

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### **R250 million on polluted mine water**

Exxaro Resources has spent R250 million to turn polluted mine water into clean drinking water at the Matla coal mine in Mpumalanga.

Following engagements with the departments of Water and Sanitation, Environmental Affairs and Mineral Resources, Exxaro (one of the largest South African based diversified resources groups) has come out with a sustainable solution to the underground water. The treatment includes water being pumped to the surface where it undergoes treatment using an innovative filtration process to purify the water. The water treatment plant will treat 10 mega litres per day. 6.5ML will be discharged to the Olifants River and the remaining will be used for water needs at the mine and will be used in the Matla Operations.

The Matla underground mining operations experience too much water entrance into the workings from surface, leading to flooding risks. The safety of workers and the environment could also be affected by the contaminated water should this water be released back to the surface before undergoing treatment. "Water is a strategic natural resource in South Africa and it is our duty to ensure that we reduce the impact of our mining activities on this precious resource," says Exxaro CEO Sipho Nkosi.

As part of its water management strategy, Exxaro says they effectively manage water through, reuse, reduction, and recycling of water. They proactively respond to water related risks, minimising risks and ensuring operations use water efficiently.

Source: [The Citizen, 11 April 2015](#)

### **Context**

The construction of treatment plants for waste water from coal mining activities is certainly a step in the right direction in helping to conserve precious water resources that are currently under huge threat in Mpumalanga.

For at least the last five years scientists, academics, conservation organisations, tourism authorities and NGOs have been issuing dire warnings about the largely unregulated rampant spread of coal mining in Mpumalanga,

and the devastating impacts that this is having on South Africa's food and water security. Year after year, the problem gets worse.



In November 2011, WWF-SA released its Coal and Water Futures in South Africa report, detailing the rapid degradation of the critical Olifants river catchment as a result of coal mining. In October 2012, the Bureau for Food and Agricultural Policy released a pilot study on the impact of coal mining on agriculture. In August 2014 the Bench Marks Foundation released its Policy Gap 9 report on South African coal mining. These reports contain terrifying statistics and dire warnings about the consequences of doing nothing to stop this impending crisis.

Coal mining will never be clean. Nor will coal-fired power stations (there are 12 of them within an hour's drive or less of Emalahleni). But there are ways to regulate coal mining to prevent it from causing such extensive, widespread and irreversible damage to our fresh water resources, most precious arable land and critical biodiversity areas...

Source: [Daily Maverick, 15 September 2014](#)

For communities to enjoy stable supplies of safe drinking water, it is important to ensure that the entire water supply cycle, from abstraction, to treatment, distribution and discharge are done with the correct equipment, that is maintained, and by staff that are technically skilled, with management enabled to lead a team effort. The [Municipal Assistant™](#) software system helps to achieve this by facilitating the efficient management functions related to water treatment and supply.

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