

Water and Sanitation in the News

Water-shedding: Feel it, it is (almost) here

If you think load-shedding is bad, brace yourself for water-shedding... coming to a tap near you. South Africa is fast running out of water, with the worst drought since 1992 leaving dams at critical levels and diminishing rivers and streams.

The reason for any potential water shedding is almost a mirror image of why we have load-shedding. Since 1994, millions of people have been added to the water grid with very little thought being given to increasing the capacity of water storage or water intake plants. Combined with mismanagement of water, non-payment for water, huge water wastage through lack of maintenance and neglect, and poor governance through corruption, we are facing a high noon of water shortages that might start affecting us in as soon as a few months.

Smaller municipalities are going to be hit first, and hardest. The Kannaland Municipality (Caltizdorp) has a month of water left. Parts of KZN – northern Ethekeini, the South Coast, the rural north – are facing water restrictions as dams dry up. Much of South Africa is about to be declared an official drought zone. Even where water utilities have access to adequate water supplies – such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme and the Midmar Dam – the strain will be immense. Water will have to be pumped from large dams to smaller dams; pollution will increase in rivers and dams as the water level decreases, water tables will drop as people pump more from boreholes...

Source: *Daily Maverick*, 25 June 2015

Context

Sunday (21 June 2015) was the first day that water rationing kicked in at a number of municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal in a bid to conserve water resources in the province. Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs MEC Nomusa Dube-Ncube last week warned that the province was suffering water shortages and that mandatory water conservation measures would have to be implemented. eThekweni Municipality (Durban and surrounds); Ilembe (Stanger, Ballito, Ndwedwe); uThungulu (Richards Bay, uMfolozi) and Mtubatuba will be most affected.

In a statement Dube-Ncube said: "Today some municipalities will commence with radical water rationing programmes as part of managing the available water resources. "Water

rationing means that water production will be reduced and, as a result of this water reduction, less water will be supplied to municipalities. This will have a knock-on effect on consumers who will be given a set of amount of water per day once the water quantum allocated to households is consumed, there will be no water available until the following day when a new amount is allocated." The northern areas of eThekweni and the southern areas of Ilembe, which are supplied by Hazelmore Dam, are expected to be the worst affected. Last week Dube-Ncube said Hazelmore Dam had a mere two months' supply of water remaining if restrictions were not implemented. KwaZulu-Natal's ongoing drought has left several communities without running water for days.

Residents from the Mtubatuba township, north of Richards Bay, are among the worst-affected and officials say rivers and dams are drying up as there is just not enough rainfall. Mtubatuba and surrounding townships are supplied by the Umfolozi River, but the drought has collapsed the water system. Areas of the eThekweni and Ilembe District Municipality supplied from the Hazelmore Dam, various South Coast locations and northern KwaZulu-Natal have critically-low dam levels. In Ilembe, two sugars mills have not opened as the drought impacts on the sugar industry. Both eThekweni and Ilembe were looking to build desalination plants as a long-term plan to deal with water shortages. In Mkhanyakude District Municipality numerous boreholes had reportedly failed, while levels at the two main dams – Pongolapoort Dam and Hluhluwe Dam – had dropped substantially. In Mtubatuba water supply had been affected after the Umfolozi River dried up. Amid the drought, plans for a new coal mine and 1 000MW power station near the town of Colenso have raised fears about clouds of toxic air pollution and contamination of the uThukela, the province's largest river system.

Source: *eNCA*, 20 June 2015; *News24*, 21 June & 24 June 2015

The **Municipal Assistant™** is a proven and trusted technology that helps to analyse water utility data in order to improve operational efficiency – thereby helping to conserve scarce water and improving the quality of drinking and waste water. It was developed in line with the needs of local utilities and has assisted with the operations, maintenance and management of water and wastewater facilities and related infrastructure in southern Africa over the past 9 years.

CONTACT US: Tel: +27 (0)21 887 7161

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