



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Bumper season for South Africa's water - DWS report

12 March 2020

Recent heavy rains have boosted the country's dam levels by by a staggering 20% more than they were in the same period in 2020.

According to the latest weekly report on dam levels by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) dams are at 86,4% average nationally, higher compared to last year's 56,6%. This is thanks to a recent soaking rainfall that fell over large parts of South Africa, sufficiently so in the catchments to enhance most Water Supply Systems.

However, as the Autumn season begins to creep in, dam levels have also begun their downward slide as the rainfall dwindles across all nine provinces. According to the report, most dams dropped from their full capacity of above 100%. The impact of the drop of individual dams has led to the national average dropping to 86,4% this week. In some provinces figures show an average improvement of between 10% and 13% compared to the corresponding period last year.

Despite the scarcity of rain in the past week, Gauteng dams, though the smallest, are flowing at their full capacity at 100,9%, followed by the Free State at 99,7%. The biggest dam in the country, the Gariep, is located in the Free State.

The Integrated Vaal River System that consists of 14 dams has benefitted immensely from the rains in the different catchments that feed the System.

Northern Cape dams are bursting at the seams at 105% while Mpumalanga and Limpopo are languishing behind at still respectable levels of 88,4% and 88,1% respectively.

The heavy rains that accounted for the turn of fortunes in South Africa's water situation, came also as a result of the Tropical Storm Eloise that unleashed heavy storms in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. Subsequently, most dams in these provinces reached their full capacity overnight.

However, dry conditions still persist in large parts of Eastern Cape where dam levels have dropped to an alarming rate. According to the department's report the average province's dam level is 56,3%, the lowest in the country. For the past four years most regions in the province have experienced severe dry conditions due to poor rainfall. The dire situation led to the Provincial Government declaring the province a disaster area. The Nelson Mandela Bay region, which includes the City of Port Elizabeth, appears to be the worst affected by dry conditions. The two Water Supply Systems in the province, namely the Algoa and the Amathole continue to struggle. The Algoa Water Supply System recorded a measly 16,0% this week, down from 16,5% last week, and further lower than the 26,1% of 2020 at the same point. The Amathole Water Supply System stands at 37,4% compared to 37,6% last week and 41,4% a year ago.

Western Cape, whose dam levels rose exponentially as a result of heavy rains last year, has dropped to 56,1% this week. However, with the end of a dry summer hydrological season in sight, the winter rains are expected to boost the province's dam levels to higher levels. The South African Weather Services (SAWS) has predicted heavy rains for Cape Town between



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today and Thursday. The Western Cape Water Supply System stands at 73,8% this week; better than the 62,3% of last year at the same time.

In Mpumalanga's Lowveld region the Inkomati-Usuthu Water Integrated System is holding out with the dam levels in the region maintaining 88,4% . The area covers Kruger National Park and towns such as Mbombela, White River, Inkomazi, Bushbuckridge and Hazyview.

KwaZulu-Natal dams have also improved their levels from 60,7% last year to 72,2% this year. The Umgeni River Integrated System has contributed immensely to the water situation in Natal Midlands and eThekweni regions. The Spioenkop Dam in Bergville and the Driel Barrage in the Giants Castle recorded 100,8% and 101,6% each. The Umgeni Water Supply System had a dramatic recharge to an incredible 82,8% this week, absolutely much higher than the 67,8% of 2020. Dam levels in North West have also registered a drastic 15% improvement from 67,2% last year to 82,6% this week. However, parts of the province such as Ngaka Modiri and Bojanala regions are reportedly still struggling with access to potable water.

Limpopo's dam levels also went up from 70,6% last year to 88,1% this week, an improvement of 18%. The Polokwane Water Supply System has also improved drastically whilst the Luvuvhu Water Supply System overflowed at 103,4%.

However, with the winter season around the corner, DWS urges water users to be circumspect with their water use to survive the long spell of the dry season.

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