



water affairs


Department:
Water and Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 266 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above-mentioned question asked by Ms A T Lovemore (DA), is attached for your consideration, please.


DIRECTOR-GENERAL (Acting)
DATE: 25/8/09

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED


MS B P SONJICA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
DATE: 27. 08. 2009

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 266

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 26 JUNE 2009
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 4)

266. Ms A T Lovemore (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) (a) What has been the total cost of studies to determine ecological reserves since 26 August 1998, (b) how is the figure made up according to each ecological reserve determined and (c) which (i) have been implemented and (ii) are being monitored;
- (2) whether the results of the monitored ecological reserves indicate that the monitoring tools are effective; if not; what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (3) whether skills are available to conduct effective monitoring of ecological reserves by using the current methodologies; if not, why not; if so, how was this conclusion reached;
- (4) whether any new monitoring methodologies are being developed; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

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REPLY:

- (1)(a) The total expenditure on studies conducted to determine ecological Reserves since the NWA was enacted is calculated at approximately R 43 million.
- (1)(b) The above-mentioned figure takes into account a vast number of Ecological Reserve determinations that have been conducted, resulting from Water Use License applications and also water resource planning studies that were conducted by My Department.
- (c)(i) The phased implementation of various ecological Reserve determinations (as mentioned above) is considered through conditions set as part of water use licenses being issued by my Department, and by means of decisions relating to national water resources planning. We have also commissioned a comprehensive study to undertake a national review and audit of the status, implementation and success of the ecological Reserve as a mechanism to ensure that environmental flows are calculated and implemented. The result from this review study will be published towards the end of this financial year.
- (c)(ii) The Ecological Reserve Determinations are being monitored periodically through resource quality objectives which form part of our River Health Program. A key objective of this monitoring program is to assess and report information on river health in order to ensure the ecologically sound management of the country's rivers, and inform and educate South Africans about the health status of rivers. However, the ecological Reserve is lagging behind the determination process, due to the relatively slow response of ecosystem change, among other.

- (2) Yes. Recent monitoring conducted by the Cape Action for People and the Environment (C.A.P.E) programme in the Western Cape (a joint initiative between My Department, the South African National Biodiversity Institute and Cape Nature) has proved that the ecological Reserve can be achieved and monitoring has indicated that ecosystems can be kept in an acceptable condition, for instance through the releases of water from dams, and hence the effectiveness of such monitoring tools.
- (3) Yes, skills are available to conduct Monitoring of Ecological Reserves. However, South Africa does not have sufficient skills to address all the monitoring needs, hence we require a gradual shift from the determination of the ecological Reserve towards monitoring, reporting and enforcement to ensure the re-deployment of experience, skilled scientists and engineers to move from determination to monitoring and enforcement, while we continue to address the skills shortages through various training and capacity building initiatives by My Department in collaboration with various water sector institutions.
- (4) Yes, standard methodologies to determine the Ecological Reserve were compiled in 1999, and My Department (together with the Water Research Commission) is in the process of updating and refining these methodologies to make provision for effective resource quality monitoring of the ecological Reserve in particular.