



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

3rd MEETING: NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE HYDRONET WATER CONTROL ROOM SYSTEM FOR CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AREAS

VENUE: VIRTUAL
TIME: 10h00 – 12h30
DATE: 18 September 2025

1. Procedural Matters

Attendance Register

Eustathia Bofilatos
Dumisani Gawulana
Ntombizanele Bila-Mupariwa
Anette Kitchen
Sibusiso Mjwara
Carey Rajah
Jan van Staden
Solomon Mathebula
Andy Sambo
Ndivhoniswa Mphuma
Doris Maumela
Motlatso Machaba
Mmakgang Enele
Anet Muir
Albert Mmbidi
Jeremy Naidoo
Mercy Ralushai
Jay Reddy
Deidre Kruger

	Michelle Hartsliel Carla Ramjukadh Leanne Reichard Grant Mackintosh Wendy Johnson
1.1 Opening and welcome	Ms Bofilatos opened the meeting and welcomed all the members present as acting Chair. Mr Mackintosh supported as meeting facilitator.
1.2 Purpose of the meeting	The purpose of this National Steering Committee Meeting was as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reflect on project's progress over this contract period • Discuss risk management • Discuss CMA readiness • Review HydroNET/WISE developments • Agree on the way forward before the contract renewal in November 2025
1.3 Introductions	Introductions were conducted, allowing attendees to share their roles and affiliations. The quorum was confirmed by Ms Bofilatos.
1.3 Apologies	Apologies were noted for DDG Lusenga. Consequently, Ms Eustathia Bofilatos undertook the role of Chairperson in her absence. Additional formal apologies were noted for: Mr Justice Maluleka, Mr Tseliso Ntili and Ms Mary Morake. Ms Bofilatos indicated that there were other parallel meetings taking place, hence it was understandable that several members would either be unable to attend or be late to this Steering Committee Meeting.
1.4 Minutes of the previous meeting	Minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved without any amendments.
1.5 Matters arising from the previous minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Terms of Reference</u>: attached to meeting reminder, with apologies from the team; all members were reminded to review and provide feedback. • <u>Project Risk Register</u>: Ms Bofilatos circulated this to the DWS Chief Director Risk and the Steering Committee members, however it was noted that no feedback was received ahead of the meeting. • <u>CMA HydroNET Training dates</u>: the dates were confirmed, and the training was successfully delivered. • <u>Digitisation strategy</u>: meetings with the Digitisation Teams have taken place; however Ms Bofilatos advised that alignment is ongoing with CIO's office. • <u>Funding discussions for CMA HydroNET subscriptions</u>: Submission preparation for the HydroWISE subscription renewal is in progress. Ms Bofilatos advised that CMA staff transfers are taking longer than anticipated, but good progress is being made. • <u>Webinar invitations</u>: Webinar invitations for the reporting period were distributed and Webinar well attended. • <u>POPIA/Data monitoring</u>: Still under investigation; HydroLogic confirmed they have added usage monitoring functionality.

1.6 Adoption of Agenda	The agenda was adopted by all, with no additions.
2. Presentations	
2.1 Feedback on the status of the Catchment Management Agencies, including the meeting held in response to the DG's letter	Ms. Bofilatos confirmed that, with the exception of BOCMA, CMA Boards have been appointed and Memoranda of Understanding have been signed. Although staff transfers have been delayed, all roadshows have been completed and offer letters are expected to be issued before the end of the year. CMA's have all submitted their Annual reports and the first APPs have been submitted despite challenges with IT systems, particularly SAP, which temporarily disrupted payments. The CIO is also reviewing the SAP system to determine its suitability and configuration for use within the CMAs. The structures of the CMAs are in the process of being finalised to enable full operationalisation by year-end
2.2 Project Risk Register	<p>Ms. Bofilatos presented the Committee with the current Project Risk Register and emphasised that it remains an important tool to guide decision-making as the contract draws to a close. She explained that risks have been assessed across four main categories: Technological and Systems, Environmental, Service Delivery, and Governance.</p> <p>Under <u>Technological and Systems risks</u>, the subscription of HydroNET has been maintained, and new technologies have been integrated to make the platform more accessible to CMAs. Continuous upgrades and monitoring have reduced exposure in this area, and the regular cadence of project and PMU meetings has ensured that system-related concerns are flagged and resolved early.</p> <p>In terms of <u>Governance risks</u>, the project has benefited from consistent reporting and oversight structures. Regular Client and Contractor meetings have created a forum for escalating challenges, while training and webinars have contributed to stronger institutional accountability.</p> <p>However, <u>Environmental and Service Delivery risks</u> remain a concern. Ms. Bofilatos noted that draft climate adaptation options, particularly for the Vaal–Orange CMA, have not yet been developed. This gap could have significant implications for future water resource management and highlights the need to ensure that CMAs are supported in mainstreaming climate resilience into their strategies. Ms. Hartslief reinforced this point, stressing that climate adaptation must become an integral part of CMA planning going forward.</p> <p><u>Service Delivery</u> risks are most visible where datasets have not yet been fully integrated into HydroNET. For example, not all water quality data is currently feeding into the platform, partly due to delays and capacity constraints in laboratory testing. These gaps affect the completeness of dashboards and limit the ability of CMAs to rely on HydroNET for compliance and reporting. Data ownership and sharing arrangements also continue to require clarification, especially in relation to integration with other departmental systems such as IRIS.</p> <p>In conclusion, while the overall Technological and Governance is stable, the amber status of Environmental and Service Delivery risks reflects the ongoing need for integration, coordination, and strategic planning. The Committee noted that</p>

	resolving these issues will be crucial to strengthening HydroWISE as a tool for both national oversight and local operational decision-making.
2.3 Feedback on activities since the last Steering Committee Meeting	<p>Mr. Mackintosh reported extensively on the HydroNET team activities undertaken between April and August 2025. He highlighted that the period was marked by a consistent rhythm of contractor and project management meetings, ensuring close coordination between SAWS, HydroLogic, Emanti, and the Department of Water and Sanitation.</p> <p>A major focus during this time was on capacity building and training across all CMAs. Tailored two-day workshops were conducted in each region, blending refresher sessions for previously trained staff with deeper “no-regret”/ priority areas, most notably water auditing and water quality applications. These sessions incorporated live CMA datasets rather than hypothetical examples, which significantly enhanced their relevance and impact. Expectations of participants were captured at the outset of each session, and outcomes were carefully reviewed through structured feedback mechanisms, including the “What I Feel Like Expressing” (WIFLE) approach. This created a transparent process where trainees could directly link their learning needs to the practical outputs of the training. Feedback showed that while participants valued the improved functionality of HydroNET, only a minority were using the system regularly prior to the training. The workshops therefore served both as critical refreshers and as catalysts for increased uptake, equipping users with confidence to integrate HydroNET dashboards into their monthly and quarterly reporting requirements.</p> <p>In particular, participants expressed strong appreciation for the enhanced water auditing tool, which now allows for farm-level compliance insights, and for the automated reporting functions, which streamline the preparation of management reports. The user satisfaction survey conducted post-training confirmed high ratings (7.5 to 8.4 out of 10) for relevance, accessibility, and usefulness, but also pointed to the need for continued encouragement and support to translate training into routine operational use. The training also reinforced a sense of ownership at CMA level, as attendees could see their own local data visualised in dashboards. This practical orientation was repeatedly noted as a key factor in building trust in the system and motivating ongoing use.</p> <p>This period also featured a well-attended webinar in April, focussing on water auditing and water licensing. This event attracted over 150 registrations, with just above 100 participants ultimately joining. It combined South African case studies (including from IUCMA) with lessons from Australian counterparts, illustrating how HydroNET can be applied in diverse contexts. Feedback from this webinar was overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting the value of cross-country learning and the practical demonstrations of dashboard functionality.</p> <p>Mr. Mackintosh concluded that while the training and webinars had been successful in strengthening skills and showcasing system improvements, the challenge remains to embed HydroNET more firmly into daily practice across all CMAs.</p>

<p>2.4 Project implementation Plan for the next three months</p>	<p>Mr. Mackintosh noted that the period from September to November 2025 represents the closing stretch of Year 2, with the contract formally ending on 21 November. Activities during this phase are carefully sequenced to ensure that reporting is completed, lessons are consolidated, and stakeholders are well-prepared for the renewal period.</p> <p>A highlight of this phase will be the third webinar of this year, scheduled for 29 October 2025, entitled “<i>Turning Weather into Wisdom</i>” and will be hosted by SAWS. This event will showcase how HydroWISE integrates weather forecasts, ground truth observations, and satellite data to provide actionable insights for water management. The webinar is expected to replicate the strong attendance and enthusiasm of previous events, offering practical case studies and highlighting the application of weather intelligence in South Africa’s catchments.</p> <p>Mr. Mackintosh also confirmed that work on a contract extension proposal has commenced, with the aim of ensuring continuity of services and safeguarding the investments made in training and capacity building. The Committee was reminded that the final phase provides a critical opportunity to both reflect on what has been achieved and to prepare for the transition into a new cycle of innovation and collaboration.</p>
<p>2.5 New (and exciting) Developments</p>	<p>Ms. Reichard provided an in-depth presentation on the launch of HydroWISE, describing it as a significant milestone in the evolution of HydroNET. She explained that while HydroNET has provided a solid foundation for the current and past periods of the Contract, HydroWISE represents a generational shift to a more intelligent, adaptable, and future-ready platform. The system incorporates a suite of new and upgraded functionalities designed in direct response to feedback from the training sessions and CMA engagements earlier in the year.</p> <p>The upgraded water auditing tool now enables CMAs to rapidly identify over-abstraction at farm level, generate targeted inspection lists, and validate licences against the deeds system. Similarly, the water quality reporting tool has been re-engineered to align with both South African compliance frameworks and international reporting standards, enabling reports to be produced seamlessly for management and regulatory purposes.</p> <p>HydroWISE also introduces a usage monitoring dashboard that tracks logins and data requests across CMAs. This provides valuable insights into system adoption and highlights where additional support may be required. Ms. Reichard observed that while training spikes usage, there is often a decline afterwards, underscoring the need for new strategies to embed HydroWISE in daily workflows. To address this, HydroWISE introduces situational or on-the-job training through proactive alerts. These alerts can notify CMA officials of issues such as water quality exceedances, unusual abstraction patterns, or approaching extreme weather events. Training and support can then be delivered in real time, when users are most motivated to apply the system.</p> <p>This functionality also creates opportunities for international peer-exchange under the Blue Deal partnership, linking South African CMAs with Dutch counterparts to jointly address challenges.</p>

2.6 From Success to What's Next	<p>Ms. Hartsliet presented on the broader strategic context, drawing attention to the increasing complexity of water management in South Africa due to climate variability and shifting rainfall patterns. She emphasised that challenges such as delayed rainfall onset, shorter rainy seasons, multi-year droughts, and extreme storm events demand a more flexible and forward-looking management approach. These risks underscore the value of HydroWISE as a tool for preparedness, resilience, and collaboration.</p> <p>She highlighted five thematic areas where HydroWISE can play a transformative role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>early warning and preparedness</u>, by providing forecast-based alert systems • <u>integrated data use</u>, through dashboards that unify meteorological, hydrological, and water quality data • <u>capacity building</u>, by training local teams to interpret data for operational decision-making • <u>scenario planning</u>, using ensemble forecasts and long-term modelling to inform policy • <u>community engagement</u>, by providing user-friendly dashboards and alerts that communicate risks directly to the public. <p>Ms. Hartsliet stressed that without the extension of the subscription, CMAs and DWS risk losing access to real-time dashboards, forecast data, and integrated reporting tools. This would erode the progress made in training, capacity building, and system institutionalisation.</p> <p>The extension of the HydroWISE project, on the other hand, offers an opportunity to build on existing achievements, deepen integration with national digitisation initiatives, and ensure that HydroWISE continues to strengthen water governance across the country. She concluded that HydroWISE is more than a software platform; it is a critical enabler of smart, transparent, and resilient water management</p> <p>Ms. Bofilatos added that securing funding for the renewal of the HydroWISE subscription is now a departmental priority. A proposal has been submitted and will follow the DBAC process, with the aim of securing funding allocation before the end of the current contract, i.e. 21 November 2025.</p> <p>Ms Bofilatos acknowledged that this was not initially budgeted for, given the expectation that CMAs would by now be fully operational. However, in light of the delays, renewal will remain with the Department.</p>
2.7 General	<p>There were no further items added to the Agenda.</p>
3 Forum for Questions from Committee Members	<p>1. <u>Duplication of data</u>: Ms Muir asked how HydroWISE outputs, particularly water auditing and water quality data, will be integrated into existing compliance and enforcement processes. She express concern that without proper alignment, there could be a risk of duplication of effort. Ms Reichard responded that HydroWISE has been deliberately designed with an open source and secure architecture to enable integration with DWS systems, with the express intention of supporting synergy across multiple systems, and avoiding duplication.</p>

	<p>Action: Ms Bofilatos to convene a follow-up meeting with Ms Muir, DWS IT teams, HydroLogic and Emanti, to finalise an integration pathway that has agreed upon data flows, ownership rules, and authorisation levels (Deadline: end October 2025)</p> <p>2. <u>Integrated IT Ecosystem</u>: Mr Reddy flagged a concern that CMAs are experiencing confusion when multiple systems are presented without clear direction. How will HydroWISE be positioned as part of an integrated ecosystem, rather than as a parallel tool? Ms Bofilatos responded that it is not DWS's intention to create competition between systems but to provide a coherent suite of tools. HydroWISE will be embedded into the national framework alongside IRIS and NEWIS, and this aspect will be supported by clear communication.</p> <p>Action: Ms Bofilatos advised that the follow-up meeting as per the aforementioned point will also address this (Deadline: end October 2025).</p> <p>3. <u>Future National Steering Committee Meetings Invitations</u>: Ms Kruger enquired whether future NSC invitations could be broadened to include operational managers and technical leads from CMAs, rather than being limited to Chief Executives as direct representation would strengthen inclusivity and ensure that those using HydroWISE day-to-day have a voice. Ms Bofilatos agreed to broaden the invitation scope to the CMAs' operational managers and technical leads.</p> <p>Action: Ms Bofilatos to include the CMA operational managers and technical leads in the NSC mailing list (deadline: before next NSC).</p>		
4 Action Items	Action	Responsible	Deadline
	Finalise funding submission for HydroWISE subscription renewal	E Bofilatos	Before 21 Nov 2025
	Distribute October 29 webinar invitation to all stakeholders	M Hartslief	Early October 2025
	Distribute October 29 webinar invitation on DWS internal NewsFlash	E Bofilatos	Early October 2025
	Convene follow-up meeting on integration of HydroNET with NEWIS/IRIS	E Bofilatos	October 2025
	Update of NSC mailing list to include CMA operational managers and technical leads	E Bofilatos	Before next NSC
	Monitor system usage and provide usage reports at next review	L Reichard	November 2025
5 Closure	The chairperson thanked everybody for their attendance and inputs and closed the meeting.		

Notes Prepared by: Wendy Johnson, Grant Mackintosh and Michelle Harts lief



Chairperson Signature:

Ms Eustathia Bofilatos

Date:

25 October 2025