



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS,
MRS. BEE MOLEWA, ON THE SOD-TURNING CEREMONY FOR SPRING GROVE
DAM, ROSETTA, KZN**

16 May 2011

Honourable Premier

Executive Mayor

Councilors

CEO's of Umngeni and TCTA

Members of the Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to start by reminding everyone of us about the important date of the upcoming local government elections, the 18 May 2011. The true test of democracy lies squarely in the ability of every government to enable its citizens to exercise their right of choosing the leadership of their choice. So on Wednesday, once more we urge that you take up your responsibility and strengthen our democracy through your vote.

On Wednesday, you will be voting for many things both in your own community and the country as a whole. As the Minister responsible for water, I know that one of the many things you will be voting for is exactly that constitutional right of access to clean drinking

water. Together with the right to shelter, food and decent health, the democracy we have fought for, for so long and hard guarantees all of us access to these basic human needs.

So when we do these things as we are today in this community, we are compelled both by the commitment we have made to you of a better life for all and the constitutional right that you struggled for. Our President, Mr Jacob Zuma made an important pledge to the people of South Africa that “as long as there are people who have no access to water, we shall not rest until our job is done”. We are here to make that pledge a reality. We have done it elsewhere in South Africa, in the Eastern Cape, in Limpopo, Free State and other provinces. It’s a long and winding road because the legacy of apartheid planning is such that our areas were last in the minds of the apartheid planners.

Despite this, we have made many strides in breaking the shackles of apartheid planning. Since 1994, we have more poor with access to safe drinking water and sanitation. There is still more to be done to eradicate the legacy of bad planning and with your support through your vote, we will ensure that every household has access to these basic human needs.

Ladies and gentlemen we should also remember the centrality of water in our economy and the economy of rural areas in particular. In addition to the fact that certain areas of this province are growing at an unprecedented level, which requires the requisite amount of water, we must also take cognisance of the role that agriculture plays in rural development. It is therefore imperative that we plan in such a way that our infrastructure is deployed appropriately to respond to the economic needs of each area in the province.

When considering the hub of KwaZulu-Natal one thinks mainly of the greater KwaZulu-Natal Coastal Metropolitan Area which consists of the area from Pietermaritzburg to Durban from west to east and from Kwadukuza (Stanger) in the north to Amanzimtoti in the south. The main bulk water resources found in this area comprises the Mgeni, Mdloti, and Mvoti river systems with support by a transfer scheme sourcing water from the Mooi River. There are several large storage dams regulating the flow in the rivers:

Midmar, Albert Falls, Nagle and Inanda on the Mgeni River and Hazelmere on the Mdloti River.

This metropolitan area is the third largest contributor to the national economy and has the second largest population concentration in the country. It is the economic hub of KwaZulu-Natal and is very important for the economic well being of the province. This area is experiencing rapid growth in water demand because of the influx of people from the rural areas, economic growth, and development initiatives like the Dube Trade Port.

Since 1996, the Department conducted various investigations to establish the feasibility of augmenting the water supply of the Mgeni System which is situated in the Midlands and coastal areas of Kwa-Zulu Natal. These investigations proposed the strategic development of water transfer schemes to transfer water from the Nkomazi River and Mooi River – the Mooi being within the Mgeni System. These transfer schemes could be constructed in stages to minimize the capital costs and the associated increase in the water tariffs to water users.

This scheme that we are launching today is the second phase involving the construction of the Spring Grove Dam and associated transfer infrastructure. When commissioned, this infrastructure will add some 60 million cubic meters of water in the system. This will assist us to be able to deliver water to an additional five million people in this area.

This is a multi-year project which will have long term impacts for South Africa's economic development and it will contribute a great deal to our New Economic Growth Path imperatives.

We all know and should celebrate water as a source of life. We know that all life, plant and animal, starts with and depends on water. We therefore need to cherish all the input that water has on life. We need water for washing, cleaning, drinking cooking, watering and even in our industries. We need to understand that we cannot let this resource go to waste or even be defiled.

South Africa remains a water scarce country, therefore all water sources need to be protected. We all also have to be conscious of the need to preserve water and ensure reduction of wastage. Water recycling has become a reality to be looked into as we continue to explore all avenues towards security of water supply.

As a country we do pride ourselves with the quality of water supply. Even in that instance we continue our endeavours to ensure and maintain the cleanliness and the integrity of our water resources. The commodity we are here about is a great contributor to economic development, rural development, addressing social equity, poverty alleviation and job creation. We believe that access to water unlocks the potential for poverty alleviation through small and medium scale farming opportunities.

Access to water is critical for food security and we also are aware that access to water is a critical driver towards social equity, as all gain access and benefit.

I thank you