



## **water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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Enquiries: L Manus  
Telephone: 082 802 1005  
Reference: 6/2/2/6

### **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

#### **FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

#### **QUESTION NO 999**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 18 MARCH 2022**  
**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 11)**

**999. Mr L J Basson (DA) to ask the Minister of Water and Sanitation:**

- (1) (a) What steps is his department taking to rehabilitate the Wilge River in Mpumalanga where effluent water from an unrehabilitated coalmine is destroying the ecology for a distance of over 55km, (b) what intervention will be put in place to prevent this from happening again and (c) who has been found to be responsible for the disaster.
- (2) how does his department intend to monitor and protect our rivers, streams and wetlands in the future.
- (3) what (a) number of other unrehabilitated mines pose a risk of damaging our rivers, (b) are the names of the rivers that are at risk and (c) how does his department intend to deal with this situation?

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### **MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION**

- (1)(a) The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) issued a Directive instructing Kromdraai Mine to appoint a suitably qualified environmental consultant to compile a rehabilitation plan for all the areas affected by the pollution incident. The issued Directive also indicated that the

rehabilitation plan ought to have clear timeframes and descriptions of how and when each remedial action will be implemented. The company subsequently submitted the draft rehabilitation plan. The DWS has assessed and accepted the rehabilitation plan for implementation.

One of the important aspects that were committed in the draft rehabilitation plan is the ecological restoration of the system. This aspect will be implemented over time as containment or curbing of pollution is prioritised to prevent potential immigration. The DWS is currently monitoring implementation of compliance to the Directive to ensure all reasonable measures are taken to contain and minimise the effects of the incident.

Further, the Kromdraai Mine and the DWS have agreed on the following:

- The mine will appoint an independent qualified environmental consultant as prescribed in the Directive to develop sustainable rehabilitation plan
- The mine will implement remedial measures to minimise and curb pollution, these measures include, amongst others, clean-up of the pollutants from the river system and the removal of fish carcasses from the Wilge River
- The Kromdraai Mine has requested approval from the DWS to release water from Bronkhorspruit and Witbank Dams to assist with the flushing of affected areas, which has been granted
- A Final Rehabilitation Plan will be submitted to the DWS by 30 April 2022

(1)(b) The DWS conducted an investigation after receiving reports of fish kill at Wilge River system. Findings of the investigation revealed that there was a pollution incident that had occurred at Kromdraai Mine on approximately 14 February 2022. The incident was caused by an old Mine shaft that collapsed which led to an overflow of polluted water from the mine into the watercourse. The Department served the facility with a Directive to immediately rectify the contravention. The Department directed the facility to, amongst others:

- take reasonable measures to contain, minimise the effects of pollution incident,
- undertake clean-up procedures,
- remedy the effects of the incident.

The Kromdraai Mine submitted an action plan, and the Department is currently monitoring implementation thereof. The DWS has recently engaged the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) to request the inclusion of criminal investigators from DFFE to the investigative team. The investigation will determine the criminal liability based on the evidence collected and the National Prosecuting Authority will decide whether to prosecute and which parties should be prosecuted.

(1)(c) Kromdraai Mine which is a section of Khwezela Colliery.

(2)(a) The DWS has a compliance monitoring programme to ensure compliance by water users, with the conditions of the water use authorisation, including the discharge of water into the water resources. Furthermore, the department has a regular sampling programme which serves as an early warning system for water quality risks.

2(b) The department has identified and assessed catchments at high risk for acid mine drainage and is developing mitigation plans to proactively manage these aspects.

- 3 The lead authority for mining is the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) and the details on the total number of the un-rehabilitated mines can be obtained from the DMRE.

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DRAFT REPLY: RECOMMENDED/ NOT RECOMMENDED/ AMENDED

  
**DR SEAN PHILLIPS**  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

DATE: 08/04/22 ✓

DRAFT REPLY: APPROVED/ NOT APPROVED/ AMENDED

  
**MR SENZO MCHUNU, MP**  
**MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION**

DATE: 19/04/2022