

## Dams are filling up, but let's not lower our guard when it comes to water consumption

WATER storage in many parts of the Western Cape has improved significantly following the recent heavy downpours, sometimes accompanied by storms and flooding in the province.

The main storage dams of the Western Cape Water Supply System (WCWSS) are the Theewaterskloof, Voëlvlei and Berg River dams (operated by the DWS), and the Wemmershoek, Upper and Lower Steenbras dams (operated by the City of Cape Town).

The combined dam storage for the WCWSS shows that the system is no longer under severe stress and that the reserve storage that was gradually depleted over the last four years has been recovered. The combined storage is roughly over

90% as of August 31.

This is a remarkable turnaround following the lower-than-normal rainfall during the 2016-2018 rainy seasons. Thanks to rains and a combination of effective management of available resources, application of drought tariffs for water consumption, extensive communication campaigns, and partnerships with communities, business, and agriculture, a potential crisis was averted.

Other areas supported by various water supplies are also showing an improving trend with Olifants Doorn at 99%, the Breede System 72.07% and Gouritz standing at 21%. It is important to note that most parts of the Gouritz systems fall in summer rainfall areas.

As an emergency water supply to curb the spread of Covid-19, a total of 615 water tanks were delivered and installed in the Western Cape by the national government.

The water from the tanks will enable communities, in particular those in heavily densified informal areas to practice good hygiene by washing hands regularly.

In collaboration with local authorities, we will continue to implement water conservation and water demand management initiatives across the province. Following the president's address on the Covid-19 risk-adjusted strategy taken down to level 2, there is an anticipated increase in water use as economic activities are being reopened. For this reason, water users

are urged to continue with water-saving initiatives

The fact that most of the Western Cape's water storage system is in a better state compared to previous years should not breed complacency. Water conservation and water demand management initiatives must remain in place.

As climate change is becoming a new normal, a business-as-usual approach can no longer be a solution. For this reason, we remind all water users, particularly high-end users, to cut down on water demand. We have to explore alternate water sources, leading to less reliance on surface water.

Let's not lower the guard.

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