



MEDIA ADVISORY

Minister Majodina to hand over a WHIS Award for the 134-year-old Douglas' marvel weir, and a newly refurbished Water Treatment Works in Siyancuma Municipality, Northern Cape

17 September 2025

As part of Heritage Month commemoration, the Minister of Water and Sanitation, Ms Pemmy Majodina will hand over the World Heritage Irrigation Structure (WHIS) Award to the Orange-Vaal Water Users Association, and the newly refurbished Douglas Water Treatment Works (WTW) to Siyancuma Local Municipality, in the ZF Mgcawu District Municipality, Northern Cape, on Thursday, 18 September 2025.

The WHIS award is a prestigious designation given to historic irrigation structures by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), and it recognises the cultural, historical, and technological significance of these structures.

The Douglas Weir, a 134-year-old engineering marvel that pioneered irrigation-led rural development in the Northern Cape was recognised as a World Heritage Irrigation Structure by the ICID. It was nominated by the South African National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (SANCID), and the award was accepted on behalf of the committee by ICID Vice-President and SANCID Chair, Prof Sylvester Mpandeli last September at the 9th Asian Regional Conference of ICID in Sydney, Australia.

Since then, the weir, located at the confluence of the Vaal and Orange Rivers in Douglas and regarded as the world's oldest, has been included in the ICID Register of World Heritage Structures.

A weir is a barrier across the width of a body of water that alters the flow characteristics of water and usually results in a change in the height of the water level. Weirs are used to control the flow of water for rivers and other water resource structures.

This is the first time that a South African irrigation structure has received the award since the inception of the WHIS recognition category in 2012. The award will be officially handed to the Orange-Vaal Water Users Association responsible for managing the infrastructure.

Minister Majodina will thereafter hand over a refurbished Douglas Water Treatment Works also located near the confluence of Vaal and Orange River, which serves as raw water abstraction supply points for water purification and supply to the town and surroundings. The existing purification plant was not operating efficiently as it had exceeded its 30-year design life cycle, and it therefore needed an urgent refurbishment.

The R28 million revitalisation project scope entailed the refurbishment of the water purification plant, the general rehabilitation work of the plant and the installation of a 200KVA emergency

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generator. The plant will filter a total capacity of 4 273 cubic metres per day of purified water to the population of 22 180 persons residing in 4 704 households within the area of Douglas.

Following the handover of the WHIS Award and the WTW, the Minister will have a community engagement with the local residents, and later conduct an oversight visit at Douglas Weir.

The Minister will be joined by the Chairperson of Water Research Commission (WRC), Dr Rethabile Melamu as well as the Chief Executive Officer of the Orange-Vaal Water Users Association, Mr Peter Joseph.

Members of the media are invited as follows:

Date : 18 September 2025

Time : 09h00

Venue : Douglas Water Treatment Plant

For confirmations, please contact Sanku Tsunke from Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) on 066 299 2915 or email tsunkes@dws.gov.za or Sifiso Mazibuko from Water Research Council (WRC) on 072 727 4543 or email sifisom@wrc.org.za

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For more information contact Departmental Spokesperson, Wisane Mavasa on 060 561 8935/ mavasaw@dws.gov.za or Ministerial Spokesperson, Cornelius Monama on 083 271 0808/ monamac@dws.gov.za

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