

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### Extreme swimmers take on polluted rivers to highlight water crisis

Two extreme athletes are set to swim 200km down the polluted Wilge River in the Free State to highlight the plight of South Africa's deteriorating waterways. Globally renowned extreme swimmers, Andrew Chin, aged 45, and Toks Viviers, aged 52, will take to the Wilge River at Harrismith on 6 January in Speedo costumes caps and goggles only, and will attempt to swim over about 10 days to Frankfort, 200km downstream.

They will be accompanied by a small support crew and will camp overnight on the river bank. The swim is organised by Rivers for Life which raises awareness of SA's water crisis and urges action. Chin is planning an extreme swim in a major river in each province as part of the initiative. "We're using more water than is available and fast running out," said Chin, adding, "our waste water treatment is in a critical state; over a third of our drinkable water is wasted through leaking pipes and taps and; many of our rivers are polluted from sewage and toxic run-off. We hope our swims will ignite action to address these issues," he said.

Source: [News24, 17 Dec. 2014](#)

### Context

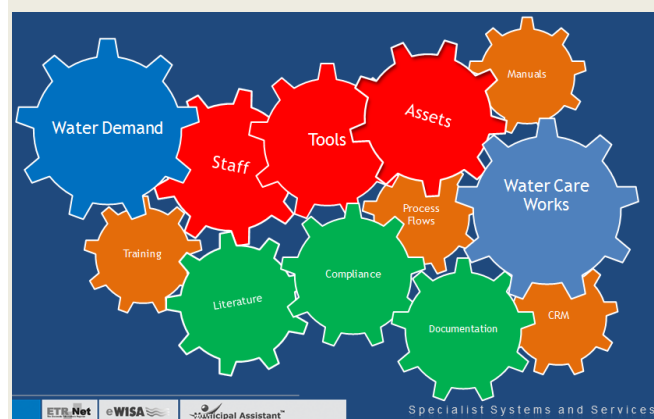
The results of a recent study, '*Eutrophication and cyanobacterial blooms in South African inland waters: 10 years of medium-resolution imaging spectrometer (MERIS) observations*', have revealed that harmful cyanobacteria are widespread in South Africa's 50 largest dams, with the Hartbeespoort dam, in the North West, the Darlington dam, in the Eastern Cape, and Spitskop dam, in the Northern Cape, found to be the worst affected by cyanobacterial surface scum.

University of Cape Town earth observation scientist Dr Mark Matthews, whose study was funded by the CSIR and the Department of Science and Technology, explained that water rich in cyanobacteria posed a serious health risk and could result in death, if consumed in large quantities. "Water quality in South Africa is a significant concern. Serious steps need to be taken to reduce the amount of nutrients entering our lakes," Matthews cautioned.

...The information derived from the study could be used to prioritise management and mitigation strategies to reduce health risks. Matthews advised the relevant managing authorities to take immediate measures to reduce the risk of exposure to surface scum at the Hartbeespoort, Darlington and Spitskop dams. "This can be done by improving the treatment of water at sewage plants, identifying the point of entry of nutrients into the water bodies and mitigating this. One way to do this is to build retaining dams and plant wetlands that will absorb the nutrients."

Source: [Engineering News, 08 Dec. 2014](#)

Addressing South Africa's water challenges needs a holistic approach. The [WAMTechnology](#) approach to drinking water and waste water management support is comprehensive as it **incorporates all the vital components** needed to ensure efficient and sustainable water supply.



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