



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Dam levels succumb to the heat wave – DWS report

31 October 2018

South Africa's dams this week dropped slightly to 72,3 % because of a week-long heat wave that has engulfed major parts of the the country.

A weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation shows that despite the drop, dam levels are generally stable and are not vastly affected by high temperatures. However, this year's figures point to a vast improvement compared to the 62,8% in the same period last year. With more rains expected during summer, it is expected that the summer rainfall areas of the country will have more water to store in their reservoirs during the dry winter of 2019.

However, the department insists on every citizen continuing to save water by using it wisely and sparingly. At the moment the country has 23 440 cubic metres of water in storage. The total storage capacity for all dams and reservoirs combined is 32 320,8 cubic metres, including Swaziland and Lesotho.

In a workshop to review its readiness for the wet season last week, the hydrology section of DWS was informed by officials from the South African Weather Services (SAWS) that the next three months would receive less-than-normal rainfall because of a weak El Nino phenomenon.

At 97,9%, Gauteng still leads other provinces with its dam levels, having dropped fractionally from 98% last week. It is followed by Free State and Northern Cape who recorded 84,6% and 78,6% respectively.

However, in terms of water management, the Berg-Olifants Water Management Agency (WMA) which straddles Western Cape and parts of Northern Cape, recorded the highest storage at 95,3%. The agency includes the Berg and Olifants catchment areas, and the major rivers, namely Berg, Diep, Steenbras, Olifants, Doorn, Krom, Sand and Sout. The catchment lies within the Western Cape and Northern Cape and includes Cape Town, the second most populous metropolitan area in South Africa. There are also several large towns in the WMA, with economies based in tourism, education, agriculture and industry.

Second to Berg-Olifants is the Vaal Major that straddles Free State and Gauteng with 86% water storage, followed by Orange in Northern Cape with 83,1%.

The Western Cape was not spared from the evaporation of its dams as its levels dropped from 73,4% to 72,7% this week. The DWS remains cautious and still insists on keeping the water restrictions unchanged until the provincial dams have reached at least 80%. Western Cape is approaching the end of its rainy season and it is important that its dam levels remain high.

Although KwaZulu-Natal registered 60,8% dam levels this week, the figure is expected to increase by next week after the torrential rains in most parts of the province on Tuesday and Wednesday. The heat notwithstanding, Mpumalanga and Limpopo are consistent with the provinces recording 70,5% and 63,2% respectively. Free State is also stable at 84,6%, with a slight drop from 85,6% last week.



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North West is experiencing a slide in its dam levels as it slipped from 58,8% to 57,5% this week. This is a sharp contrast to its levels in the same period last year when it recorded 76%.

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