

Fresh farm invasions in Beitbridge

Newsday by Rex Mphisa

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Eland Pan on Denlynian Conservancy (photo supplied and added)

FRESH farm invasions have been reported at Denlynian Conservancy in Beitbridge where settlers armed with 2014 letters are trooping in.

Most of the settlers are reportedly setting up shacks and are currently clearing land for farming. The development comes days after government introduced new offer letters with security features to avoid corruption.

Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Climate and Rural Resettlement ministry secretary John Bhasera said he was not aware of the development.

"I have not heard about that development. I will check with our office in Beitbridge," Bhasera said.

Denlynian Ranch director Ian Ferguson (Jr) said scores of settlers armed with 2014 letters were trooping into the wildlife conservancy.

He said the settlers were cutting down trees and harvesting firewood.

"It is a brand new invasion and they are bringing 2014 offer letters from the local lands office. It seems the office is issuing more offer letters for the conservancy," Ferguson said.

"It is terrible. They are moving further away from the river and along a mountain chopping trees and burning the bush," he said. The settlers were not co-operative, he said, adding that they had refused to show him the offer letters for the farm reserved for wildlife. Denlynian Conservancy belongs to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and it is understood to have been struck off the resettlement farms register by Cabinet.

In that decision, government resolved not to resettle people on conservancies and citrus plantations.

Ferguson said he had eviction orders for some farmers settled on the property, but police were refusing to enforce the High Court orders.

It is believed that the new settlers, whose letters have not been verified, were rushing into the area after government announced plans to establish irrigation schemes downstream of the Zhovhe Dam.

On his recent visit to Beitbridge, Lands and Agriculture minister Anxious Masuka said an irrigation scheme would be implemented soon.

Old offer letters are being replaced by new ones with security features.

The move is meant to eliminate corruption in the allocation of land.

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