

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### **WC under water restrictions as dam levels drop**

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has announced its intention to impose water restrictions in the Western Cape Province as dam levels across the country continue to decline week on week.

The major dams supplying the Western Cape Water Supply System have been severely drawn down over the past year due to high water demand and lower-than normal rainfall experienced over the period. Currently Gauteng is the only province in the country that has not been declared a state of disaster due to the ongoing drought.

### **Poor infrastructure exacerbates the problem**

Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Gogta), Des van Rooyen, told the Inter-Ministerial Task Team (IMTT) on Drought that the drought situation has been exacerbated by the poor state of water-related infrastructure, water losses and the lack of implementation of stringent water conservation measures in affected areas.

“The drought situation is still gloomy. Disasters do not happen in a vacuum, but in communities where people stay. Among the measures that should be considered in addressing the drought conditions are disaster management plans and other seasonal related contingency plans.

“Our people do not have much information. There should be increased communication of drought-related information to all communities. We should ensure implementation of Disaster Risk Management, with an emphasis on Disaster Risk reduction,” said Van Rooyen.

### **South Africa's Dam Levels Falling Weekly**

DWS has warned that dam levels across all South Africa's provinces continue to steadily decline each week, with the overall average dam levels falling 0.4 percentage points from 53.8% capacity two weeks ago to 53.4% by June 6. This compared with the 76.2% capacity of South Africa's dams recorded in the comparative week last year.

“A further fall off of about 10% before the onset of the summer rains can be expected,” the DWS noted in a statement on Monday. The department's latest weekly assessment of 211 dams throughout South Africa showed 12 dams at below 10% capacity and 64 dams below 40%. The DWS said that only 18 of the monitored dams were at 100% capacity as at June 6.

The Gauteng-serving Vaal river dams system fell from 63.1% to 62.5% week-on-week, a significant drop from the 82.4% capacity levels reported at the same time last year. The Sterkfontein dam remained steady at 89%, while the Grootdraai dam experienced a decrease of 1.3% to 84.7% by last Monday.

Further breaking down the declines posted, the DWS said that the Umgeni dam system, which served eThekweni and Mzinduzi, in KwaZulu-Natal, had decreased 1.5%, while Klipfontein, Goedertrouw and Hluhluwe were all falling weekly and were now at “dangerously low” levels of 17.4%, 20% and 13.4% respectively. The five-dam Algoa system, in the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipality, decreased 0.8% week-on-week to 75.9% by June 6, while the six-dam Amathola system serving Buffalo City decreased 0.6%.

“The Cape Town dams system serving mainly the City of Cape Town decreased by 0.6% this week, with the Voelvlei dam sitting at 20.6%, a decrease of 0.4% compared with the previous week. “In the Orange river, the Gariiep dam is at 53.4%, a decrease of 0.7%, and the Van Der Kloof dam is at 65.1%, which is an increase of 1.1%,” the department pointed out. The Polokwane system saw a decrease of 0.3% to 51.3%.

“The department has concluded stakeholder consultations for the Vaal, Orange and Bloemfontein systems and recommendations are being advanced on how to intensify and ensure water supply during the current low dam levels,” the DWS concluded.

Sources: *Infrastructurene.ws*, 14 June 2016; *Engineering News*, 13 June 2016

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