

Water and Sanitation in the News

Drought takes a grip on Cape municipalities

The Western Cape government is set to ask its national counterparts to classify a provincial disaster because of the ongoing drought plaguing the region. The move comes as looming water shortages, low dam levels and predictions of a dry summer, threatens to cripple the agricultural sector in several municipalities. Authorities have been closely monitoring the situation across the province, and at least four municipalities have implemented water restrictions as precautionary measures.

Local government, environmental affairs and development planning MEC, Anton Bredell, said an assessment of the water situation in the province was completed last week. He said the department was ready to move ahead with an official request and would approach the Western Cape Provincial cabinet in this regard. "We have been busy doing assessments of the situation and these assessments were only completed on Friday. The plan is to go to the national disaster management authorities with a request for a provincial disaster declaration that will also include the Swartland area."

Bredell said the restrictions imposed on the West Coast and in the Karoo were precautionary by nature. He added that the decision to issue water restrictions was made at municipal level. "Given the pressure on water resources in the Western Cape, some municipalities have started to implement water restrictions. Witzenberg local municipality immediately moved to implement restrictions in Tulbagh due to the low water level in their storage dam."

The town's dam is 32 percent full. The Central Karoo District has already rolled out a water conservation campaign covering its whole area, while the Matzikama local municipality has applied water restrictions in all its towns, including Klaver, Vredendal, Vanrhynsdorp and Lutzville. In the Cederberg local municipality, water restrictions in Clanwilliams have been imposed since April. Bredell warned that the water system was under pressure and was expected to come under additional pressure over the December holiday season when there will be an influx of visitors to the coastal areas.

Source: IOL News, 16 November 2015

How did ancient civilisations manage & conserve their water?

The ancient Indus Valley Civilization of South Asia (dating back more than 5000 years ago), including current day Pakistan and

Northwest India, was prominent in hydraulic engineering, and had many water supply and sanitation devices that were the first of their kind. Among other things, they contain the world's earliest known system of flush toilets. These existed in many homes, and were connected to a common sewerage pipe. Most houses also had private wells. City walls functioned as a barrier against floods.



"The kind of efficient system of Harappans of Dholavira, developed for conservation, harvesting and storage of water speaks eloquently about their advanced hydraulic engineering, given the state of technology in the third millennium BCE" says R.S.Bist, Joint Director General (Rtd.), Archaeological Survey of India.

One of the unique features of Dholavira is the **sophisticated water conservation system of channels and reservoirs**, the earliest found anywhere in the world, built completely of stone. The city had massive reservoirs, three of which are exposed. They were used for storing fresh water brought by rains or to store water diverted from two nearby rivulets. **This clearly came in response to the desert climate and conditions of Kutch, where several years may pass without rainfall.** A seasonal stream which runs in a north-south direction near the site was dammed at several points to collect water. The inhabitants of Dholavira created sixteen or more reservoirs of varying size during Stage III (2500–2200 BCE).

Source: Wikipedia

If our ancient forefathers succeeded for millennia in coping with times of droughts and water scarcity by means of great hydraulic engineering accomplishments — without the luxury of our modern day technologies including machinery, electricity and computers — then we should also be able to relatively easily do the same. We already have all the people and tools (hardware and software – e.g. **Municipal Assistant™**), so all we need now is the willpower, resilience and teamwork of all stakeholders in government and private sectors.

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

WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

Visit our websites:

www.wamsys.co.za

www.municipalassistant.co.za

www.ewisa.co.za