



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

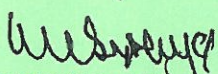
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Enquiries: M Mahunonyane
Telephone: 013 759 7300
Reference: 6/2/2/6

MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: QUESTION 1806 FOR WRITTEN REPLY

A draft reply to the above question asked by Mrs M Wenger (DA) is attached for your consideration.


DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 08/08/2012


DRAFT REPLY APPROVED/AMENDED


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

DATE: 2012/08/13

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NO 1806

DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 27 JULY 2012
(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 20)

1806. Mrs M Wenger (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs:

- (1) What are the (a) last three dates on which officials of the Department of Water Affairs have conducted inspection visits with regard to each mine that is being investigated for pollution of the Bosmanspruit Dam in Carolina and (b)(i) names and (ii) designations of the officials who conducted the inspection in each case;
- (2) whether any investigation was made with regard to the discharge from mines entering the Bosmanspruit Dam; if not, why not; if so, (a) why was it only noticed by her department once it affected the quality of the water and (b) what are the further relevant details;
- (3) whether an early warning system has been put in place to detect seepage of discharge from the specified mines into the receiving environment; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (4) whether her department had been informed of discharges from the mines before the water became contaminated; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details of her department's response;
- (5) whether her department has taken action to compel compliance with discharge standards and pollution prevention measures in terms of the National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998; if not, why not; if so, what (a) action and (b) has been the response by the responsible parties?

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REPLY:

- (1) Table 1 below indicates the dates, name and designations of officials who conducted inspection visits to mines being investigated for pollution of the Bosmanspruit Dam in Carolina. This is over and above the testing of water in the Carolina area and our fill-time (24/7) presence there as DWA and ICMA, since January this year when the water quality problem was experienced.

Table 1: Names of officials and designations

(a) Date	(b)(i) Names of officials	(b)(ii) Designations
25 April 2012	Names furnished	Details furnished
20 June 2012	Names furnished	Details furnished
26 July 2012	Names furnished	Details furnished

- (2) The investigations into the discharge through point and non-point sources into the Boesmanspruit Dam are on-going since the Carolina water pollution problem was reported during the first weeks of January of 2012. The investigations have culminated in the issuance of pre-directives in terms of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998) on 7 March 2012, to four mines namely, Northern Coal, Siphethe Coal, Union Colliery operated by BHP Billiton and Xstrata Msobo Coal within the Boesmanspruit sub-catchment. On 10 July 2012, Northern Coal and Siphethe Coal were issued with directives in terms of section 19 of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998). The directives required the two mines to implement certain pollution preventative measures so as to reverse the situation and ultimately restore the water quality within the Boesmanspruit system. The other two mines, Xstrata Msobo Coal and BHP Billiton are still being engaged as there is no direct linkage to these mines to the pollution incidence of January 2012. Once the investigation is completed a decision will be taken on whether Msobo Coal and BHP Billiton should be issued with directives.
- (3) In order to detect any further seepage or discharge of Acid Mine Drainage into the Boesmanspruit Dam, a comprehensive surface water monitoring programme has been implemented by the Inkomati Catchment Management Agency. **Water samples are collected on a weekly basis as part of this programme. In addition, Northern Coal and Siphethe Coal have been instructed to institute additional water monitoring programme and report back to the Inkomati Catchment Management Agency as per their water use licences and conditions of the directives.**
- (4) The main points of Acid Mine Drainage into the Boesmanspruit Dam only became evident during January 2012. Prior January 2012, the two mentioned institutions were only aware that extensive mining is occurring in Boesmanspruit sub-catchment and that water use authorisation, which would manage water management, particularly water from the mining operations, was on-going in an effort to implement source management strategy, which is part of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act No. 36 of 1998) water resources management strategies.
- (5) Any discharge from the four mines will be managed through the water use licenses. Northern Coal and Xstrata Mosbo Coal have been issued with water use licences, which clearly stipulate discharge standards that are applicable. Siphethe Coal has been instructed in the directive mentioned in paragraph (2) above to apply for a water use licence to provide for measures to address their water problem (within set time frames). Their licence, once issued, will contain discharge standards that will prevent water resource degradation. To date, Siphethe Coal has not submitted the water use licence application. BHP Billiton, which operated Union Colliery was closed and rehabilitated before the requirements of a water use licence and they have been issued with closure permits by the then Department of Minerals and Energy. However, due to the fact that their closed and rehabilitated operation still produces water, the engagement mentioned above will also look at the need to compel this mining house to apply for a water use licence that will specify water discharge standards where applicable.

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