

CHAPTER 10 – SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS STRATEGIES

NEED FOR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS STRATEGIES

The *Social and Environmental Considerations Main Strategy* is required to address:

- ⇒ Public consultation and participation
- ⇒ Education and capacity building in the water sector
- ⇒ Community awareness;
- ⇒ Communications relating to water;
- ⇒ Compliance with environmental legislation;
- ⇒ Mitigation of environmental and social impacts;
- ⇒ The environmental development approval process;
- ⇒ Strategic Environmental Assessment.

RELEVANT IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES

The following specific strategies have been developed further:

- 10.1 Public participation and communication;
- 10.2 Environmental considerations.

10.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNICATION

Management objective:

To provide a guideline for a uniform approach to public awareness, consultation and participation processes, as well as capacity building.

Situation assessment:

Limited capacity and the inadequate level of water management awareness of staff at various levels of Government have been identified as major stumbling blocks towards effective water management. It is therefore necessary that managers who make decisions requiring or impacting on the water resource be adequately capacitated. Capacity of DWAF staff is unfortunately also severely limited.

Generic Departmental Public Participation Guidelines as well as many specific guidelines are available to provide guidance when dealing with stakeholders or the public.

A Communication Section has been established within the Regional Directorate: Planning, Development and Institutions. A wide range of RO staff is however responsible for the various public participation requirements, in line with their staffing line functions. Capacity building, public participation and communications already form an integral part of the functions of many staff. This should be formalised and should form part of a Plan for the ISP area.

Strategic approach:

The Departmental public participation guidelines will be followed to attain specific objectives in the required range of public consultation, education and capacity building, within the identified ISP strategies. In many cases, best or good practice and experience of what is appropriate for specific communities and circumstances will be followed. The Region should evaluate, or allow for an evaluation of both its skills and successes (and failures) in processes requiring public participation. Particular attention will be given to efforts to reach out to the less powerful groups and the poor, who are not accustomed to being drawn into the public debate.

Management actions:

1. Refine the requirements for public consultation and participation within the various strategies;
2. Identify the current and future public participation needs and develop and implement a regional public participation approach, based on Guidelines provided by Directorate Water Management Institutions Governance (WMIG) and the specific public consultation and participation requirements;
3. The Region will determine whether it has the capacity and capability to meet these needs by drafting a plan to indicate its level of skill in public participation in the Region and in the ISP area. The plan will list or at least indicate the skills that the Department may have to call upon locally, and those which it may have to import to achieve its public participation agenda and goals;
4. Ensure that the necessary resources are available;

5. Inform water users and relevant authorities of the implementation of the ISP;
6. Inform, liaise with and educate policy makers, officials, water users and the public as required by the various ISP strategies;
7. Support public awareness campaigns on the value of urban rivers as social amenities, and assist with cleaning campaigns in terms of water resource management issues;
8. Implement the water education programme;
9. Contribute to national communication programmes.

Responsibility:

The RO assisted by Directorates WMI Governance and WA&IU and WfW.

Priority:

Priority 1 – Very high.

10.2 INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Management objective:

To successfully undertake water resource management planning and implementation within the broader framework of environmental legislation, whilst ensuring that the resource is managed in a manner which recognises and sustains the environment as a whole in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Situation assessment:

A vital requirement for ensuring sustainable conservation practices is the identification of conservation - worthy habitats or sensitive ecosystems. Many of the initiatives or projects that are undertaken or supported by the Department negatively impact on the environment. The DWAF has set up guidelines and policies to ensure that water resources are used in an equitable and sustainable manner. The Departmental role is to comply with environmental legislation and to promote compliance in an environmentally responsible manner. The Department therefore needs to maintain a good co-operative relationship with other government departments. Specific aspects of the environment in this ISP area are discussed below.

Terrestrial environment

There are a number of sensitive and protected environmental areas in the ISP area, as described in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.7. The Fish estuary is ecologically significant. All the rivers and tributaries should be properly managed to protect indigenous species.

Irrigation water in especially lower parts of rivers, as well as in large groundwater abstraction areas, has high salinities, and will result in salt accumulation in the soil if not leached. Leaching is however not practiced widely in this area. Soil that has elevated salinity from irrigation practices will not easily support natural growth.

Invasive alien plants infestation is dealt with in the *Managing Invasive Alien Plants Strategy*, Strategy 7.4.

Manage the siting and management of waste disposal onto land under the *Water Quality Management Strategy*, Strategy 6.2.

Alexandria Dune Field

A southern coastal strip that incorporates the Alexandria Dune Field, making up the largest coastal dune field in the world is set to become part of the Addo Elephant National Park. Alexandria/Cannon Rocks has a developed well field in the dune area. Groundwater seeps to sea in this area, resulting in a unique form of plankton blooms that should be monitored and protected. This proposed extension of the nature reserve to the coast may have an impact on the current abstraction of water from the Colchester dunes. A stringent Environmental Management Plan has been set, based on the Record of Decision issued by DEAET, to ensure good co-operative governance if rezoning does happen.

Aquatic environment

The Reserve requirements are detailed in the *Reserve and RQOs Strategy*; Strategy 6.1 and water quality issues are dealt with in the *Water Quality Management Strategy*, Strategy 6.2.

Wetlands

Wetlands are vulnerable to degradation due to over-abstraction of groundwater as well as physical modification, drainage and infilling. DWAF is responsible for the protection of wetlands, however DWAF funds that were earmarked for the Eastern Cape Wetlands Forum have been transferred to DEAET, who will be responsible for such management in future. An Eastern Cape Wetlands Forum, which consists of numerous government and non-government organisations bodies, was established to assist with the cataloguing, assessment and monitoring of wetlands in the province.

There is a lack of knowledge regarding wetlands in this ISP area. A wetland delineation guideline was funded by DWAF to define wetlands. Wetlands in the Lower Sundays River (N40) catchment have been mapped and sorted by type and landscape locations, as part of a recent DWAF project. Rehabilitation of the Grahamstown Featherstone Kloof Wetland has been done.

Preservation of the wetlands requires education programmes, monitoring and the clearing of invasive alien plants to ensure retention of critical wetland functions. There is a need for Working-for-Wetlands to initiate wetlands programmes, according to priorities.

Social environment

An overview of the ISP area's socio-economic situation is given in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.4.

Erosion

Significant parts of the ISP area have very high soil erosion potential. Removal of riparian vegetation has a significant impact on sedimentation and water quality. Land-use practices in the former Ciskei area caused land degradation and soil wash-off. A lack of post-farming rehabilitation leads to increased erosion.

Strategic approach:

See Chapter 1 paragraph 1.5 for DWAF's position regarding the environment.

Ensure compliance with the requirements of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), Environmental Conservation Act (ECA) and other related environmental legislation in terms of water resource management planning and implementation. Manage tributary rivers to protect indigenous species. Support the Eastern Cape Wetlands Forum initiatives and any other initiatives that promote water-related environmental protection and health.

Management actions:

1. Promote environmental awareness and creation of capacity;
2. Promote and undertake stakeholder empowerment, especially regarding socio-economic aspects;
3. Ensure compliance with environmental legislation (NEMA and ECA) through regional implementation of the Department's Consolidated Environmental Implementation and Management Plan, within the context of the DWAF Environmental Management Framework;
4. Prepare regular *State of Water Resources* Reports, which will build on the State of Rivers reports by the River Health Programme. The reports will describe progress in achieving the environmental objectives of the NWA, and indicate areas where new interventions or intensified efforts are required;
5. Plan for the introduction of a river health monitoring programme;
6. Make inputs to national environmental reporting by DEAT;
7. Use the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as a tool to, amongst others, determine forestry potential as and when required.

Responsibility:

The implementation of the Environmental strategy is the responsibility of all DWAF Directorates and the RO. The D: WA&IU responsibility is to oversee the development of environmental and social policies and procedures within the department.

Priority:

Priority 3 – Medium. To be implemented on a continuous basis as part of normal operations.