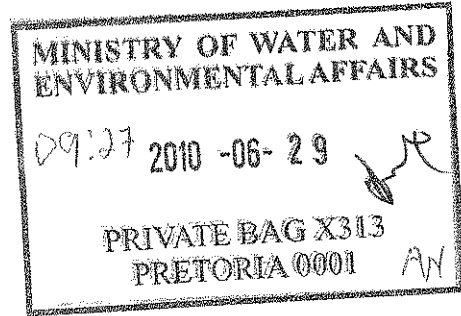


water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Enquiries: HH Pienaar
Telephone: 012-336-7197
Reference: 2/1/5/1

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 1809 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above-mentioned question asked by Mrs A T Lovemore (DA); is attached for your consideration.


DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)

DATE: 28/6/10

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED


MS B P SONJICA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 2010/07/04

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 1809

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 04 JUNE 2010
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 16)

1809. Mrs A T Lovemore (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) Whether any areas or catchments have been declared as environmentally too sensitive to be subjected to mining operations; if so, (a) what are the details of these areas or catchments and the declaration of their sensitivity and (b) on what basis was the declaration made in each case; if not,
- (2) whether plans are in place to declare certain areas or catchments as environmentally too sensitive to be subjected to mining operations; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether any research is being conducted or planned with a view to declaring certain areas or catchments as environmentally too sensitive to be subjected to mining operations; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW2085E

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REPLY:

- (1) There has not been any declaration made as to the environmental sensitivity of catchments in respect of mining. It is important to note that both the National Water Act and the National Environmental Management Act entitles any person to apply for a Water Use Licence or an Environmental Authorisation in terms of the respective statutes as far as mining is concerned. Therefore, to make a declaration to prevent mining in certain areas could be construed as action being in conflict with the provision of the afore-mentioned legislation.

There are various legislated integrated environmental management (IEM) tools which can achieve a similar purpose (i.e. balancing environmental protection with development). From an environmental management point of view, these include the development of Environmental Management Frameworks, identification of geographic areas and Strategic Environmental Assessments. The benefit of geographic areas is that additional activities can be added to the current environmental impact assessment (EIA) list of activities that require approval, as well as the making these lists to have more stringent requirements.

From a water resource management perspective, measures to protect the water resources include resource directed measures (RDM), source directed controls (SDC), water resource monitoring, as well as conditions (i.e. resource quality objectives) set as part of water use authorisations. Therefore, any water use authorisation must be evaluated on its own merits taking the aforementioned measures into account, in the same way that the EIA application is evaluated on its own merits taking the environmental attributes into account.

(1)(a) Falls away

(1)(b) Falls away

- (2) The Protected Areas Act and the Biodiversity Act also makes provision for identifying areas of high environmental importance that should specify specific terms and conditions in terms of resource use. My Department is also working in close collaboration with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in identifying areas with high biodiversity status.
- (3) Three studies in three water management areas respectively are currently underway for the classification of all significant water resources in terms of the requirements of the National Water Act. These studies will complement the initiatives by SANBI in identifying areas comprising of high biodiversity status.

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