



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WATER AND
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

2011-03-28

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MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 689 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above-mentioned question asked by Mr G R Morgan (DA); is attached for your consideration.

ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 25/03/2011

DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED

MRS B E MOLEWA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: 29-3-2011

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 689

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 07 MARCH 2011
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 04)

689. Mr G R Morgan (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) With reference to a certain report (details furnished), (a) what is envisaged in length of time as the medium to long term for the removal of salt loads from river system, (b) into which river system will the water containing the high salt loads be deposited, (c) how will salt loads be removed from the river systems if it is deposited over long distances and (d) what will the impact of these increased salt loads be on the river systems;
- (2) whether there is capacity within the river system to absorb these salt loads; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details? NW740E

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REPLY:

- (1)(a) The Department's medium-term target to start with the removal of salt loads from the Vaal River System is 2014.
- (b) In the short-term, partially treated underground mine water with a high salinity content will be released into the Blesbokspruit (East Rand Mining Basin), Klipspruit (Central Rand Mining Basin) and the Tweelopiespruit (West Rand Mining Basin).
- (c) The medium to long-term solution aims to remove all contaminants from the underground mine water through employing best available desalination technology.

In the short-term, the Department maintains fitness-for-use through dilution releases from the Vaal Dam. Local impacts due to salinity will be temporary in nature and will not warrant removal from the river system over long distances.

- (d) The Department plans to remove the entire salt load from the underground mine water in the medium to long-term, implying that there will be no salinity impact beyond 2014 originating from the three basins.

In the short-term, the saline discharges may result in local impacts, until the tributaries join the Vaal River main stem where dilution with good quality water ensures fitness-for-use below the Vaal Barrage.

- (2) The Vaal River System is close to reaching its assimilative capacity in certain reaches of the river thus the need to remove salt loads by 2014.

There are various sources of salinity in the Vaal River Basin, such as underground mine water, diffuse pollution, atmospheric fall-out and treated sewage water.

A Vaal River Strategy Steering Committee is overseeing the implementation of various strategies in the Vaal River System. These include an Integrated Water Quality Management Strategy that must ensure long term fitness-for-use of the Vaal River water.

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