

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This ISP document provides a first attempt at compiling a perspective of how the Department wishes to manage the water resources of the catchments of the Amatole - Kei. Reference has been made to the enabling legislative and environmental framework within which water plays an essential role. Water demands must be met in such a way that its use fully supports social and economic development, equity, sustainability and efficient and effective use of water. An optimum balance needs to be sought between the social, economic and biophysical components of the environment for the benefit of all living organisms and for the sustainability of a healthy environment.

Together with the many studies and reports on the area, the Eastern Cape Regional Office of DWAF has provided a wealth of regional water management information. The issues and concerns that were identified during the preliminary interviews and follow up workshops are discussed under the various strategies that have been developed for implementation. Strategies with a strong regional emphasis on the Amatole – Kei have been developed for implementation under the ten main strategy groups.

The Amatole – Kei catchments have an overall surplus water yield. However, this general statement can be misleading as local deficits are experienced in some catchments such as the Klipplaat River in the Upper Kei catchment, the upper Buffalo River in the Amatole catchments, the upper Keiskamma River, the upper White Kei River below Macubeni Dam, the Tsomo River below Ncora Dam due to inter-catchment transfers, and in the upper Thomas River catchments due to run-of-river irrigation use. This situation is further dependent on the intermediate level ecological Reserve determinations still to be undertaken for some of these catchments.

Continued urban and industrial growth in the Buffalo City Municipal area and the resultant growth in water demand will require the implementation of effective conservation and demand management measures and water re-use options to limit demand. Additional development of water resources will nevertheless be required, some time between the years 2012 and 2015 depending on the success of the East London IDZ in attracting industries. The importance of timeously initiating studies for BCM's future water supplies should not be ignored. At the same time the quality of water of the main rivers currently supplying the BCM is deteriorating and a comprehensive water quality management plan will need to be put in place in the short term to address the situation.

Within the Upper Kei catchment there has been an over-allocation of water from Waterdown Dam which is Queenstown's main water supply. With the revitalisation of the defunct irrigation schemes established during the period of the former Ciskei and Transkei and the taking up of water rights and allocations, the assurance of water supply to Queenstown is decreasing. A study is presently being undertaken to address the problem, and implementation of the recommendations is on the critical path if the town is not to suffer from permanent water restrictions in the near future.

A very important support role will be required from DWAF in aligning itself with the Provincial Government's Growth and Development Strategy, which has as one of its main pillars for the eradication of poverty, the revitalisation and expansion of agriculture (irrigation) especially in the former Ciskei and Transkei areas. Close co-operative governance and liaison will be required between officials of DWAF, the Provincial Department of Agriculture and the District Municipalities in order to ensure the efficient, effective and timeous allocation of available water for this purpose.

While it is recognised that the groundwater resources of the region must play an important part in securing the future water supplies, the lack of knowledge, understanding and data on this valuable resource needs to be urgently addressed if this resource is to play a meaningful role.

With the role of DWAF in the future focusing on support, monitoring and regulation rather than direct service delivery, it is vital that the monitoring and information systems within the Department both at a regional and national level are upgraded and become fully functional and populated with reliable data. This is critical for the future success of DWAF in supporting not only DWAF officials but also the wider public service and civil society.

Ensuring effective implementation of the ISP is the major challenge that lies ahead. The key to success will be to appoint staff to be responsible for the various strategies and their implementation. The responsible DWAF staff need to buy-in and take ownership of these strategies, develop them further and refine and improve them. Champions i.e. specialised Directorates and staff in DWAF Head Office, who will support the implementation of the regional strategies are equally as important. Any proposed action must conform to these strategies or require special evaluation against ISP priorities if it is to be supported.

The various actions required to implement the ISP strategies have as far as possible been identified and listed under each strategy. The general lack of adequate skilled human and financial resources will however influence the scope of work that can actually be addressed under the various strategies. This limitation should not be underestimated if the strategies are to be successfully developed in the future. Each strategy has been prioritised. Following on from this study, a further requirement is that the actions listed under each strategy should be revisited and prioritised to be in line with the available resources and funding to implement each strategy. The possibility of repositioning or retraining DWAF staff to be able to address the identified strategy priorities must be considered. Alternatively, obtaining additional staff resources with the right training and mindset must receive the highest consideration.

It has not been possible to develop all possible strategies that may be required. For example, a detailed strategy to deal with the East London IDZ development with respect to water re-use may still be necessary. The critical issue of soil conservation needs a detailed co-operative strategy that must be compiled together with the PDoA. Other required strategies may become apparent, and should be developed as they become necessary. Some strategies combine aspects that may need to be expanded

into separate strategies. The issues or problems encountered with water supply and sanitation programmes, especially in rural areas, are not addressed in this ISP.

It is recognised that there are likely to be some omissions and unforeseen priorities, but this ISP provides the basis for further development. Where the need for certain strategies has been identified but the information for a detailed situation assessment is lacking, future management action will be required to develop such strategies. This aspect applies specifically to the following areas:

- The issue of transfer of water from the Tsomo catchment (Ncora Dam) to the Mbashe catchment for generation of hydropower by Eskom in the Mbashe catchment needs to be analysed in view of the extreme poverty in the Tsomo catchment.
- The need for a comprehensive Soil Conservation Programme to be undertaken by the Provincial Department of Agriculture with the support of DWAF in order to protect the surface and groundwater resources.
- The removal and/or licensing of alien wattle plantations in the ISP area requires further investigation due to their importance (existing and potential) for the local rural economy. This is connected to a strategy for further commercial forestry in the area, which at present has not been considered as a possibility.
- Due to the pristine nature and environmental sensitivity of the area's rivers and estuaries, it is vital that the ecological Reserves are analysed to a level which instills confidence in their use. Only then can a detailed strategy be developed for implementation of Reserve releases and monitoring.

This ISP will form the basis on which the water resources of the ISP area will be managed until the CMA for WMA 12 has been established. It is expected that the ISP will be updated annually as new information, requirements and priorities are established. This ISP will provide a valuable basis for the future CMA to use and from which it can develop its own catchment management strategy.