



INTERNET ARTICLE

Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership aiding municipalities towards Green Drop certification

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The Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership is on a mission to get six waste water treatment plants Green Drop certified in the Mpumalanga Province. The participating wastewater treatment plants and benefiting municipalities are Barberton and White River in City of Mbombela Local Municipality, Emthonjeni and Emgwenya in Emakhazeni Local Municipality, and Mhlathikop and Mhlathiplaas in Nkomazi Local Municipality.

The Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership aims to improve water quality of the Crocodile River through the optimisation of selected wastewater treatment works (WWTW) systems, capacity development and institutional strengthening. The partnership commenced in 2018 and runs in three phases with Phase 1 running from 2018 to 2022, the current Phase 2 running from 2023 to 2026, and the last Phase running from 2027 to 2030.

The partners in the Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership include the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), Dutch Water Authorities (DWA), Mpumalanga Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency (IUCMA), Mpumalanga Provincial Treasury, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA), Ehlanzeni and Nkangala district municipalities, and the participating local municipalities of City of Mbombela, Emakhazeni and Nkomazi.

The Crocodile River Blue Deal Partnership has outlined its objectives as follows: the overarching strategic goal is to improve the water quality of the Crocodile River, the tactical goal involves obtaining Green Drop Certification for all six participating Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs), and the operational goal is centered around the renovation, operation, and maintenance of the WWTWs.

On 16 November 2023, the Blue Deal Crocodile River MOU Oversight Committee held its annual feedback meeting to assess progress made by the Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership so far at the Mpumalanga Provincial Disaster Management Centre.

The purpose of the meeting was to report to the leadership and accounting officers, to profile and celebrate tangible positive results, impact, and progress made individually and collectively, to identify key bottlenecks or challenges for collective clearing and to share, pursue and secure opportunities arising through the partnership.



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The partnership has achieved several milestones, including the creation and execution of Green Drop Improvement Plans for all participating Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs). Notable progress has been made in refurbishing three out of the six WWTWs. Additionally, the participating municipalities have taken a leading role in the Mpumalanga sludge beneficiation and commercial use initiative, making strides in sludge classification.

The Water Quality and Monitoring Task Team closely scrutinised WWTW discharge and reported that while improvements have been recorded, achieving requirements remains a work in progress. The task team urges municipalities to invest in programs, plans, accredited laboratories, and flow-measuring devices for comprehensive data compliance.

The Technical Capacitation Task Team shared insights into the current Green Drop Score and set ambitious targets. By 2026 all municipalities aspire to achieve scores between 75-85% leading up to a score of above 90% in 2030, which secures a Green Drop Certification. A process audit that was conducted by DWS at Mhlatikop WWTW shows positive contribution towards the Green Drop score. This exchange of expertise among all partners enhances collective learning.

As this initiative is still work in progress, the Blue Deal Crocodile River Partnership is actively seeking the commitment and participation of all partners involved. The project aims to establish a Business Planning and Finance Task Team. It will be tasked with the responsibility of ring-fencing the sanitation budget, particularly for operations and maintenance (O&M). The team will also oversee the procurement process and ensure timely payments to service providers, with a special focus on laboratory services. These measures are crucial to achieving the project's goals of attaining Green Drop status for the participating Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs), ultimately contributing to the maintenance of a clean and healthy Crocodile River.

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