



water affairs


Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: H Smit
Telephone: 012 392 1301
Reference: 6/2/2/6

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 2047 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: 1/9/10

~~DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED~~


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

DATE: 02. 09. 2010

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 2047

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 06 AUGUST 2010
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 19)

2047. Mrs A T Lovemore (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) What (a) are the details of the monitoring regime of the uranium levels in the Wonderfonteinspruit catchment and (b) have the results been since 1 January 2010;
- (2) whether any epidemiological studies have been carried out to determine the health impact of the radioactive uranium in the catchment area; if so, what are the relevant details; if not,
- (3) whether such epidemiological studies are planned for the near future; if not, why not; if so, (a)(i) when and (ii) by whom will the studies be conducted and (b) what (i) areas and communities, (ii) possible health impact and (iii) pollution pathways will be considered in the studies;
- (4) whether the results of these studies will be made available to the public; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

NW2442E

---0000---

REPLY:

- (1)(a) The monitoring sampling schedule of the Uranium levels in the Wonderfontein Spruit catchment has been conducted by various institutions such as my Department, the mines discharging treated mine water, the National Nuclear Regulator (NNR) and Tlokwe (Potchefstroom) Local Municipality.

The NNR does monitoring on an ad hoc basis as part of their verification program to ensure the mines compliance with the conditions stipulated in their individual radiological effluent programs as per the Mine Certificate of Registration. It should be noted that my Department previously conducted routine sampling. However, such monitoring was scaled down as the other institution's results satisfied my Department's needs. As a sector leader and regulator, my Department thus closely monitors the results submitted. As the last routine sampling was conducted by my Department as part of this regulatory oversight role in June 2009, an *ad hoc* sampling to verify the other institutions' analysis will be done by the end of August 2010.

- (1)(b) The results from samples taken by the NNR indicated no elevated levels of radio activity in the water whilst the weekly water sampling done by Tlokwe Local Municipality on various points in the Lower Wonderfontein Spruit always complied with the potable water standard specified by the World Health Organisation.
- (2) Yes, the epidemiological study was carried out by Tlokwe Local Municipality as it falls outside my Department mandates. The study was to establish if there are any health defects in groups living along and making use of the watercourse in the Wonderfontein Spruit. This group was compared to a reference group living away from the Wonderfontein Spruit. The findings of the study did not yield any significant differences between the two groups and did not indicate results suggestive of exposure to heavy metals and uranium in the group associated with the Wonderfontein Spruit.

- (3)(a) No, the epidemiological studies falls outside my Department mandates and as result can not be part of my future plan.
- (3)(b) Refer to paragraph (3)(a) above.
- (4) Refer to paragraph (3)(a) above.

---00000---