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► **Do you think that an increased number of swimmers in the water for longer periods is a possible reason for attacks here?**

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This trend is offered as a reason world-wide and with the advent of better and more comfortable wetsuits etc., let alone the fact that 40% of the world's population now live within 100km of the coast. The reality is that the number of bites has decreased when measured against water user effort and numbers.

Think of my water use versus a 'knee high jump over the foamies' bather – not even comparable. I should be dead 100 times over and yet not even close. It goes back to the do's and don'ts of question one. Look at the Cape bather who got bitten by the white shark after repeatedly being warned by the Shark Spotters not to enter the water. Now, he is a bite statistic but this should've been averted by listening to sound local advice.

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► **Who do you believe should be taking responsibility for the situation?**

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In Port St. Johns as in all cases around the world the individual must take responsibility. More needs to be done at Port St. Johns such as paying and upskilling the life guards and having better medical facilities on the beach and at the clinics to deal with potential trauma. In Australia and America this is the route they have chosen to go where man and shark are likely to conflict.

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► **Do you believe the beach should be closed to swimmers and if so do you think it will send a lasting negative image for tourism of the area?**

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If the conditions mentioned in question one are met then yes it should be closed. This is neither permanent nor long term but must relate to the environmental conditions as they occur and it needs to be assessed on this basis frequently (tides/currents and wind will all affect this decision almost hourly). The Shark Spotters network have set



the standard and provided a low tech yet workable solution for another shark hotspot so why not here. This is a community that needs the positive spin off from tourism and needs jobs.

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► **Do you think the situation warrants putting up shark nets?**

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Never. Nets and drumlines are heinous. In 1987 Dr Smale and Compagno wrote a paper motivating for the removal of shark nets on the KZN coast as the threat had passed, whaling had ended in the late 1970's.

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► **Do you think that shark nets further up the coast have 'pushed' the sharks further south?**

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No. Port St Johns is a productive part of the coast and would attract a commensurate load of predators. It reminds me of the time when the diving was closed on Quarter Mile Reef Sodwana Bay for three months prior to the arrival of the raggies. I'm not sure the raggies are waiting on Aliwal until the divers have cleared off Quarter Mile and then rush up there to take advantage of the now empty reef space.

Sharks do not fear the nets and the nets do not influence their habitat preference –nearly 50% of the sharks get caught going out and I have watched many whale sharks skilfully navigate

away from and around the nets, I have sadly seen them drown in the nets too. Nets have caused huge ecological imbalances as pointed out by Rudy van der Elst in a scientific paper.

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## Research at Port St Johns

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The Port St Johns beach is in the Eastern Cape and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board. However, as the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board is a parastatal the Department of Environmental Affairs has appointed it to investigate the large species of sharks in the area and what might have contributed to the string of fatal annual attacks.

The study is focusing on the Zambezi and tiger sharks. The immediate outcry from the public following the fatal attacks raised the issue of installing nets. However all indications are that this will not be done due to the adverse environmental impact. Currently the KwaZulu-Natal Sharks Board is in fact trying to reduce shark nets in KwaZulu-Natal. **W**