St Lucia - physical dynamics 125
Developments on the Mfolozi flood plain 126
Separation of the Mfolozi and St Lucia systems 127
Physical conditions under different management scenarios 127
National Biodiversity Assessment 2010 135
Conclusions and Recommendations……..... 137
References……...137
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MICROALGAE AND MACROPHYTES OF THE MSUNDUZI ESTUARY 138
Introduction……....138
Summary of Findings…….....139
Salinity, Secchi depth and nutrients 139
Phytoplankton biomass 141
Phytoplankton community composition 142
Benthic microalgal species 143
Vegetation distribution 144
Conclusions and Recommendations……..152
References……...153
BENTHIC FAUNAL DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE IN THE MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI ESTUARY 155
Abstract……....115
Introduction…….. 155
Methods……...158
Sampling 158
Data analysis 158
Results…….....159
Estuary mouth and environmental conditions 159
Substrata 160

Benthic distribution and abundance 161
Changes in benthic community structure 162
Relationship between species assemblage and environmental factors 168
Discussion……...171
Acknowledgements…….. 173
References……...174
FRESHWATER PRAWNS AND THE ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE LINKS BETWEEN THE MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI AND ST LUCIA WETLANDS 176
Introduction……....176
Important Findings From Bickerton (1989) ……..178
Conditions for successful reproduction of *Macrobrachium* species 178

Hypothesis for *Macrobrachium* population fluctuations 178
Population ecology of *Macrobrachium rude* in the mfolozi/msunduzi floodplain 181
Macrobrachium species as a food resource 184
Macrobrachium species movements and habitat requirements 185
Macrobrachium habitat destruction and rehabilitation 186
References…… 188
CHARACTERISATION OF THE MESOZOOPLANKTON COMMUNITY OF THE MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI ESTUARINE SYSTEM DURING A LOW FLOW PERIOD 192
Abstract…… 192
Introduction…….. 192
Methods…… 193
Results…….. 195
Discussion…… 199
Acknowledgements…….. 201
References…… 201
FISH ASSEMBLAGES OF THE MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI ESTUARINE SYSTEM WHEN NOT LINKED TO THE ST LUCIA MOUTH 203
Abstract……... 203
Introduction……. 203
Study Area…… 205
Materials And Methods…… 206
Sampling 206
Statistical Analysis 206
Estuarine Association 206
Results…….. 207
Estuary mouth and environmental conditions 205
Species composition 208
Estuarine association 210
Temporal and spatial changes in the fish assemblage 215
Correlation between species assemblage and water quality variables 217
Discussion……. 217
Acknowledgements…….. 223
References…… 223
A RESOURCE ECONOMICS ANALYSIS OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REHABILITATION OF THE MFOLOZI FLOODPLAIN 226
Introduction……... 226
Economic valuation of ecosystem services 227
Service description 227
Outline of restoration scenarios 230
Current land use: no restoration 230

Partial reinstatement 230
Full restoration 231
Specialist estimates of ecosystem service value change 232
Partial restoration 233
References…… 236
THE VALUE OF ESTUARIES IN NORTHERN KWAZULU-NATAL WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE MFOLOZI AND ST LUCIA SYSTEMS 238
Introduction 238
Conservation importance 240
Ecosystem services 243
Provisioning services..... 243
Regulating services 246
Exports to marine ecosystems 247
Cultural services 250

Tourism and Recreation 250
Estuary angling 251
Nature based toursim 251
Scientific and Education Value 253
Total value 253
References 253
THE ST LUCIA MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI INDABA: A REVIEW AND CONSIDERATION OF FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS 256
Introduction…….....256
Commentary…….....257
Future Research Possibilities…….....259
Conclusions……... .260
References……....261
LIST OF ACRONYMS 262
MFOLOZI/MSUNDUZI PROJECT TEAM 264
APPENDIX 1 265