

Water and Sanitation in the News

Strict adherence to water restrictions still crucial

The country's average dam levels are steady at 53.3% week on week, but the back of the drought is still not broken, reports the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). Overall there is a slight upward movement due to the recent rains and snowfalls in the Western Cape and the Free State. However this very slight increase is insignificant when compared to this time last when the average dam levels were at 72.7%. Some current dam levels are as follows:

- The Algoa System has five dams serving Nelson Mandela Bay. This week it stands at 72.2% compared with 72.9% last week – a decrease of 0.7%.
- At the Cape Town Dams System there are 6 dams serving mainly the City of Cape Town. The system this week increased by 1.3% to 58.2%, where the Voelvlei Dam has increased by 2.7% to 61.3%. The Clanwilliam Dam is at 99.9%. With all of this activity, water restrictions are to remain in place.
- The Hazelmere Dam is at 56.6% showing an increase of 4.3% week on week. Transfers from the uThongathi River are still taking place. The Nagel Dam has decreased by 2% to 68.4%, while the Midmar Dam has increased by 0.1% to 45.8%.
- Considering that KwaZulu-Natal has borne the brunt of the drought, other KwaZulu-Natal dams which remain dangerously low are: Klipfontein at 13%, Hluhluwe at 18.9%, and Goedertrouw at 18.1%. All have declined slightly. The current restrictions for Goedertrouw Dam will remain at 15% for industry, 40% for domestic and 80% for irrigation.
- The Vaal River System has 14 dams and serves mainly Gauteng, Sasol and Eskom. It has decreased by 0.2% to 54%. The system was at 75.3% last year. Katse Dam now stands at 47.4% which is a decrease of 0.2% from the previous week. Vaal Dam decreased to 34%, indicating a decrease of 0.5% week on week. The Sterkfontein is up by 0.2% to 89.7% and the Grootdraai is steady 79.1%. Restrictions are now in place for the Vaal River system.
- On the Orange River, the Gariiep Dam is at 55.7% showing an increase of 1.1% and Van Der Kloof Dam is at 65.7%, indicating a slight increase of 0.2%.
- For the Polokwane System with two dams, there was a decrease of 0.2% to 36.4%.

- The Bloemfontein System comprises of four dams serving mainly Mangaung. This week's 37.1% compared with 36.7% last week showed a slight improvement of 0.4%.

The DWS continues to monitor 211 dams on a weekly basis. Of these at the moment 13 dams are below 10%, 59 dams are below 40%, and 23 dams are above 100%...

Context

In the wake of a strong El Niño phenomenon aggravating South Africa's already dry conditions, no relief is yet to be seen, as an anticipated counter, La Niña, has been weakened to the point that "neutral conditions may not be completely ruled out", the South African Weather Service (SAWS) said on Monday.

The El Niño last year severely exacerbated a years-long persisting drought that had resulted in 2015 being the driest year on record for South Africa since 1921.

"The recovery of South Africa from drought conditions may take some time, depending on rainfall and temperature conditions over the coming spring through summer 2016/17 season," said SAWS long-range forecasting senior scientist Dr Asmerom Beraki at a media briefing at the agency's Pretoria headquarters.

...The recovery from the 2015/16 drought, which persisted across the bulk of South Africa, has been potentially stalled by forecast above-normal temperature tendencies in the coming seasons and the unlikelihood of a well-established La Niña. This left climate-sensitive industries in a "delicate" situation, Beraki noted.

... "Most climate models indicate the prospect of above normal rainfall conditions toward early summer, but with marginal confidence," he added, noting that more reliable information could become available closer to the mid-summer...

Sources: [Infrastructurene.ws, 29 Aug.;](#) [Engineering News, 29 August 2016](#)

In times of water scarcity, communities' precious water supplies needs to be protected by means of well-maintained and reliable water infrastructure, as well as efficient water management practices. **WAMTechnology** training, product systems and continuous service, provide critical support by providing strategic and tactical information to the management of assets, water quality, staff, water demand, maintenance of water works & sewer systems, vehicles, suppliers and timesheets of staff.

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