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INTERNET ARTICLE

Heat wave affects SA's dam levels

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Sweltering temperatures in large parts of the country are gradually reducing the average dam levels, prompting South Africans for sustained rainfalls to boost water resources. Statistics show the levels have dropped by four percent in the past four months when the temperatures started soaring.

Hot regions of Limpopo such as Musina and Lephalale this week peaked at 40 degrees Celcius while areas of Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West recorded an average of 38 degrees Celcius.

According to the latest weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation, the dam levels have dropped to 62,3%, a percentage drop compared to the same period last year. However, the good news is that there is 19 946,5 cubic metre volumes of water in the country's reservoirs. The figure is expected to improve soon with the regular summer rains that are expected in the first week of next month.

Free State, home to some of the biggest dams in the country, continues to lead the country with the highest dam levels at 71,4% dropping from 72,4% last week. Second on the table is Gauteng which registered a marginal drop, recorded 93,5% to. However, the province has the smallest and fewest dams that reach their capacity with the smallest rainfall. Northern Cape, which also has fewer and smallest dams, is third on the table at 83,4%.

Mpumalanga is among the stable provinces at 65,5%. Witbank and Middelburg dams on the Highveld, recorded 90,7% and 81,5% apiece. Loskop Dam improved slightly from 90% to 90,4%, while Ohrigstad is scraping on the surface at 9,1%.

Despite the hot temperatures in Limpopo, its dam levels improved slightly from 58% to 58,6% this week. Nandoni Dam almost reaching its capacity at 98,3%. Ironically the dam is forging ahead with its high levels despite a seering heat that peaked at 39 degrees on Tuesday. The dam supplies four local municipalities in the region, including Malamulela, Mutare and Makhado. Mutshedzi, Hans Merensky in Phalaborwa, Magoebaskloof between Boyne and Tzaneen, and Vergelegen dropped marginally from their full capacity to an average 98% dams. However, the situation remains gloomy in Mopani District where three major dams, Tzaneen, Middel-Letaba and Modjadji remained below 20%. The situation is dire in Giyani where its



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major source of water, Middel-Letaba, dropped to a measly 0,8%. Hydrologically, water extraction is strictly forbidden once a dam has reached the 10% threshold.

The water situation in North West remains fairly stable in large parts of the province as it recorded 61,7% this week. However, most villages in Madibeng and Bojanala districts are experiencing acute water shortages because of poor infrastructure and the absence of rainfalls.

The situation remains stable in Eastern Cape where for the past two weeks dam levels remained at 48,8%. For the past four years the province experienced a serious drought that has plunged most regions to acute water shortages. The situation is particularly dire in Butterworth where Gcuwa Dam has almost dried up and local residents rely on tinkered water for survival.

KwaZulu-Natal dams are fast approaching half their levels with the province dropping from 52,7 to 52,1 this week. Only two of the province's dams, Midmar and Driel Barrage, carry the hopes of sufficient water availability at 91,2% and 90,6% each. Midmar supplies Pietermaritzburg and eThekweni metros and smaller towns that include Cato Ridge, Richmond and Pinetown. The situation has become particularly desperate in Zululand and Umkhanyakude towns due to the absence of rainfalls. Last week Umkhanyakude fell under the District Development Model that includes DWS, the Provincial Government and the district council who will work together to tackle regional service delivery challenges

Although Western Cape has reached a 90% threshold, dam levels are beginning to drop slightly as the province approaches its hydrological cycle next month. The DWS report shows a marginal drop from 90,3 to 90,2% as rains are becoming far and few in between. Having emerged from the most severe drought in a century, Western Cape have become water savvy and have indulged in water saving practices to prepare themselves for a dry summer season.

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