

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### Water crisis gets worse

It is a disaster. That is the opinion of the Greytown mayor Thami Ngubane of the town's dire water situation. Ngubane has now admitted that the municipality is partly to blame for the situation faced by residents of the parched town. Three weeks since Greytown's taps ran dry, residents took the mayor to task last week over the water crisis the town faces.

Greytown residents gathered at the city hall at a public meeting held by Ngubane on Thursday to discuss the drought situation the town and surrounding areas are facing. Ngubane said things had "gone from bad to worse" regarding the water available to locals. "Our main source of water has been Lake Merthley but since the drought the water levels have dropped dramatically and as a response to this, we had to implement water restrictions," he said. "Last year, we decided to have water in the taps from 4 am to 8 am and then again at 4 pm to 8 pm."

He said as 2016 came around, it was decided that to preserve the water the taps would have to be switched off, with the town's main source of water coming from Jojo tanks placed around Greytown. "Judging from what we have seen, not all of us have heard the call to preserve water," he said. "Some tanks have been destroyed with lots of water being lost in the process ..." He said the town had started drilling boreholes before the taps were shut off but soon noticed the boreholes were drying up. "We looked at the factors behind this and saw that many private boreholes were being drilled."

Ngubane then admitted that the failure of the Craigie Burn dam pipeline project, which would see a pipeline from the dam to the town, came from the municipality's "own weakness". Earlier this year The Witness reported scores of sites where reservoirs and pipelines for the project were being built, but the construction sites had been abandoned. The Witness visited one site and saw metres of pipeline lying in the open, half-dug trenches, and an abandoned, half-built reservoir with its structural plans lying muddled and torn on the floor of an empty container. At the time, The Witness was told that the project had not been abandoned and contractors were still working, although there had been delays.

"Umziyathi had no municipal manager for a year and was without a mayor for a while due to the instability within it," said Ngubane. "This has resulted in Umziyathi being unable to fight their weaknesses. Some of the contractors appointed to work on the pipeline did not do the job properly and have not done the project justice. "Because of our own weaknesses, we have not delivered in time," he said.

He said three contractors had been terminated and they were in the process of appointing new contractors. In the meantime, he said, a project called Phase Two that was using nine new boreholes to transfer water to the town should be completed by July 22...

### Context

Other areas in the province are also suffering from water scarcity. KwaZulu-Natal's Umfolozi River has run dry, spelling tough times ahead for the province which has already been declared a disaster area due to the ongoing drought. This is affecting the supply of water to the areas of Mtubatuba, St Lucia and Nkolokotho and residents in the Umkhanyakude district have been asked to use water sparingly.

According to Umkhanyakude District Municipality Mduzi Dlamini, the district municipality has now taken the decision to implement a rationing programme to all the areas that are affected. Levels at the Kwa Bobhoza reservoir are reportedly running on empty, ranging from 0% to 1.8%, and at Hluhluwe the dam level is extremely low at 22%. Water levels at Hluhluwe have dropped 90 m<sup>3</sup> as a result of the ongoing drought. Water levels in the Jozini dam are also very low and the municipality had contracted water tankers to fetch water from eMpangeni dams to supply local communities. The municipality has also commissioned four boreholes at the Umfolozi River which can yield at least 1.8 ML a day. Dlamini said that although this wasn't nearly enough, all measures were being taken to increase the supply.

Sources: [News24, 18 July 2016](#); [Infrastructurene.ws, 19 July 2016](#)

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