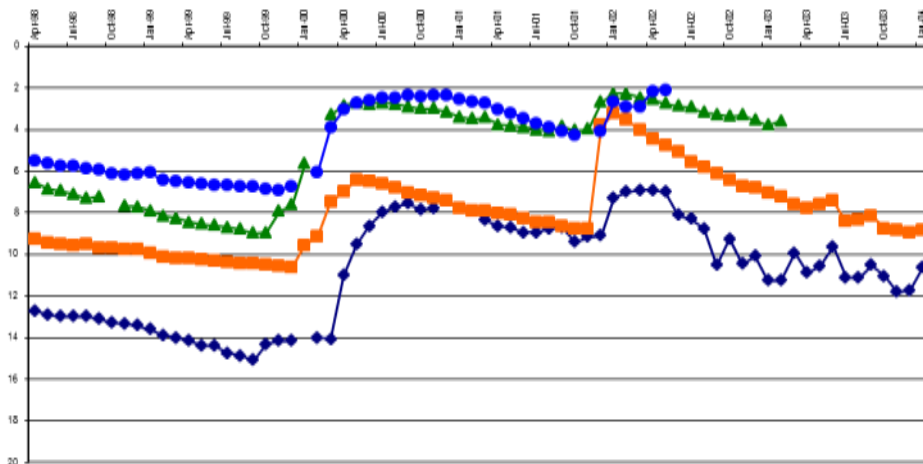


LIMPOPO REGION

QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT ON GROUNDWATER LEVEL TRENDS



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SEPTEMBER 2016

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SUMMARY

The groundwater level status discussed in the report represent the situation on 30 June 2016, which is the end of the 3rd quarter of the hydrological year and midway through the dry season. Drought conditions resulting in very limited groundwater recharge since 2014 is evident, with a notable decline in water levels since then. Groundwater levels at 89.3% of monitoring stations are currently lower than the same time the previous year. Despite the two-year decline present at almost all monitoring stations, is the general status of the groundwater levels still considered to be healthy in most instances. Historical data indicates that current levels are generally still much above the critical levels reached in previous droughts such as the early nineties. If the dry conditions however persists for a prolonged period, the rate of decline will accelerate over time and the situation may become critical. Three areas of possible concern have been identified due to continuous declining water levels and an apparent lack of recharge during normal seasonal rainfall. An accurate assessment of the current status in these areas can unfortunately not be made as no long-term data in these areas is available.

Indications from current forecasts are that the probability for a better rainy season then the previous is good. Unfortunately forecasts show that heavy rainfall very early in the season is not a high probability.

Drying up of surface water resources such as streams and small dams, especially in rural areas is leading to more dependency on groundwater. As a result monitoring boreholes are being vandalised to be used as s source of water. This is achieved by dipping empty containers down the hole utilising the suspension ropes for the electronic loggers and hauling water from the borehole. Instruments are vandalised, stolen or dumped down the hole. In some instances pumps are installed in the monitoring boreholes. At formal groundwater supply schemes the tendency is to increase the abstraction from supply boreholes which lead to over abstraction and ultimately failing of boreholes.

The situation emphasise the importance of groundwater as alternative source but it can only be sustainable if managed properly.

1. BACKGROUND

The report reflects the status at the end of the third quarter of the hydrological year which is also midway through the dry season. Electronic groundwater level data was downloaded during July and August 2016 and processed in September

Groundwater level trends and comparison to previous levels are discussed per secondary drainage area.

The distribution of the monitoring network is illustrated by **MAP 1**.

2. GROUNDWATER LEVELS

The groundwater levels at some sites are directly impacted by nearby pumping. In calculation of averages for tables 1 and 2, data from stations directly affected by nearby abstraction were not included.

2.1 DIFFERENCE IN GROUNDWATER LEVELS; 1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2016 (TABLE 1)

Some stations indicating a rise in groundwater level are related to pumping and can not be considered to be a true reflection. Only 8.7% of stations with data for this period indicate an actual rise in groundwater level due to some very limited late recharge. Groundwater levels at 89.13% of the stations with data for this period have declined since the start of the dry season.

The distribution of monitoring stations with higher or lower groundwater levels is illustrated by **MAP 2**.

1 April to 30 June 2016			
Total stations	196		
With data	184 Stations	93.9%	
Water level	Number of stations	Average(m)	%
Down	164 Stations	-0.62	89.13%
Up	19 Stations	0.54	10.33%
No change	1 Stations		0.54%
No Data	12 Stations		
Total	196		100.00%

TABLE 1

2.2 DIFFERENCE IN GROUNDWATER LEVELS; 30 JUNE 2015 TO 30 JUNE 2016 (TABLE 2)

89.33% of the monitoring stations indicated lower water levels than that recorded the same time last year. The average decline is 1.5m. Six of the stations with higher water levels are due to pumping levels measured and only 7.3% actually indicate a true rise.

The distribution of monitoring stations with higher or lower groundwater levels is illustrated by **MAP 3**

30 June 2015 to 30 June 2016	
Total stations	196

With data	178 Stations	90.8%
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Water level	Number of stations	Average(m)	%
Down	159 Stations	-1.54	89.33%
Up	19 Stations	0.59	10.67%
No change	0 Stations		0.00%
No Data	18 Stations		
Total	196		100.00%

TABLE 2

3 GROUNDWATER LEVEL TRENDS IN THE DIFFERENT SECONDARY DRAINAGE AREAS

The positions of monitoring stations used for discussion of trend graphs in each drainage is indicated on the relevant map for the drainage.

3.1 DRAINAGE AREA A4 (MAP 4)

Groundwater levels in the upper to middle reaches of the drainage generally indicate normal seasonal fluctuations over some years. Despite some recharge indicated in April 2016 is the limited recharge over the past two seasons clearly visible from the general decline since December 2014 (**GRAPH 1**)

In the lower reaches or discharge area of the drainage groundwater levels indicate little to no seasonal fluctuation. (**GRAPH 2**)

Despite this are groundwater levels generally stable with the exception of two stations in the north east of the drainage that are characterised by a constant decline in groundwater levels, as is also the case at some nearby stations in the adjoining A5 drainage area.

3.2 DRAINAGE A5 (MAP 5)

Groundwater levels in the upper reaches of the drainage indicate stable conditions with normal seasonal fluctuation. The current groundwater levels in this area represent a healthy status but the lack of recharge since 2014 can be seen from the declining trend since April 2014 (**GRAPH 3**)

In the lower reaches of the A5 drainage area the situation is not as favourable. Groundwater levels are continuously declining with little or no evidence of recharge for some years now. (**GRAPH 4**). This trend is also displayed at some stations in A4 and A6 drainage areas adjacent to this area.

3.3 DRAINAGE A6 (MAP 6)

Groundwater levels is still considered to reflect a good status despite the limited recharge the past two seasons (**GRAPH 5**). The graph represent the general groundwater level trends in most of the drainage area. The declining trend since 2014 can also be noted at the end of the graph.

It is also clear that periodic periods of rise and decline is normal. Compared to the historical levels displayed in the long-term, current levels are still healthy.

Groundwater levels at some stations in the north western part however are displaying a constant decline. The groundwater level time series of two of these stations are presented as an example (**GRAPH 6**)

3.4 DRAINAGE A7 (MAP 7)

The current status of groundwater levels in the A7 drainage in general, is considered healthy when compared with historical levels (**GRAPH 7**) The two-year decline since 2014 as discussed above is also, as in all drainages, present in the groundwater level trends but is currently still no reason for concern. The declining trend is illustrated by (**GRAPH 8**)

3.5 DRAINAGE A8 (MAP 8)

Groundwater levels in the A8 drainage are very stable and characterised by normal seasonal fluctuations. (**GRAPH 9**).

The groundwater level at A8 Mabvete however, indicate a constant decline and corresponds with trends displayed by a number of monitoring stations in the adjacent A9 drainage area.

3.6 DRAINAGE A9 (MAP 9)

Clear seasonal fluctuations can generally be noted at most stations in the upper reaches of the A9 drainage with the two-year decline also apparent here. (**GRAPH 10**). Seasonal fluctuations at some stations such as A9Tshidzivhe, A9Tswera and A9Vhurivhuri is very prominent indicating quick recharge followed by outflow. The groundwater levels at A9Mailaskop and A9Gondenani are impacted by nearby abstractions and indicate a declining trend similar to that displayed by groundwater levels in the lower reaches of the drainage.

The lower reaches of the Mutale River drainage is characterised by steady declining groundwater levels (**GRAPH 11**). Despite some recharge from 2012 to 2014, the decline still continues. The stations is highlighted in red on (**MAP 9**)

3.7 DRAINAGE B3

The groundwater level at only one of the four monitoring stations in this drainage is un-impacted and it is impossible to come to any conclusions on the status of groundwater in the drainage as a whole except that some areas are heavily impacted on. The groundwater status around Tuinplaas and Settlers has long been a matter of concern and continue to be so (**GRAPH 12**).

3.8 DRAINAGE B5 (MAP 10)

Some long-term data is available in this drainage and as with the A6 and A7 drainages, comparison of current and historical trends indicate a still healthy status(**GRAPH 13**)

3.9 DRAINAGE B7 (MAP 11)

Groundwater levels in this drainage indicate a stable condition with seasonal fluctuations around a mean. The current two-year decline in water levels is also very apparent. The groundwater level status is still considered to be healthy **(GRAPH 14)**

3.10 DRAINAGE B8 (Map 12)

Groundwater level trends in the northern part of the drainage drained by the Koedoes, Middle and Klein Letaba Rivers differ drastically from that in the southern part drained by the Great Letaba River.

A constant decline with very little to no seasonal fluctuation characterise groundwater levels in the northern part of the B8 drainage. Considerable rainfall in the 2012-2013 wet season did not have any apparent impact on the groundwater levels. Groundwater in this area may be at risk.**(GRAPH 15)**

Groundwater level trends in the southern part display stable conditions with regular seasonal fluctuations. The decline from 2014 onwards is prominent for station B8Mpangani **(GRAPH 16)**. Groundwater level status is also still considered to be healthy.

3.11 DRAINAGE B9 (MAP 13)

The four monitoring stations in the B9 drainage indicate an underlying very slow decline despite some seasonal fluctuations at B9Mukhomi and B9Maphophe. **(GRAPH 17)** This trend is somewhat similar to that displayed by groundwater levels in the adjoining B8 drainage but not as prominent.

4 RAINFALL

4.1 PERCENTAGE OF NORMAL RAINFALL; JULY 2015 TO JUNE 2016

(FIGURE 1). Compiled from maps obtained from the South African Weather Services give clear indication of the low rainfall recorded in Limpopo for the past two seasons.

5 SEASONAL FORECASTS

Precipitation probability maps obtained from the United States Of America's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration web site <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/> can be viewed as **(FIGURE 2)**

The text provided on the figure is self explaining. Indications currently are of a more favourable rainfall outlook from December 2016 onwards

Rainfall probability forecasts compiled by the South African Weather Services also indicate more favourable conditions for above normal rainfall from December 2016 onwards **(FIGURE 3)**.

6 IMPORTANCE OF GROUNDWATER MONITORING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The impact from drought on water resources is sooner apparent than on groundwater. With the current state of dams in Limpopo below 50% of capacity the importance of groundwater,

especially in rural settings, can not be ignored, but sustainable use of groundwater as with any resource, depends on sound management. Management of groundwater is based on proper monitoring of groundwater levels, quality and abstraction volumes.

6.1 THE RESULT OF LACK OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT; B5 BYZONDERHEID 2 (GRAPH 18)

This is the 3rd consecutive report in which this example is included. The decline continues and is currently the most extreme case identified by the monitoring network. As the borehole where the abstraction took place has reportedly failed it may well be that the forced discontinuation of abstraction will result in some recovery of the water level. A good recharge event will however be needed for the aquifer to recover.

7 AREAS OF POSSIBLE CONCERN

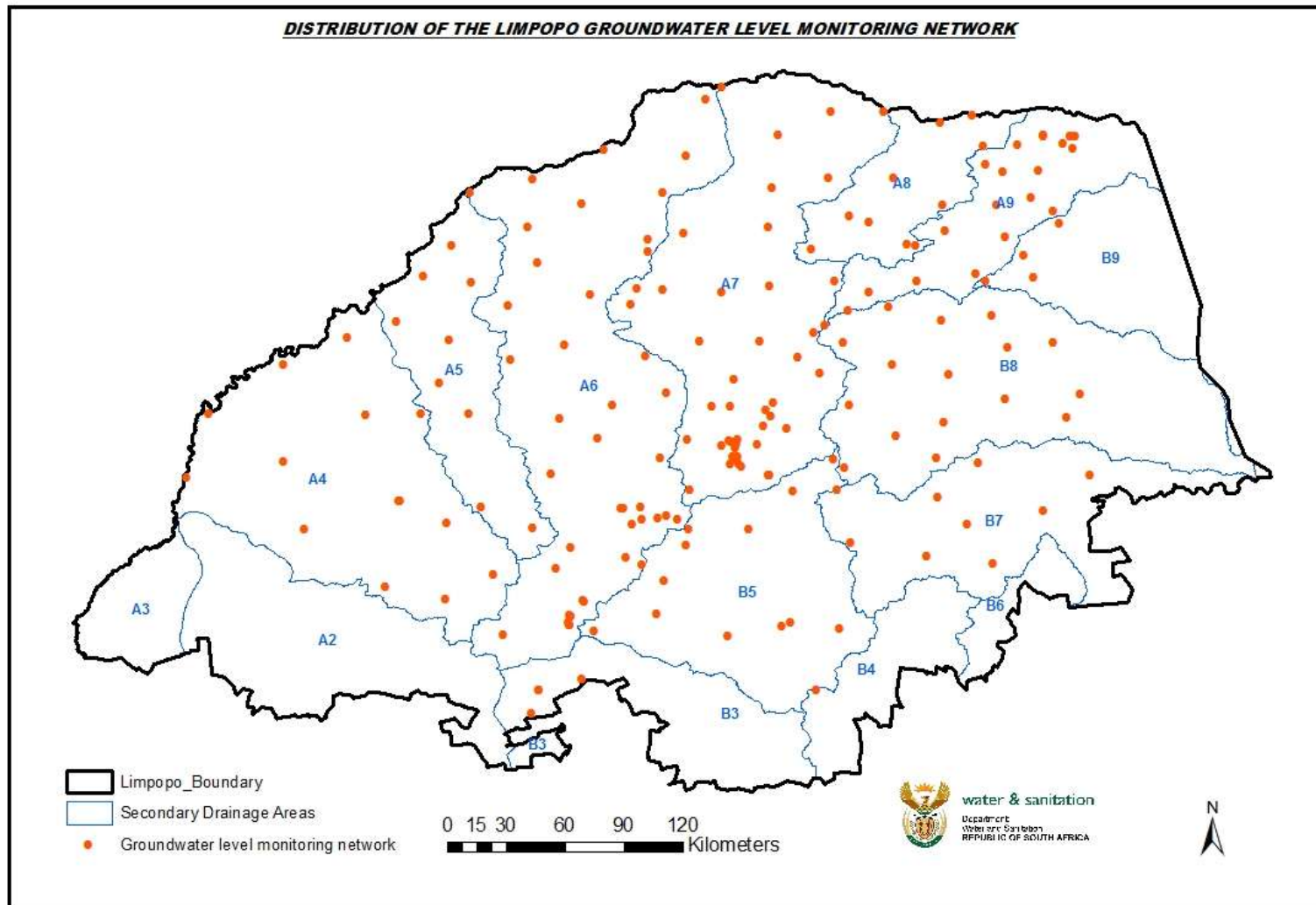
Three areas of possible concern if the drought persists have been identified from continuous declining groundwater levels and little to no indication of recharge. The monitoring stations in question are highlighted in red on **(MAP 14)**

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

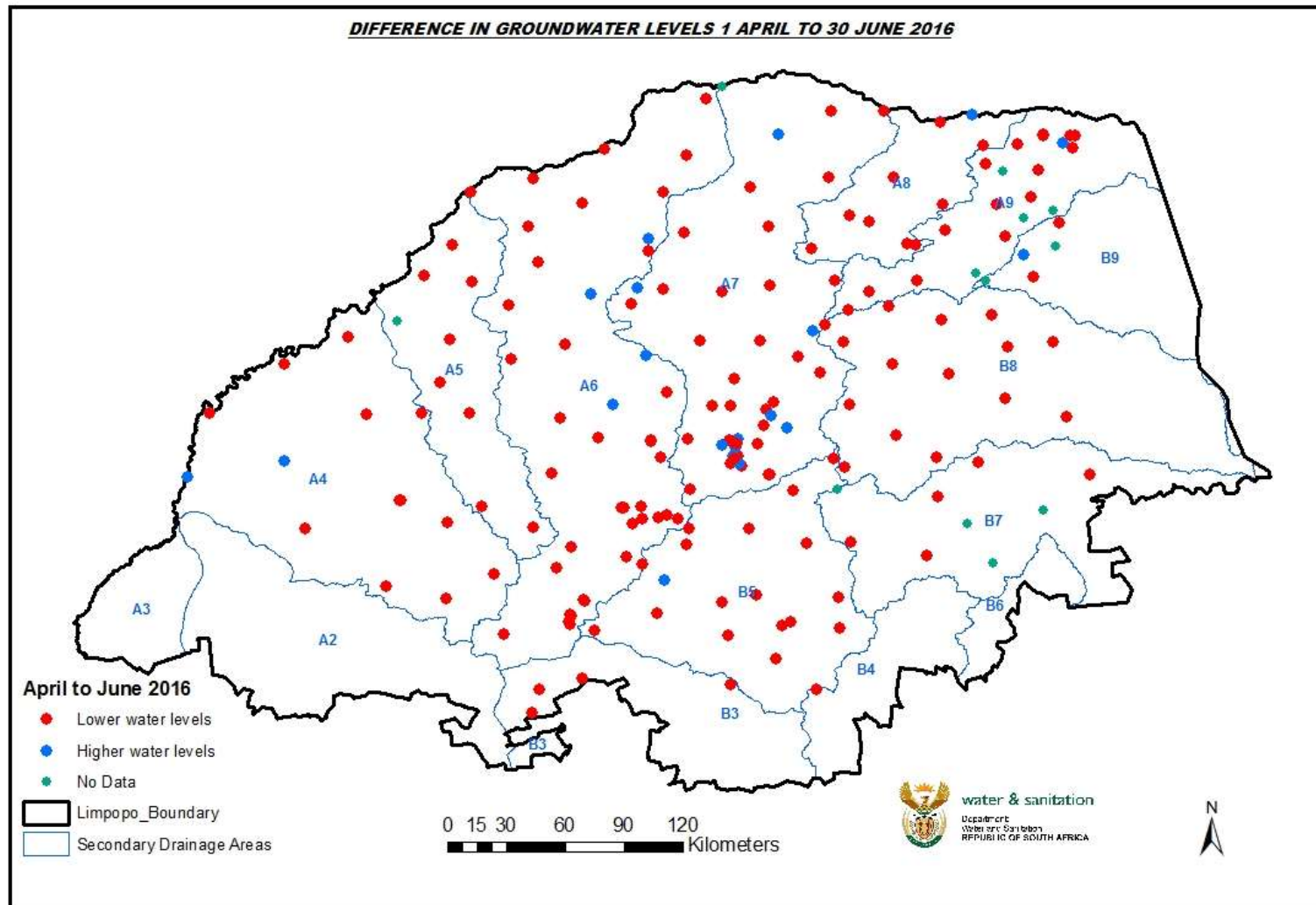
Percentage of normal rainfall: South African Weather Services: <http://www.weathersa.co.za>

Detail forecasts: South African Weather Services: <http://www.weathersa.co.za>

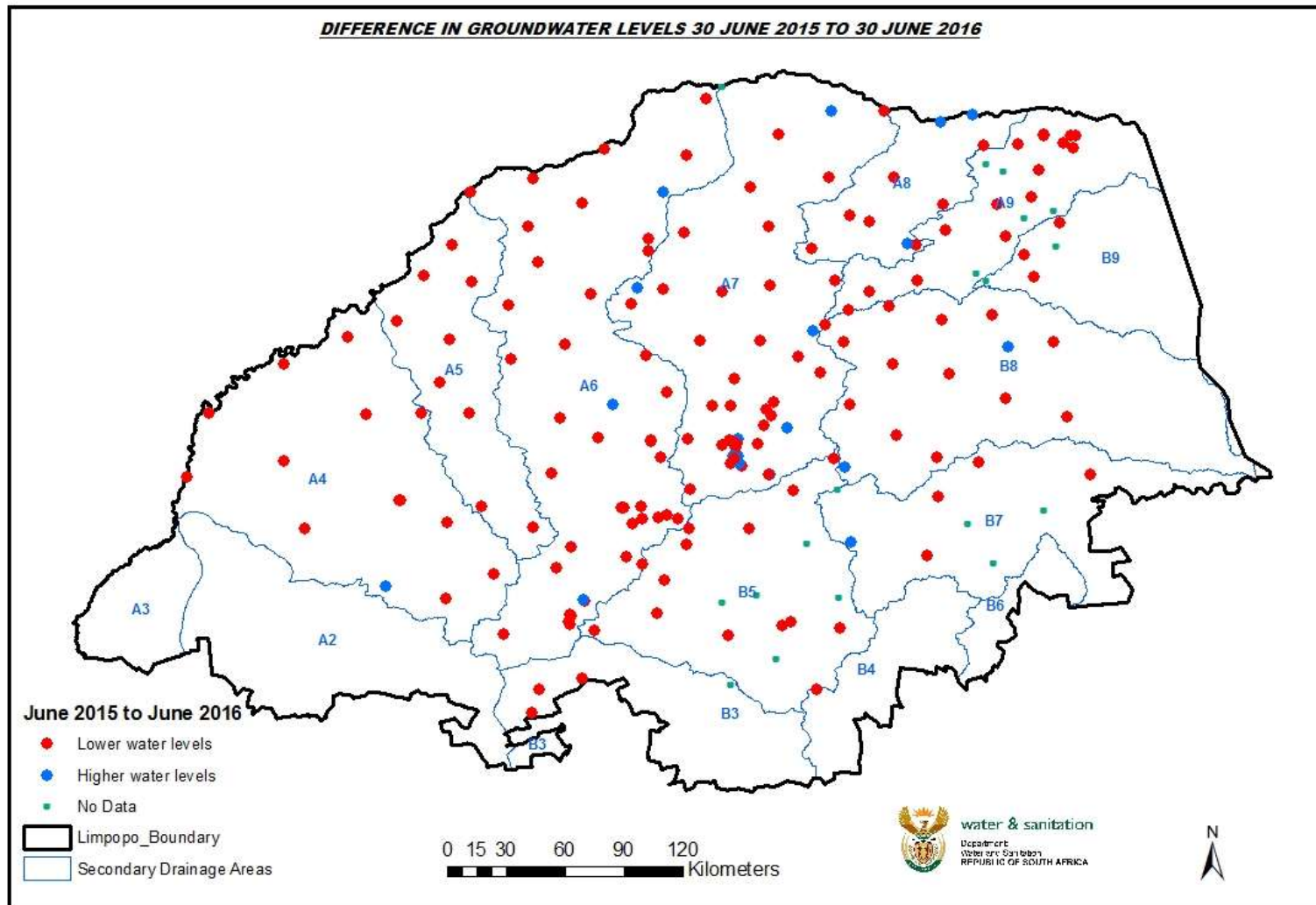
Precipitation probability forecasts: U. S government , National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>



MAP 1

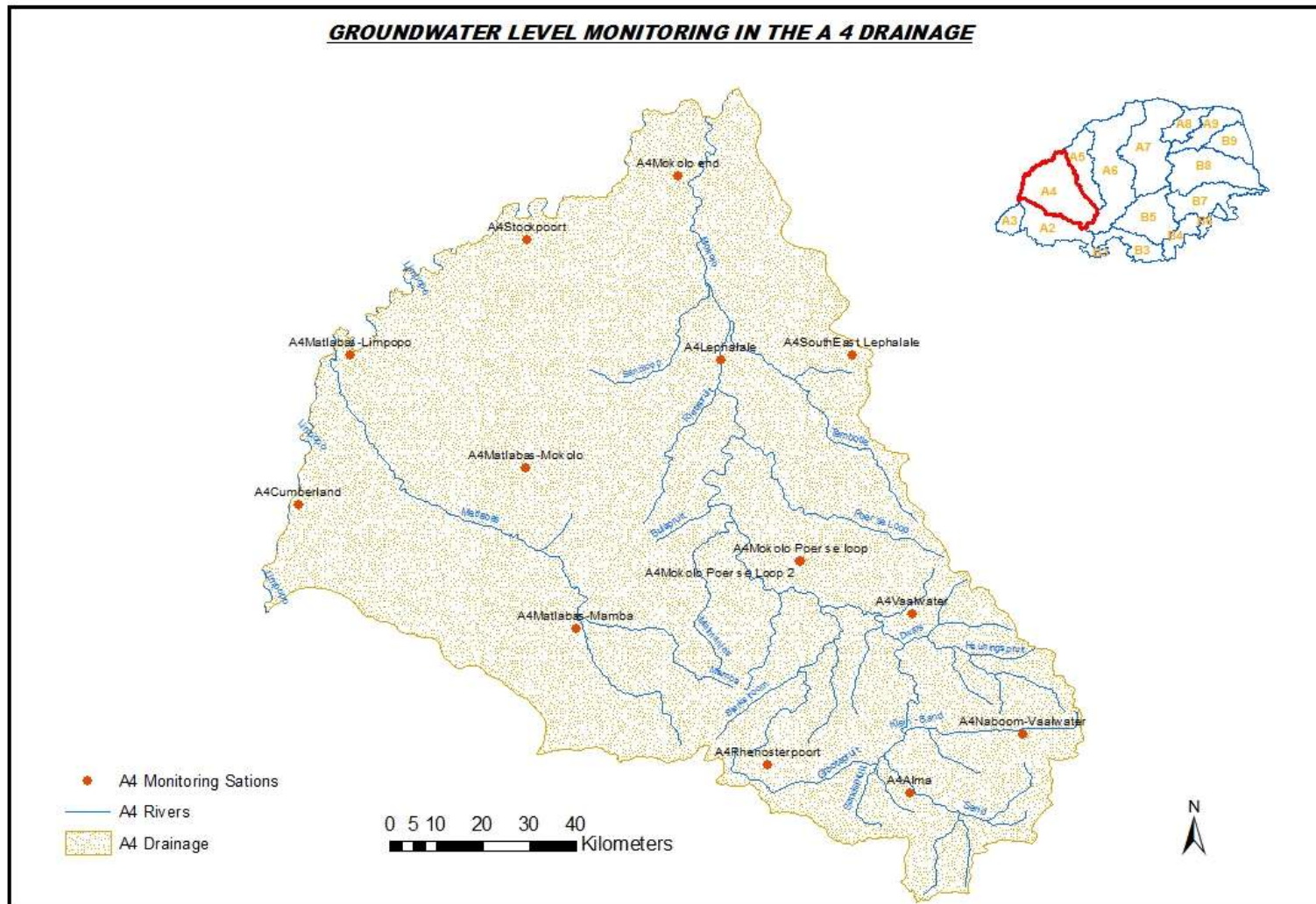


MAP 2



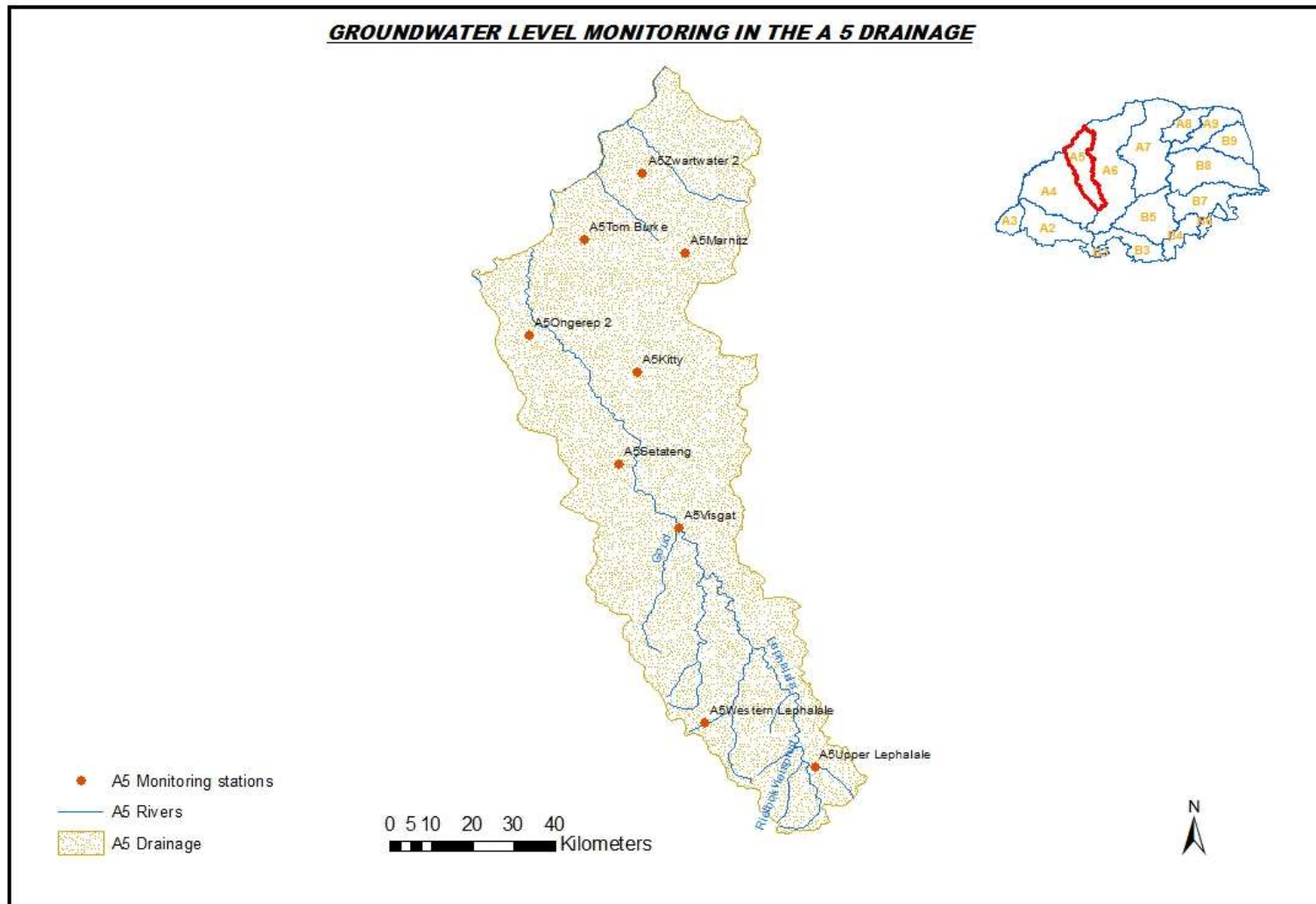
MAP 3

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE A 4 DRAINAGE



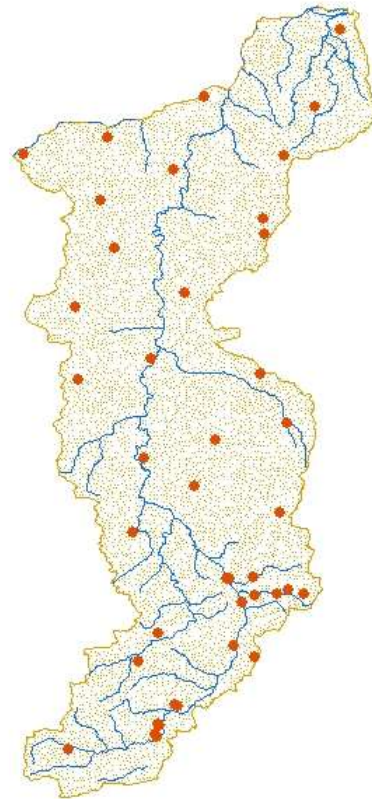
MAP 4

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE A 5 DRAINAGE

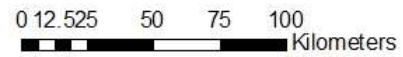


MAP 5

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE A6 DRAINAGE

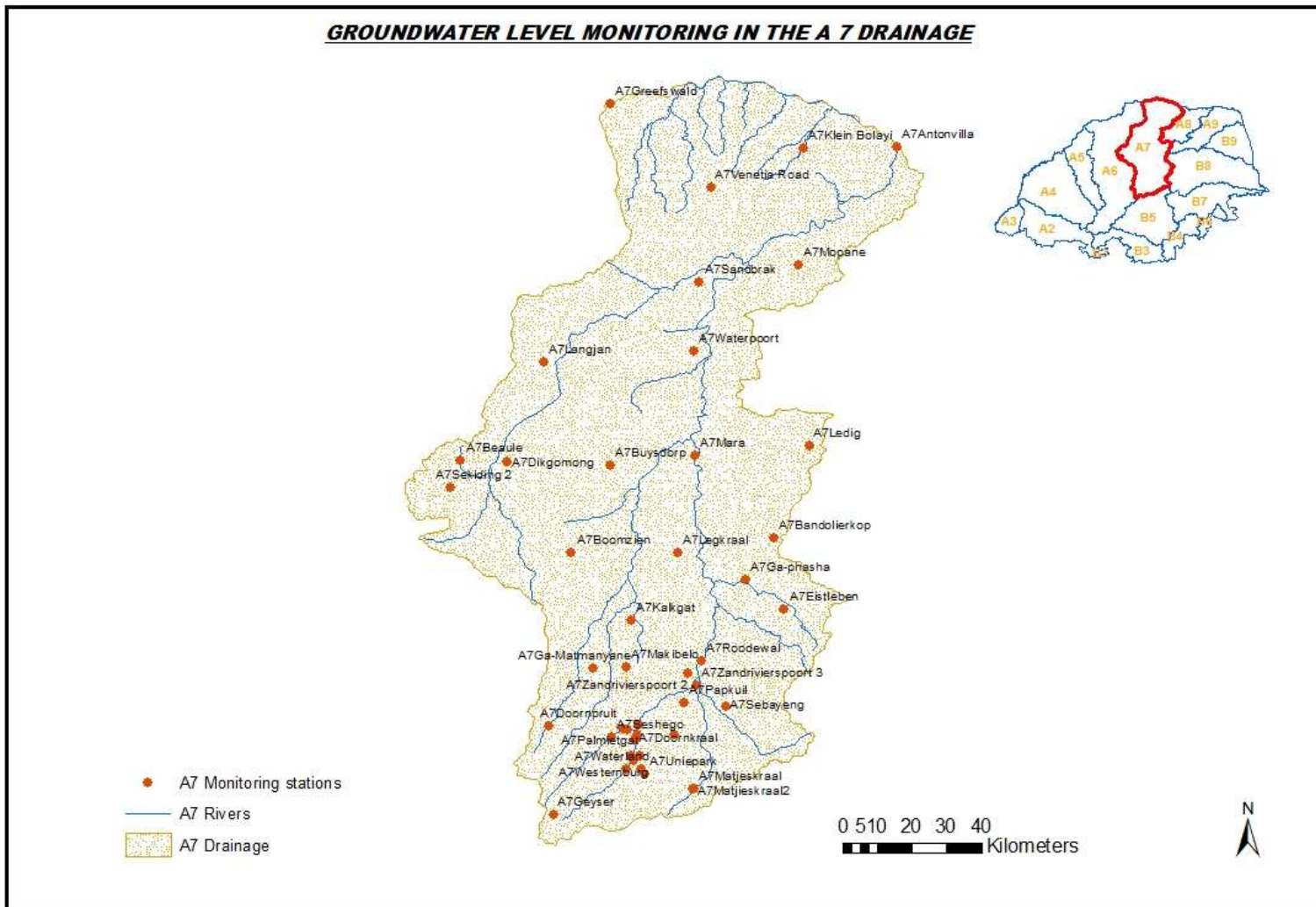


- A6 Monitoring stations
- A6 Rivers
- ▨ A6 Drainage



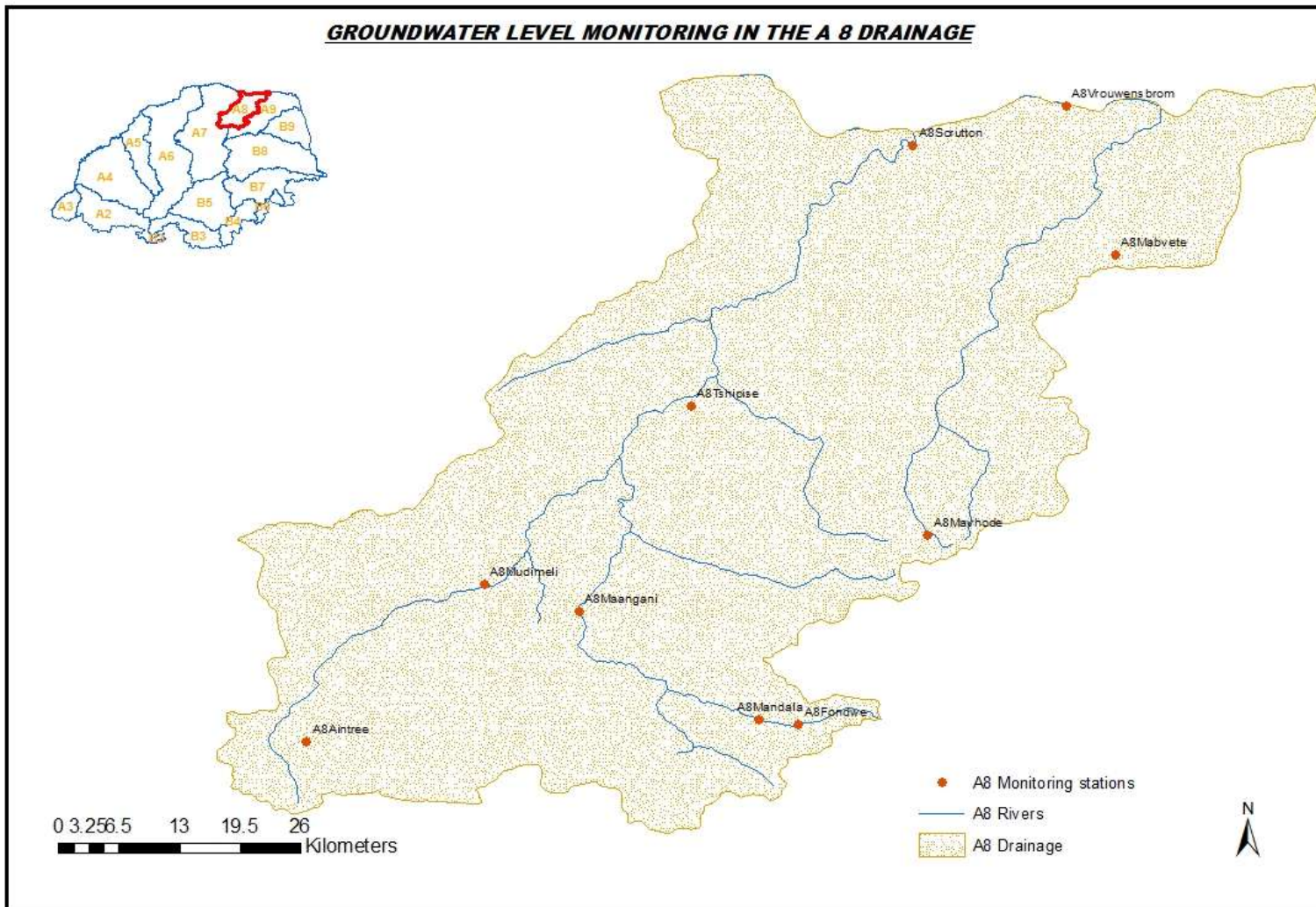
MAP 6

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE A 7 DRAINAGE

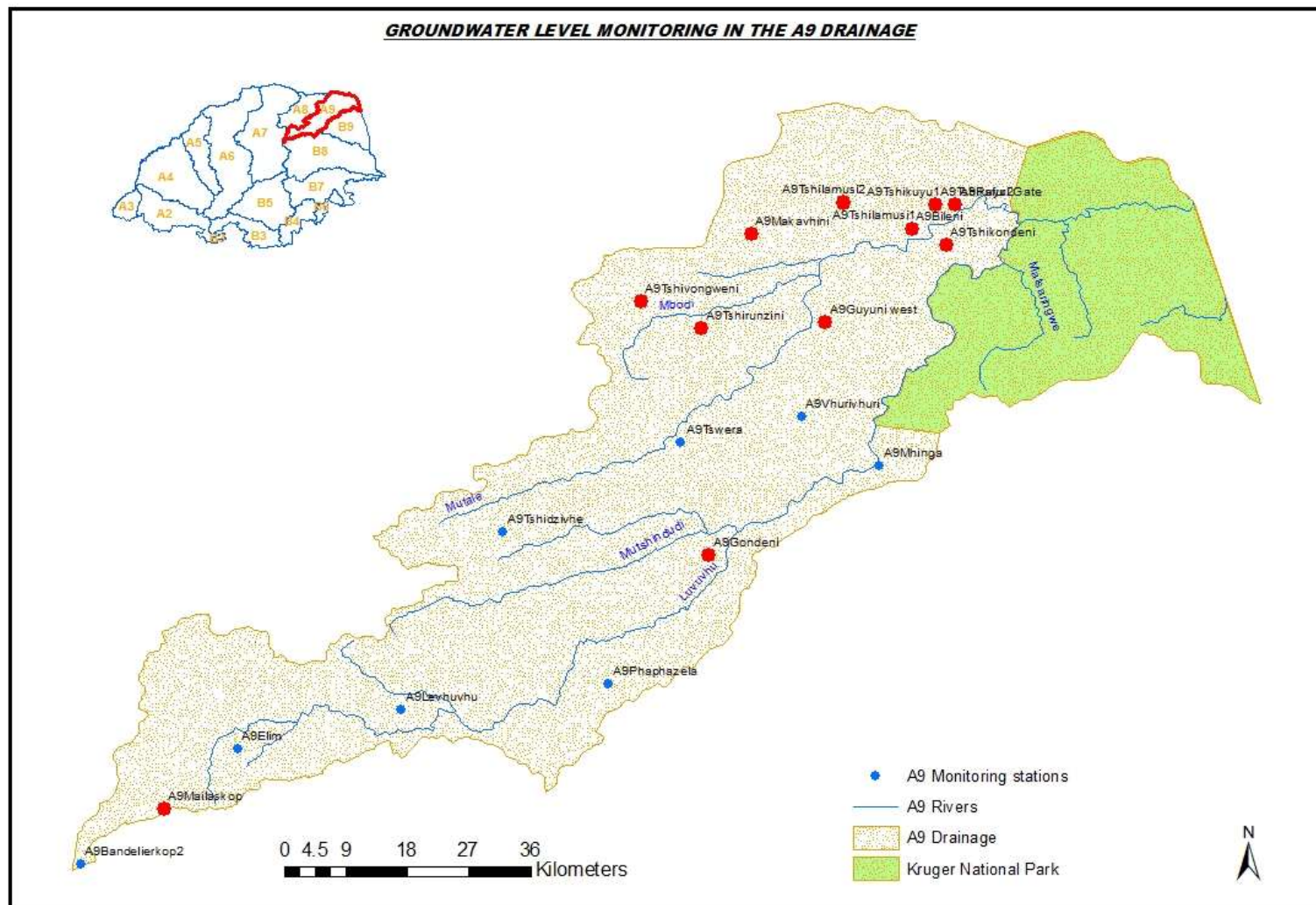


MAP 7

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE A 8 DRAINAGE

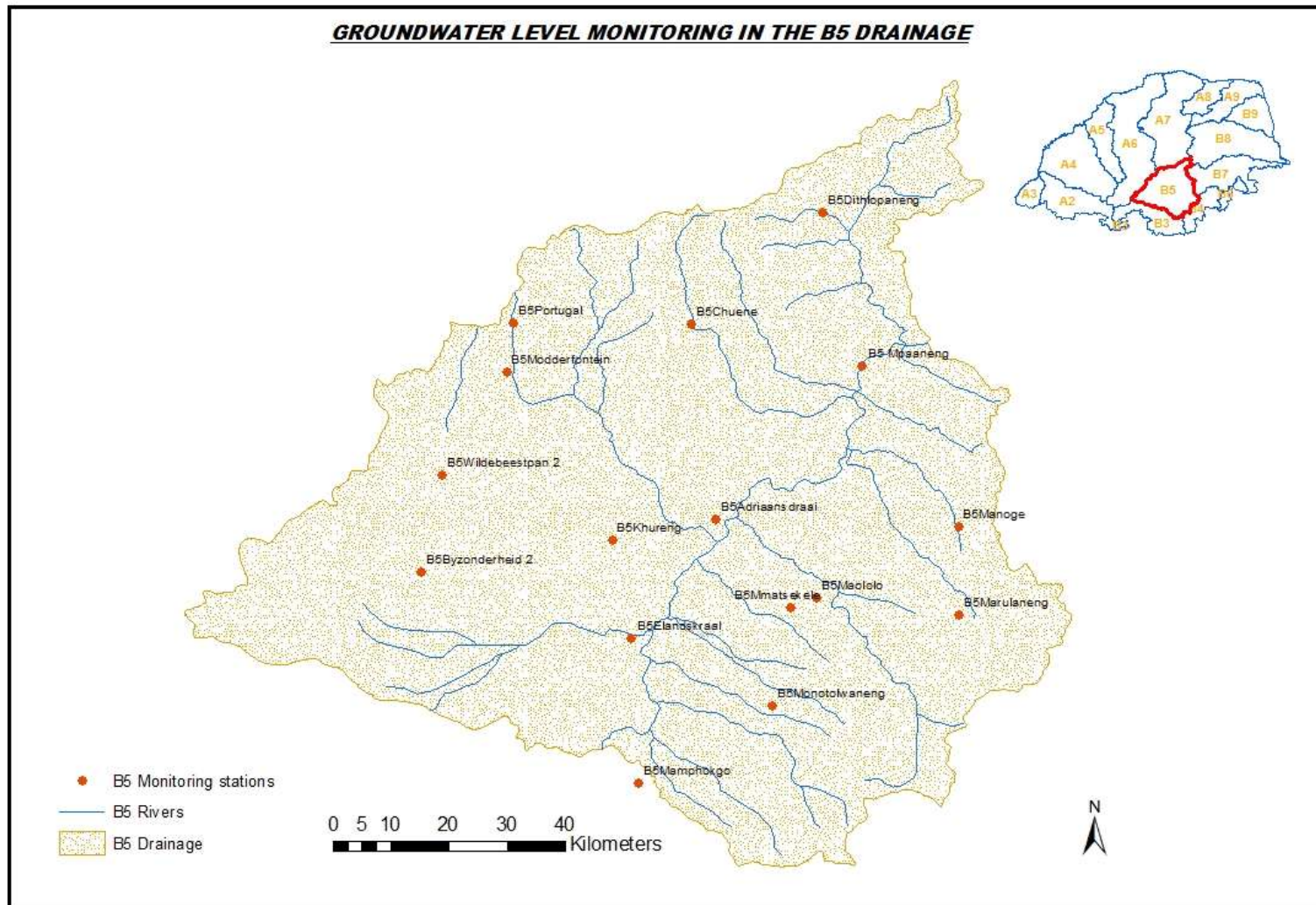


MAP 8



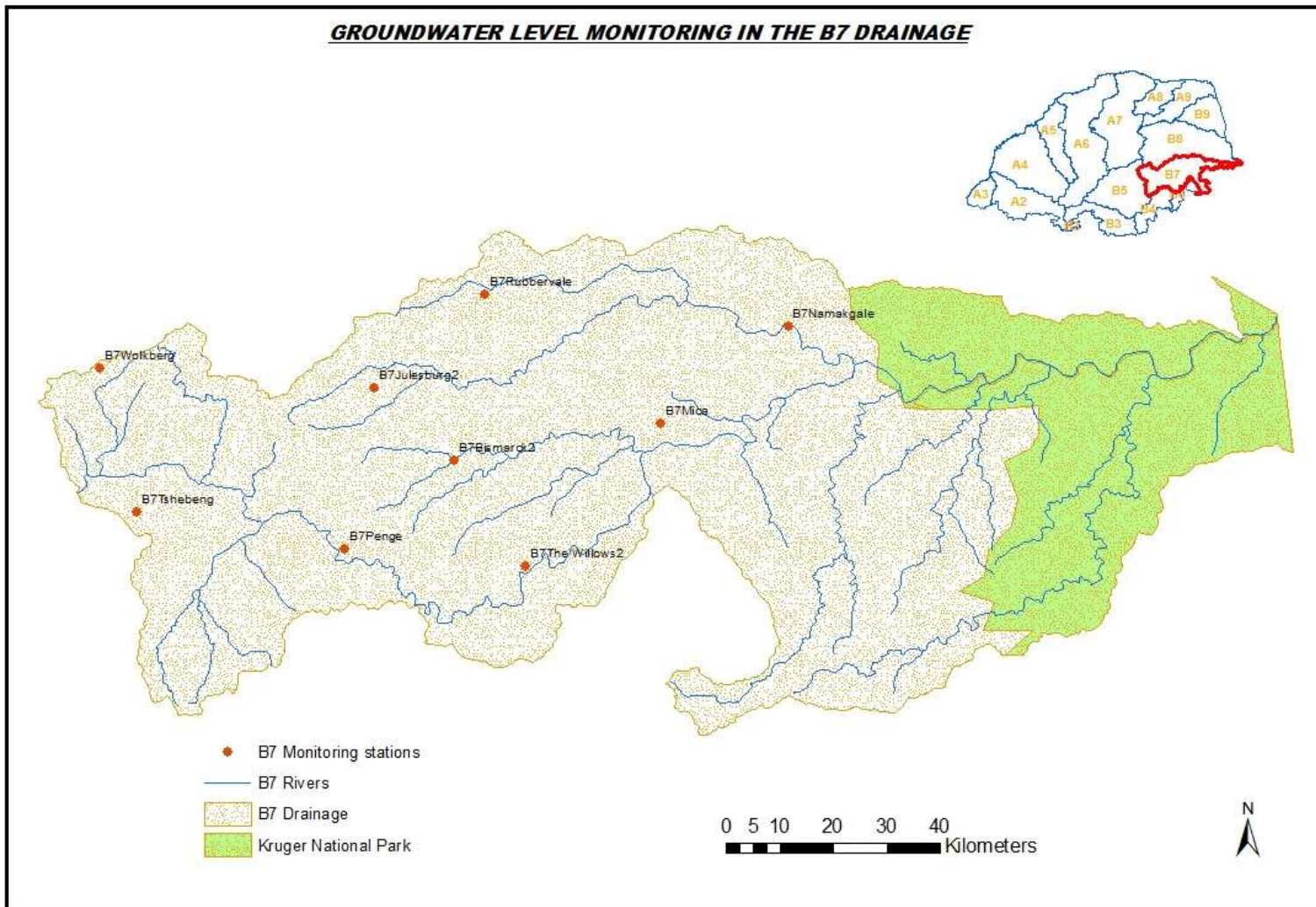
MAP 9

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE B5 DRAINAGE



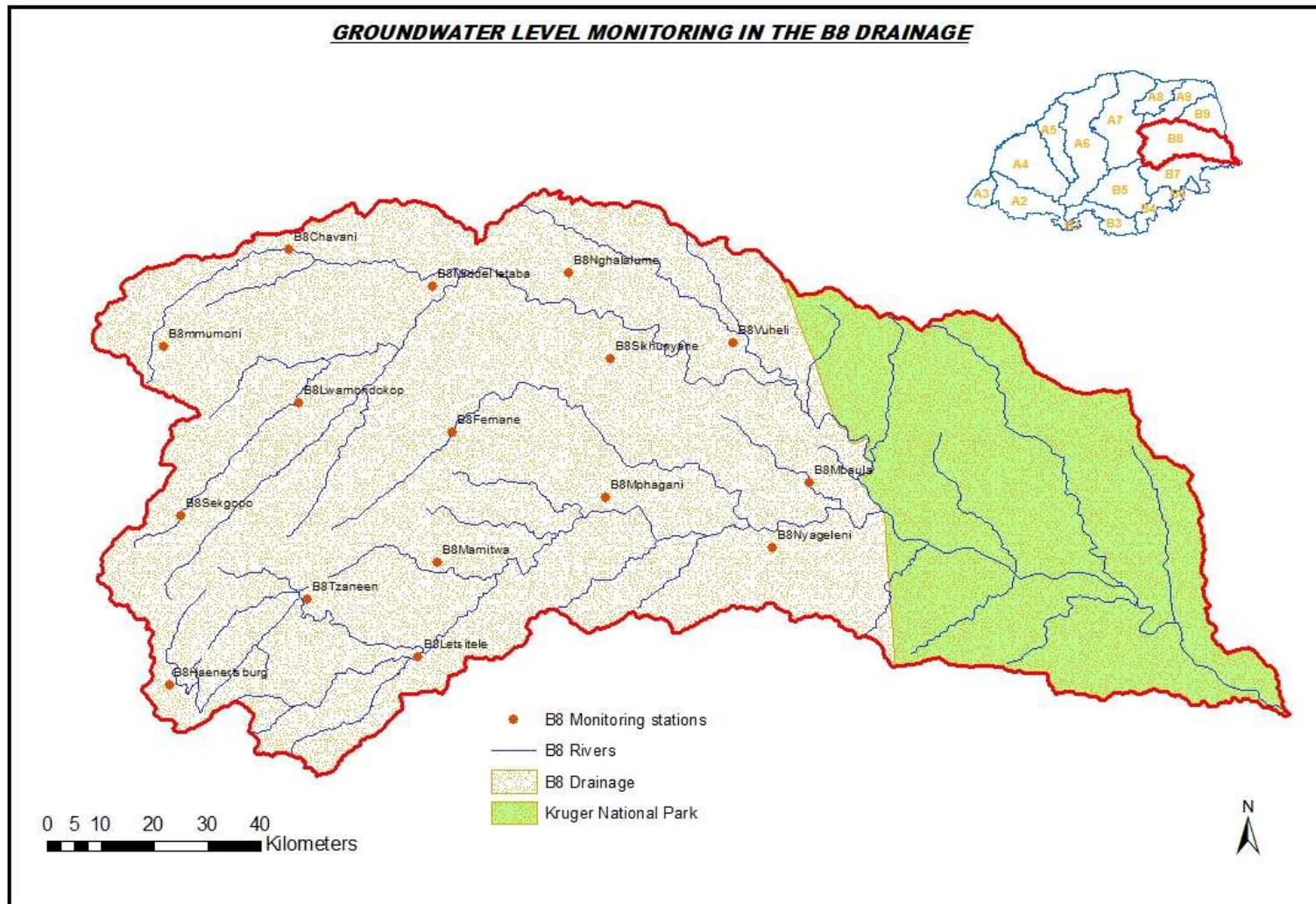
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GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE B7 DRAINAGE



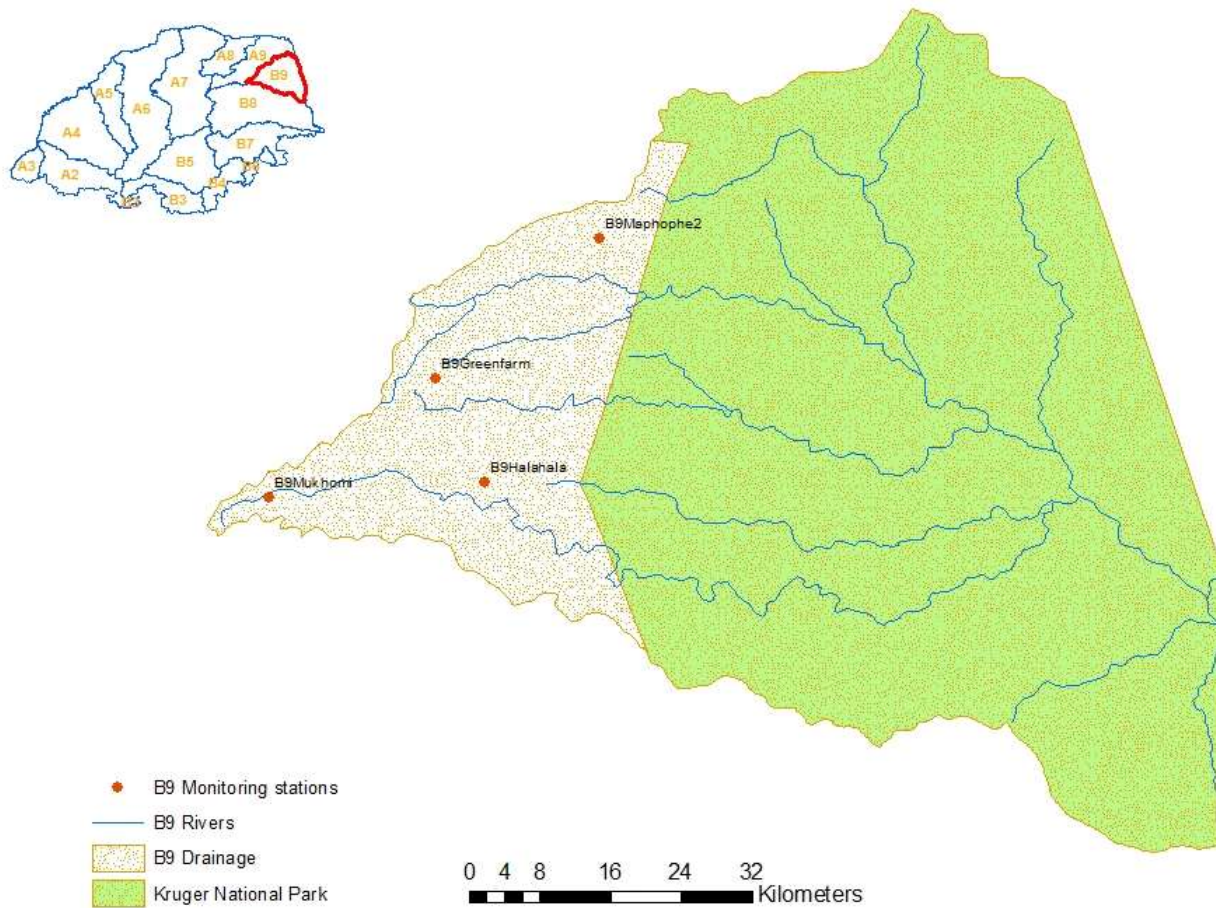
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GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE B8 DRAINAGE

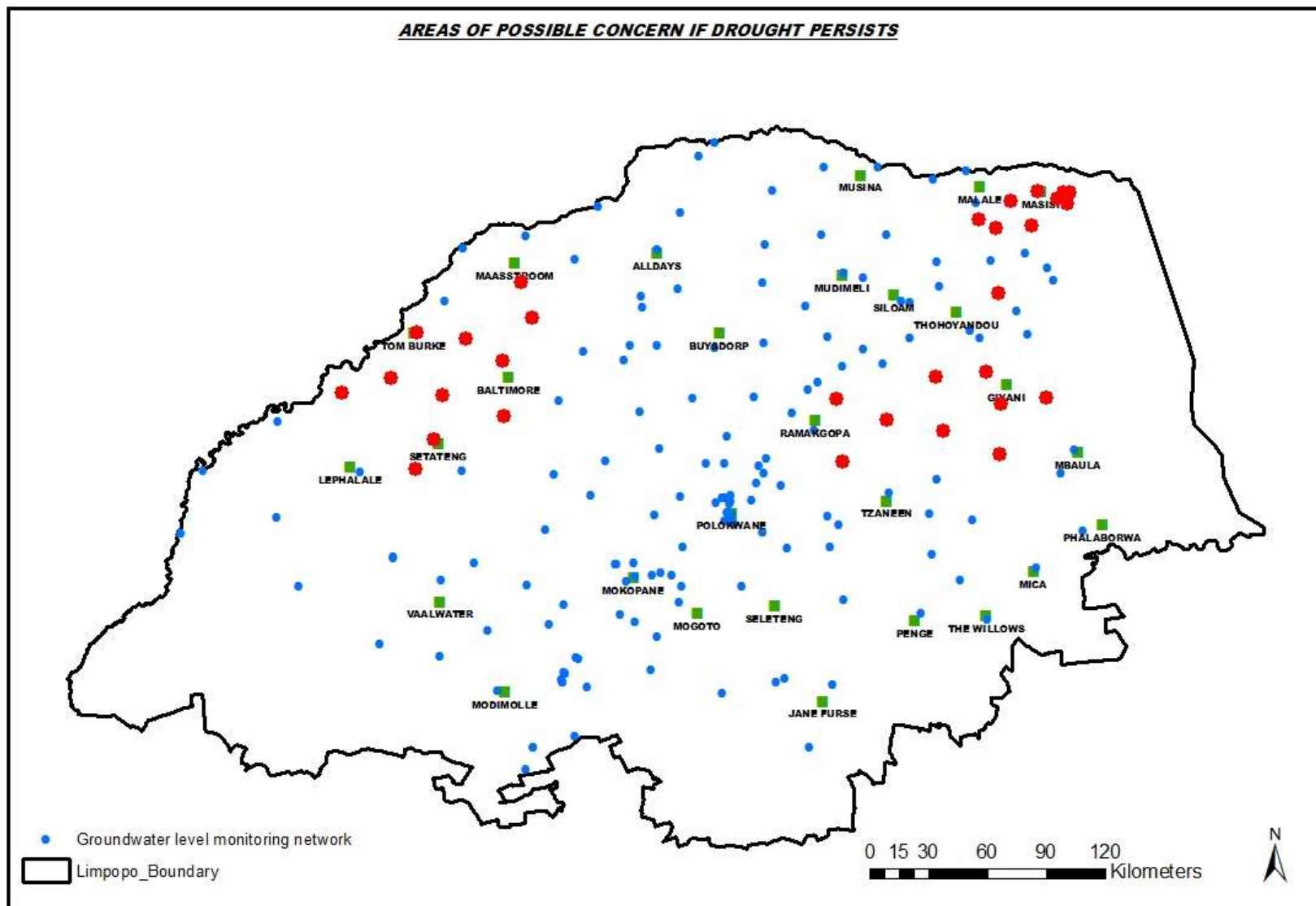


MAP 12

GROUNDWATER LEVEL MONITORING IN THE B9 DRAINAGE

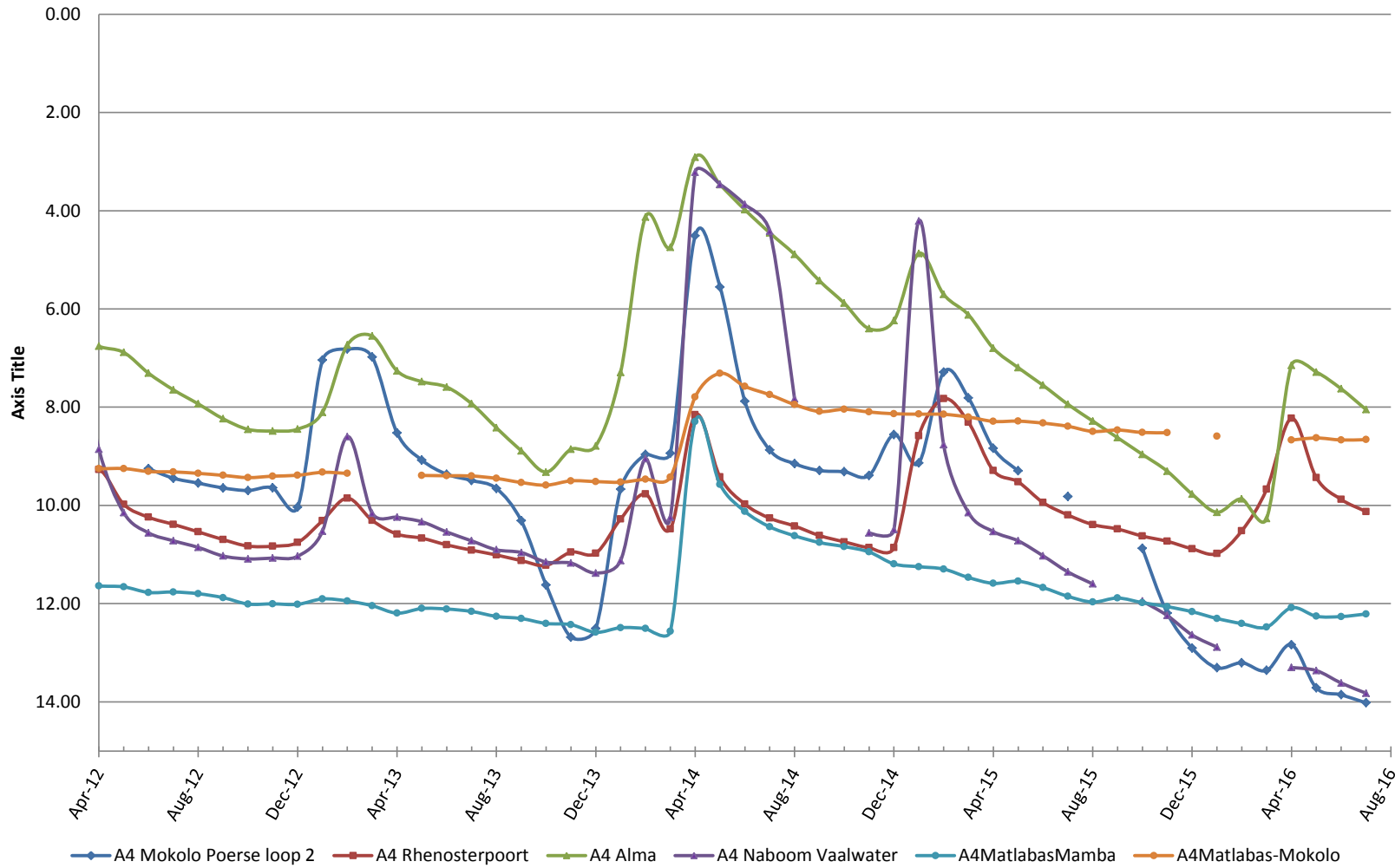


Map 13

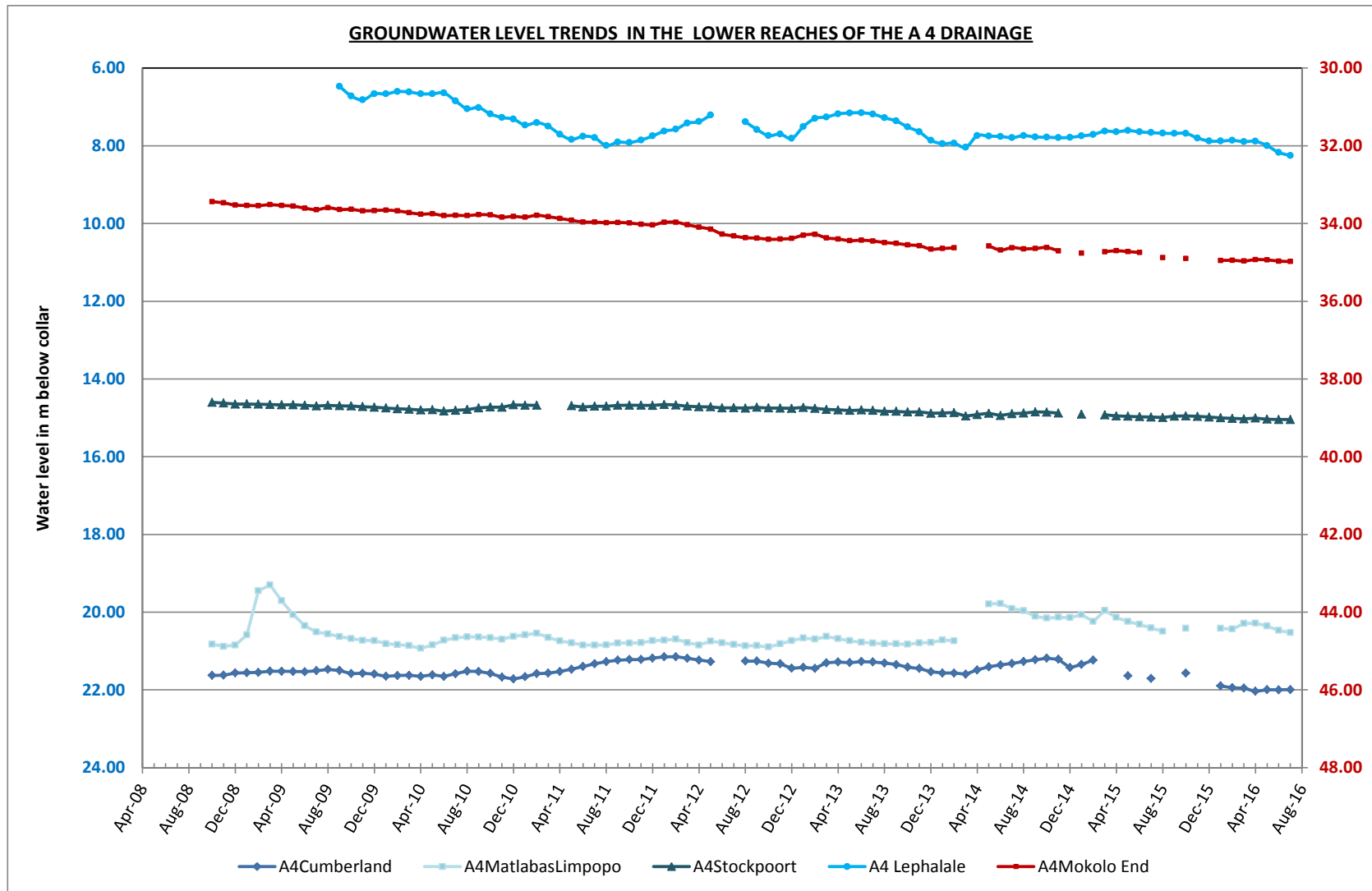


MAP 14

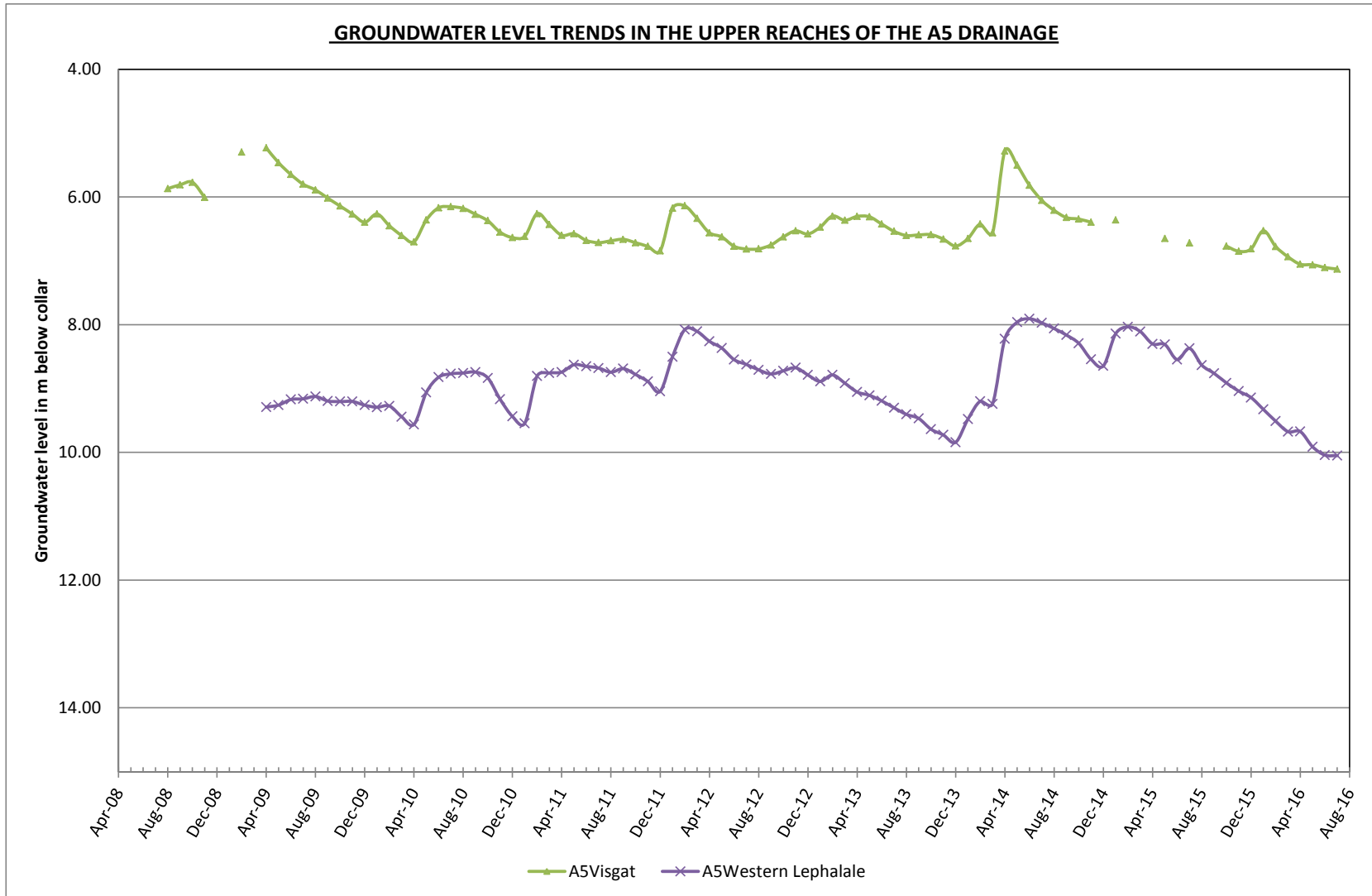
GROUNDWATER LEVEL TRENDS IN THE UPPER TO MIDDLE REACHES OF THE A 4 DRAINAGE



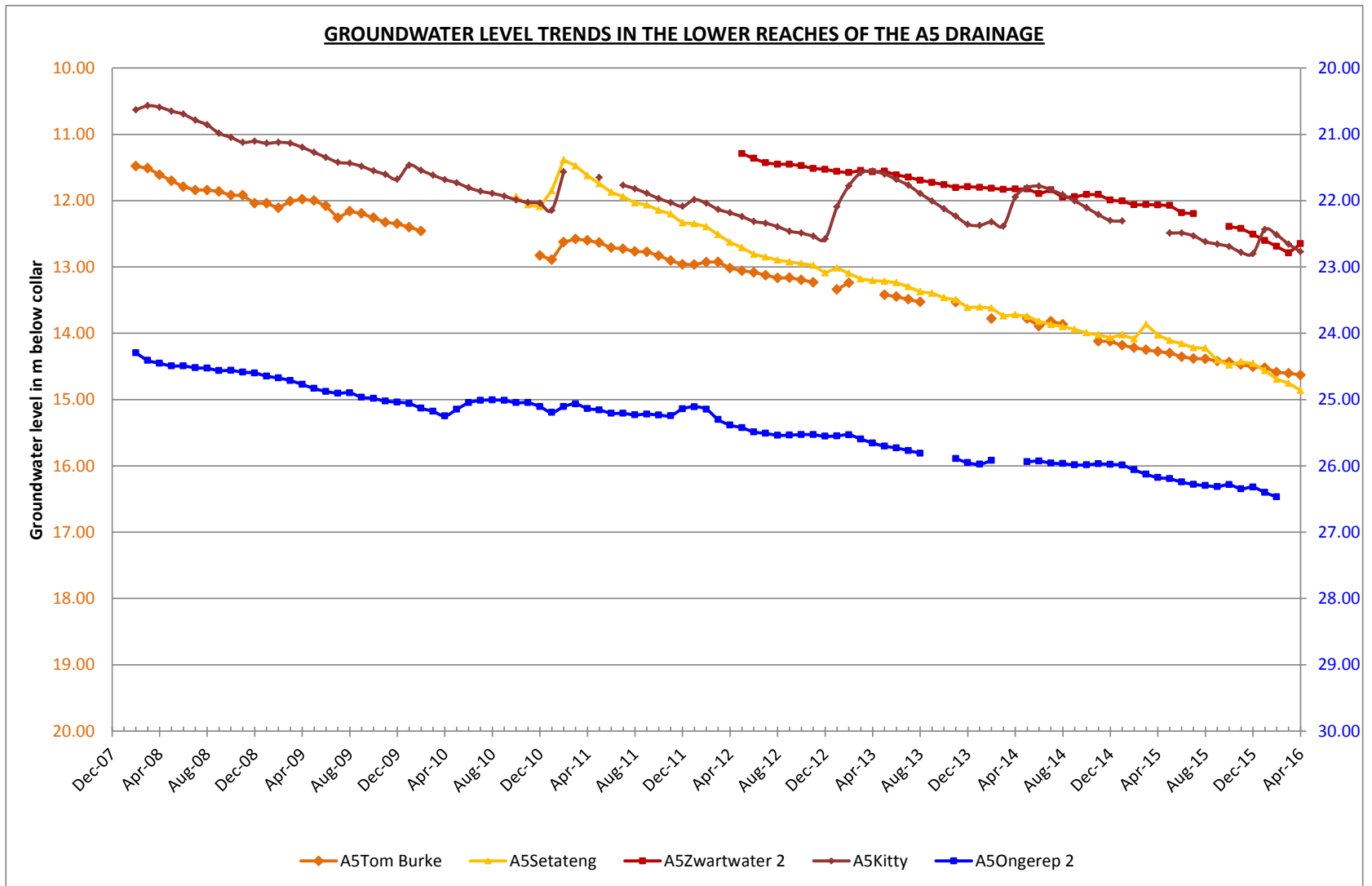
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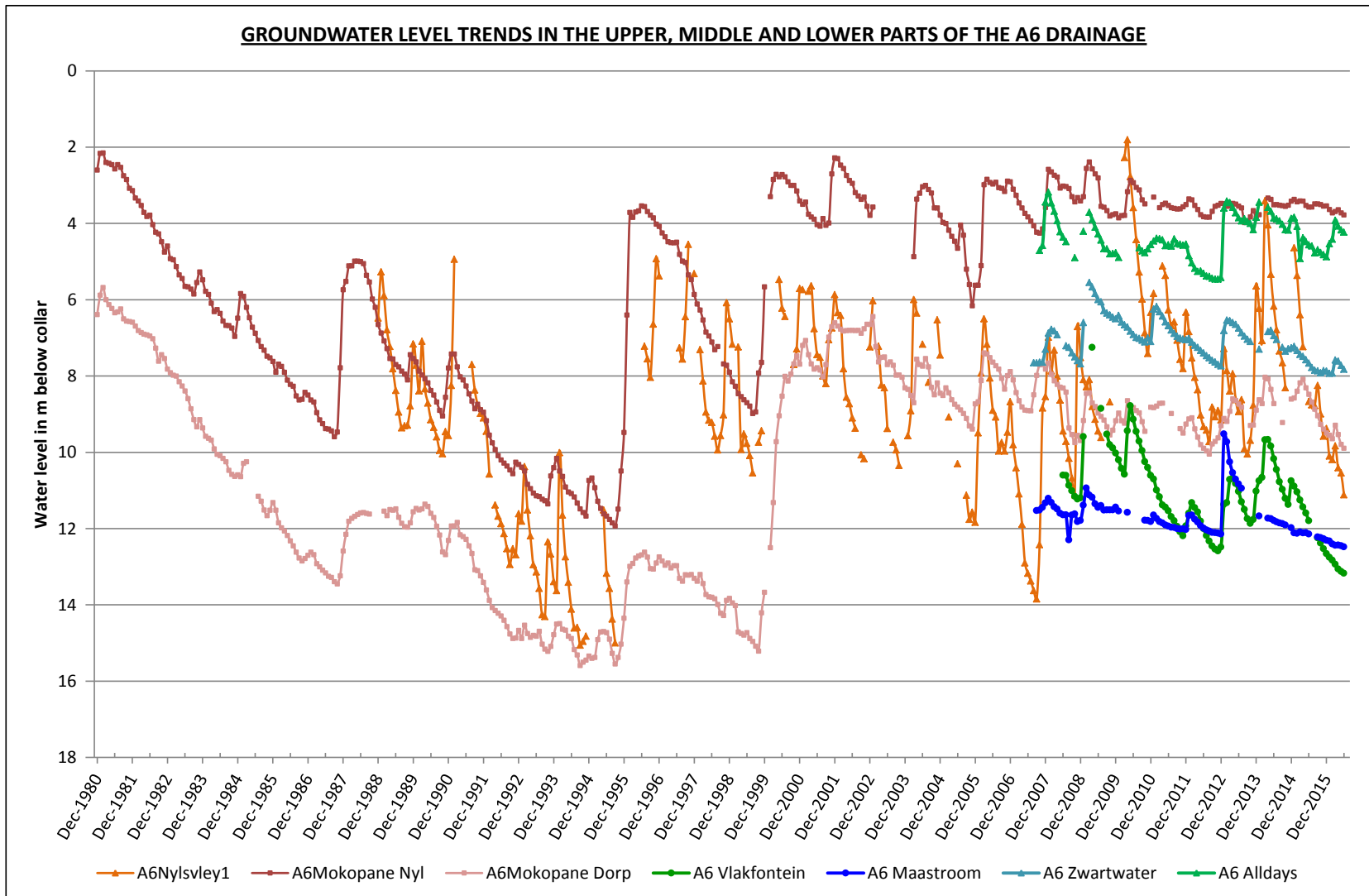
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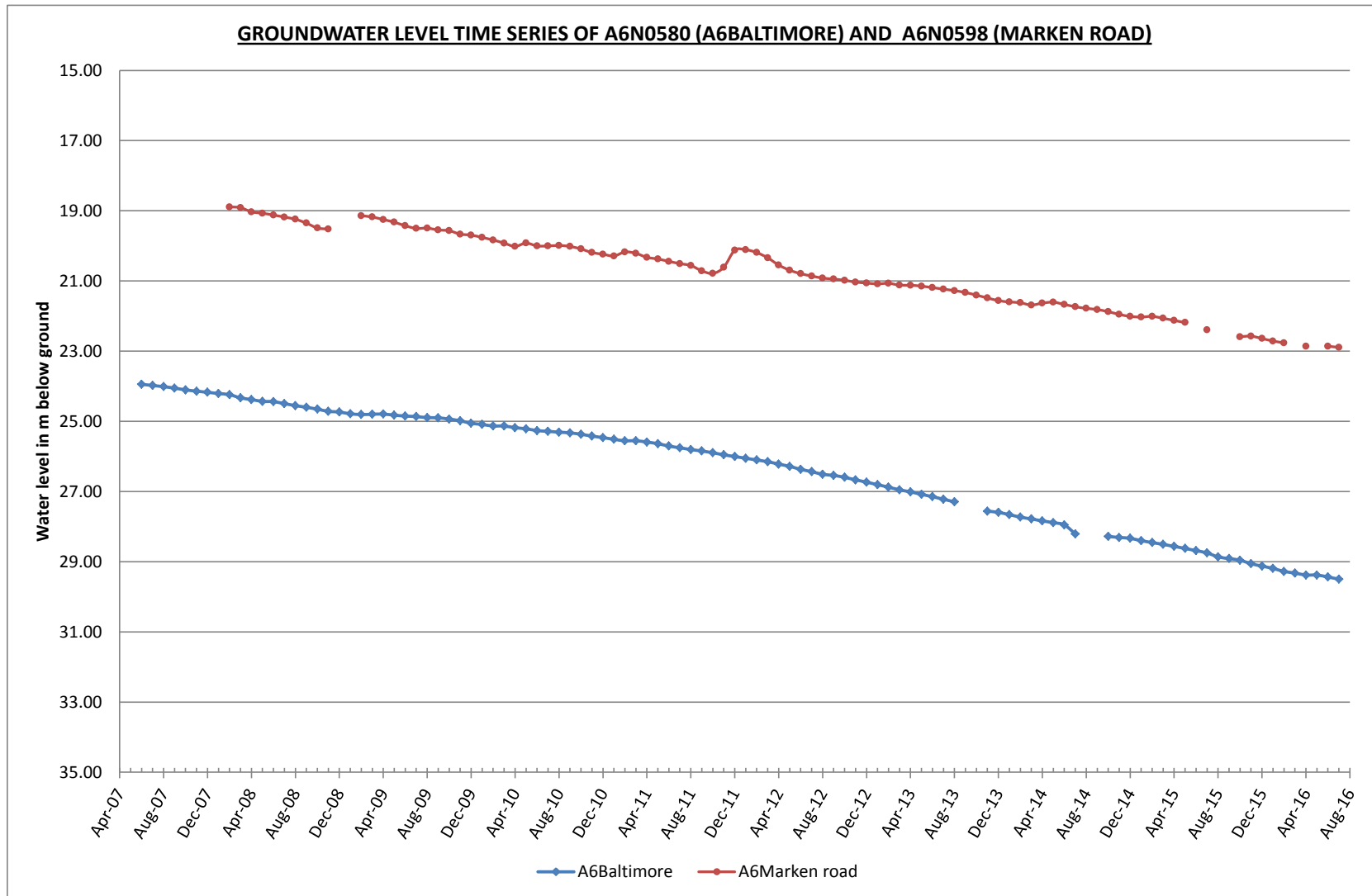
GRAPH 3



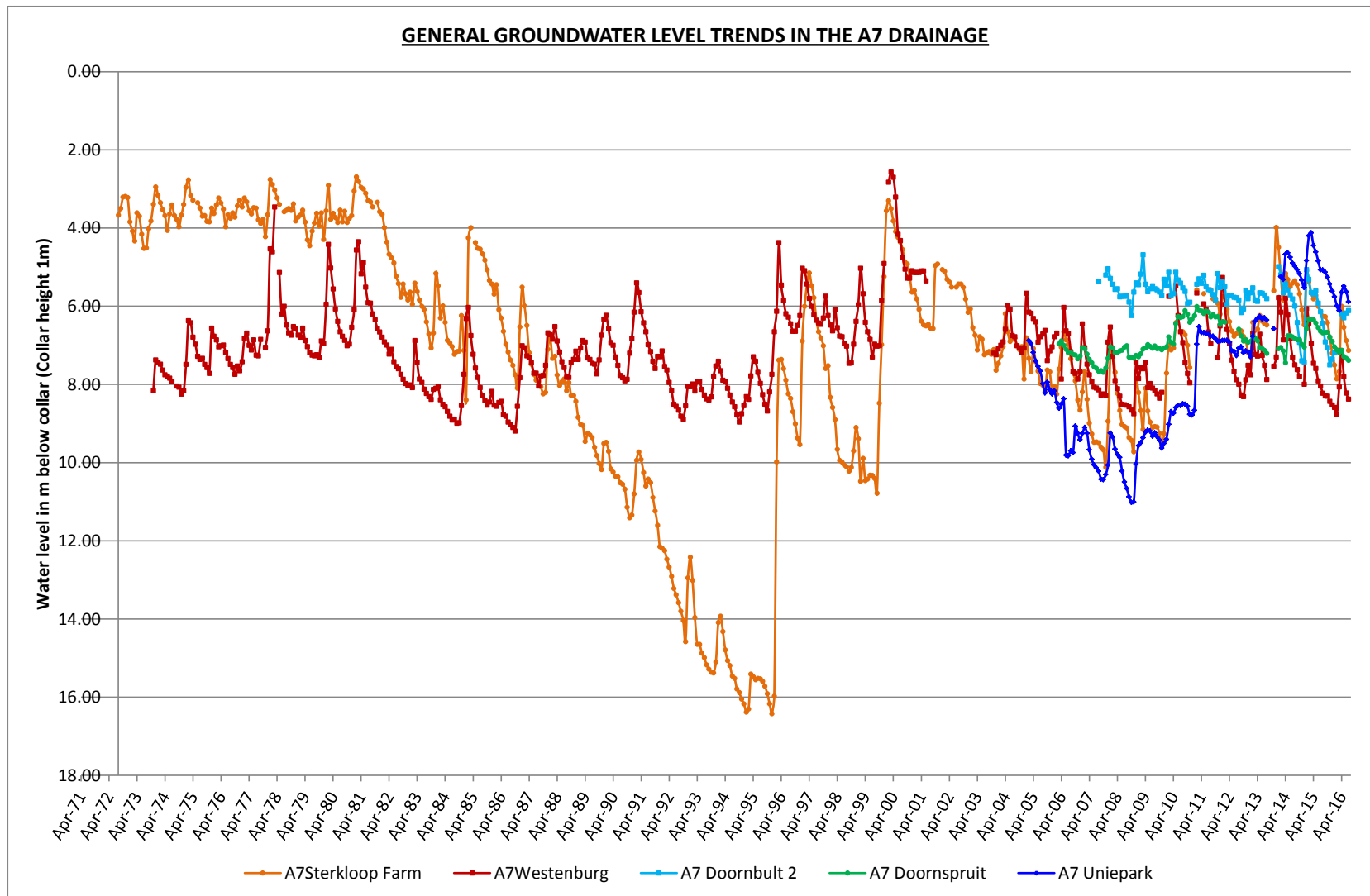
GRAPH 4



GRAPH 5

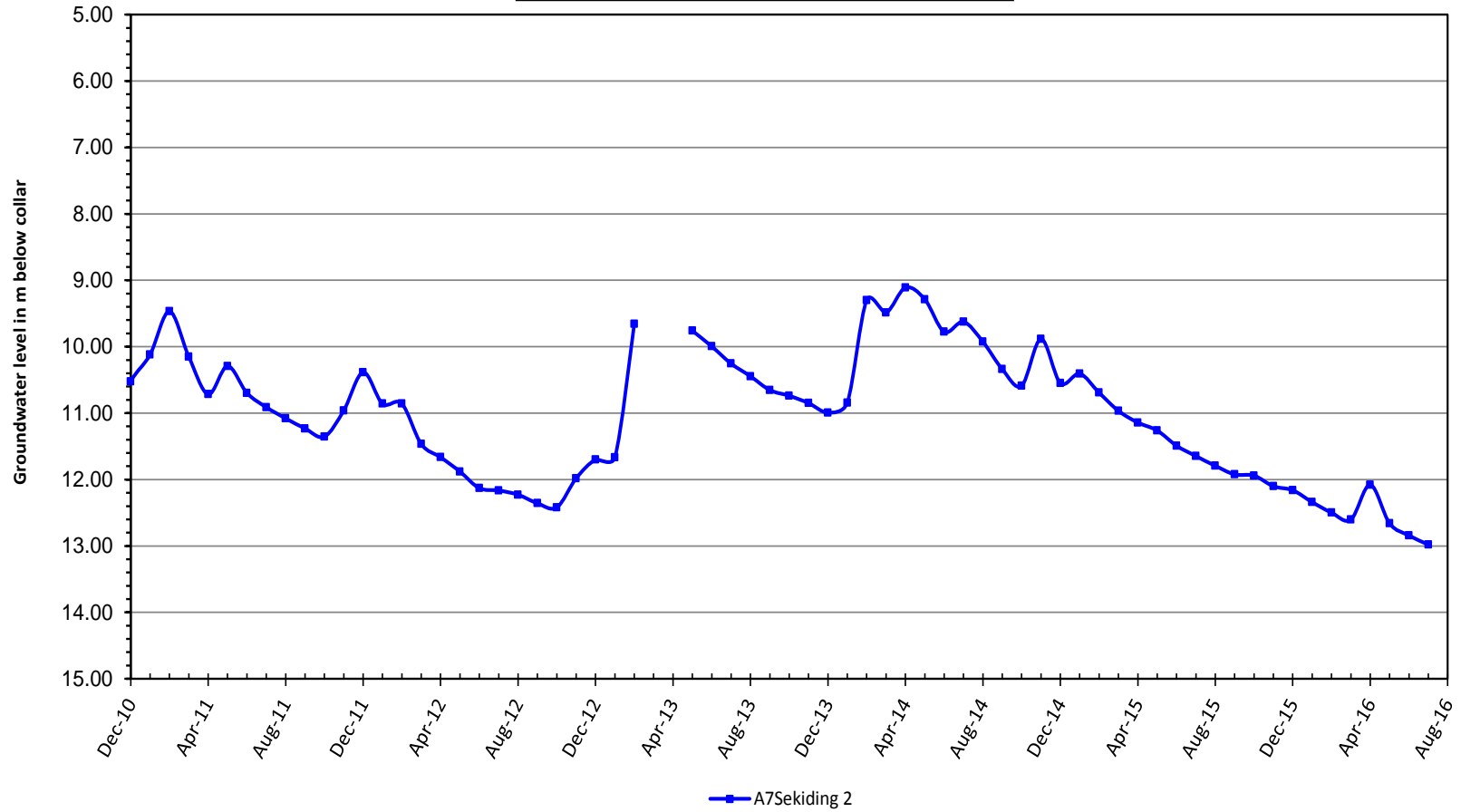


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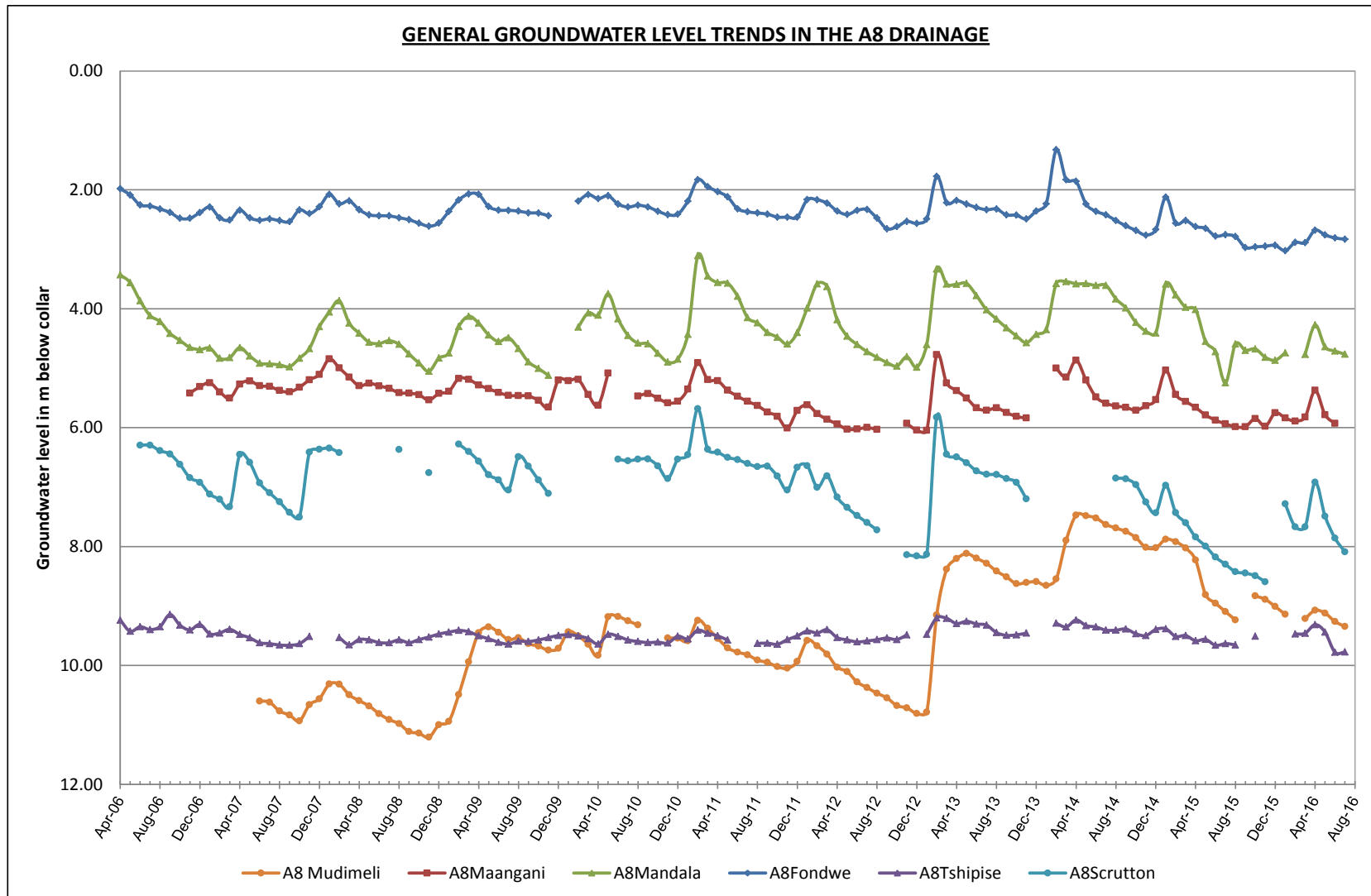


GRAPH 7

GROUNDWATER LEVEL TREND AT A7 SEKIDING 2

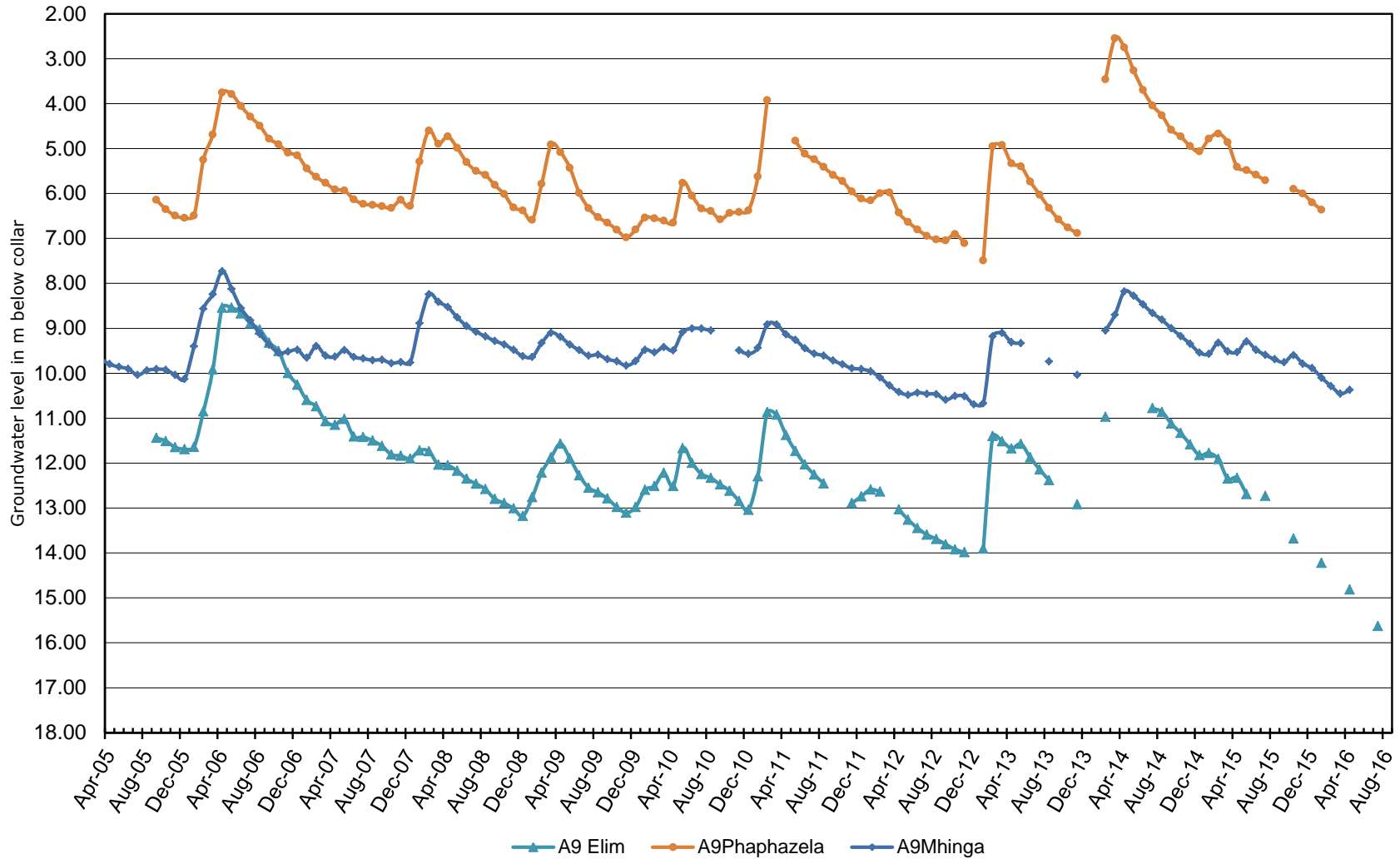


GRAPH 8



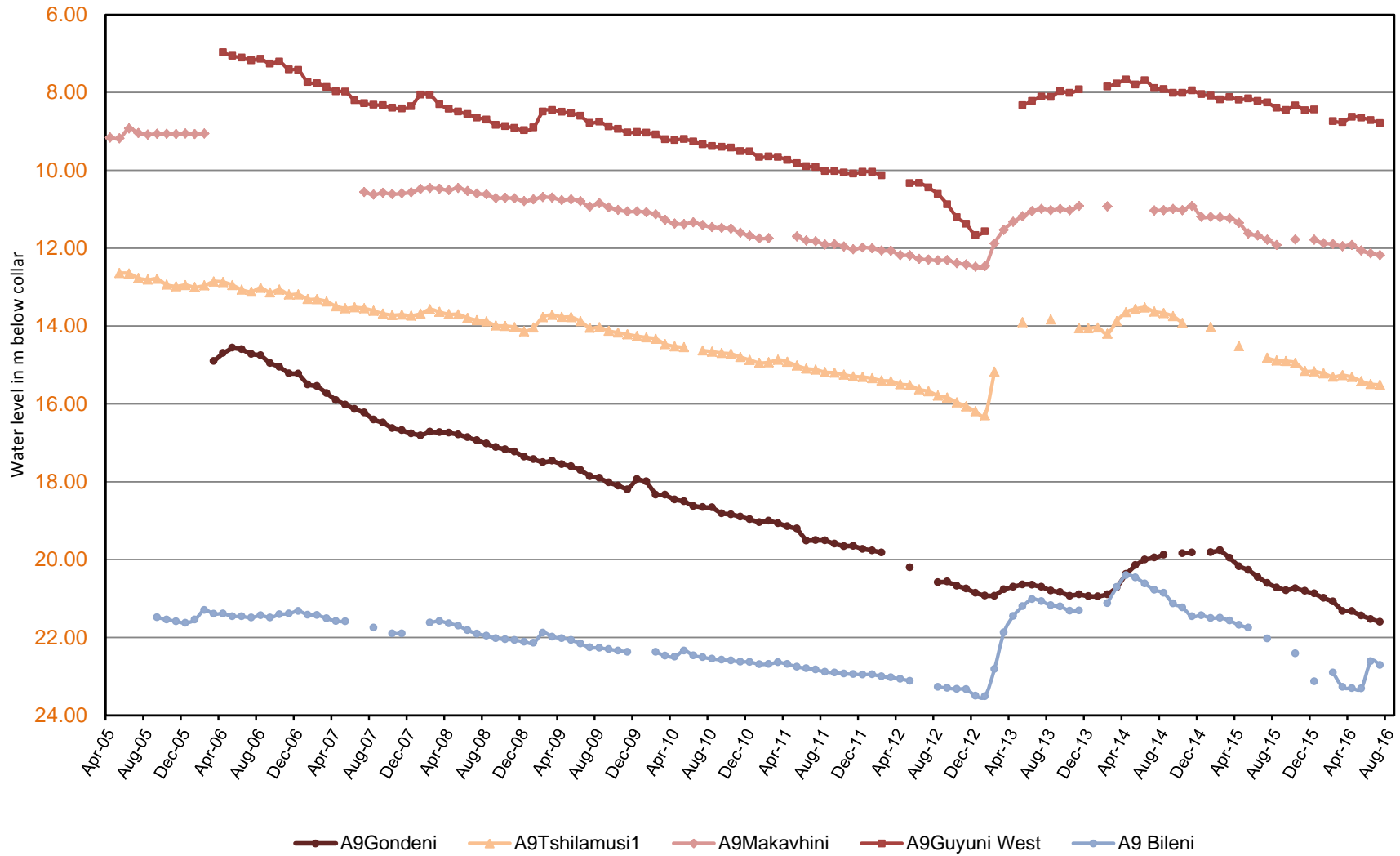
GRAPH 9

GROUNDWATER LEVEL TRENDS IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE A9 DRAINAGE

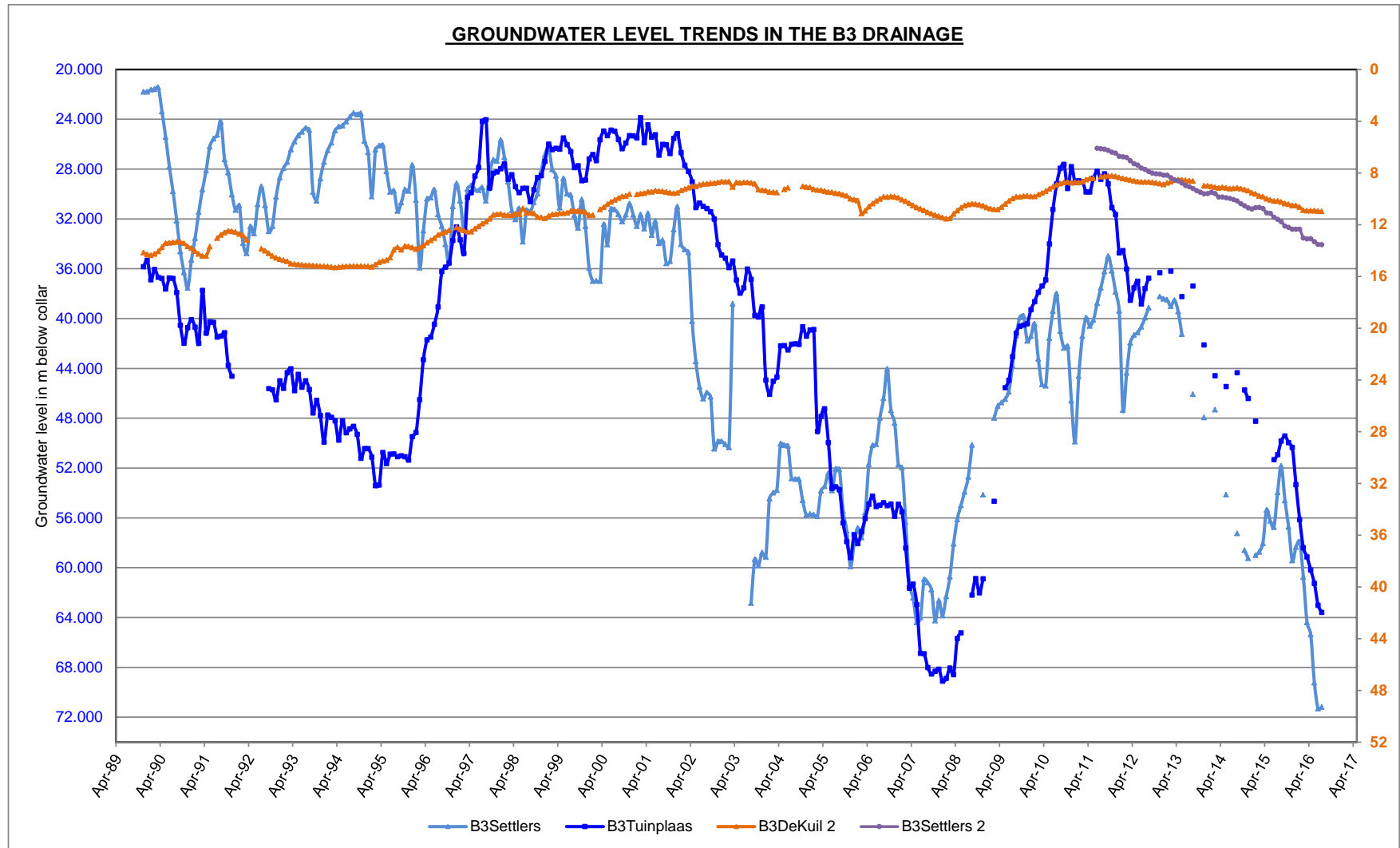


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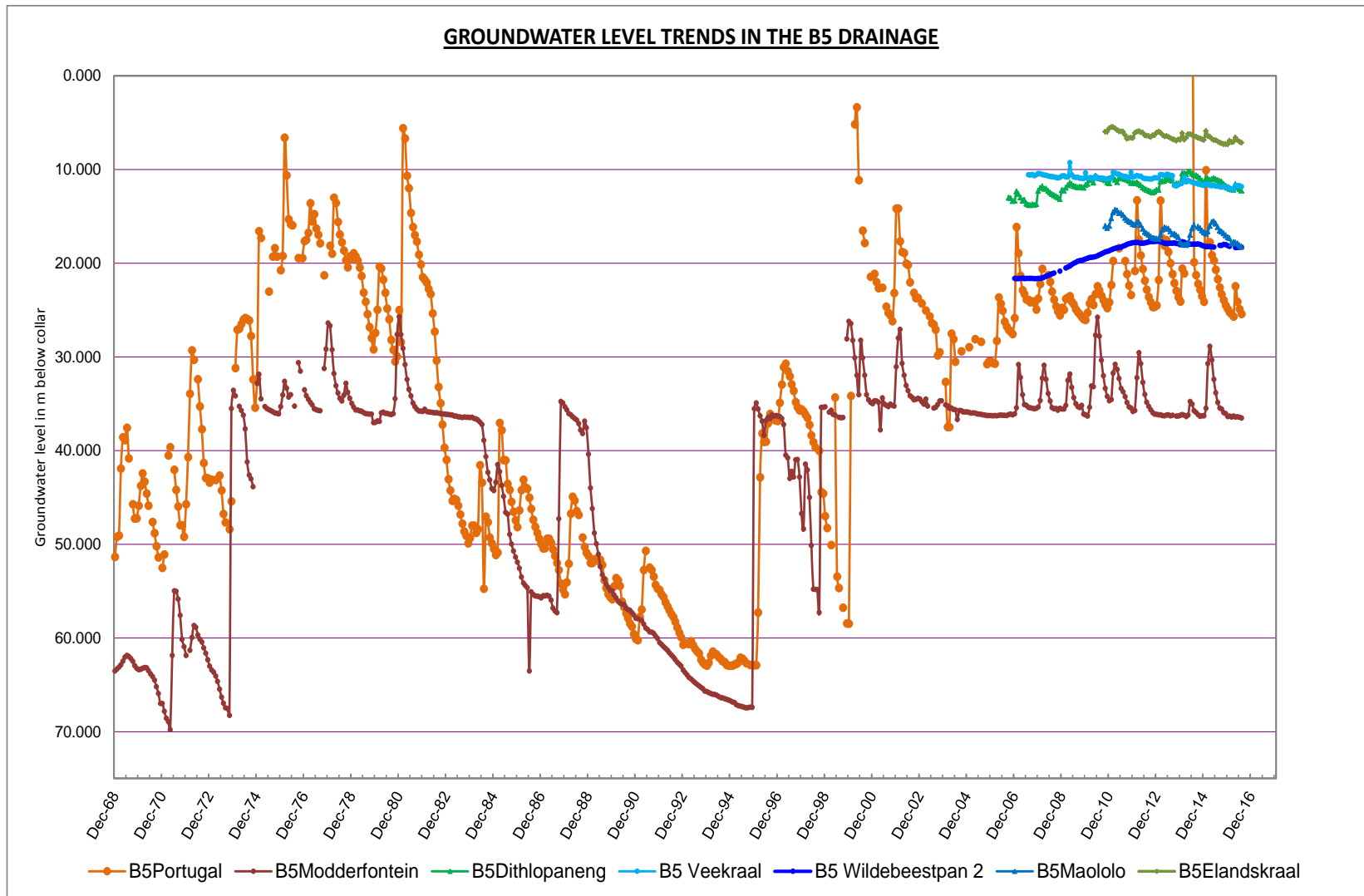
GROUNDWATER LEVEL TRENDS IN THE LOWER REACHES OF THE A9 DRAINAGE



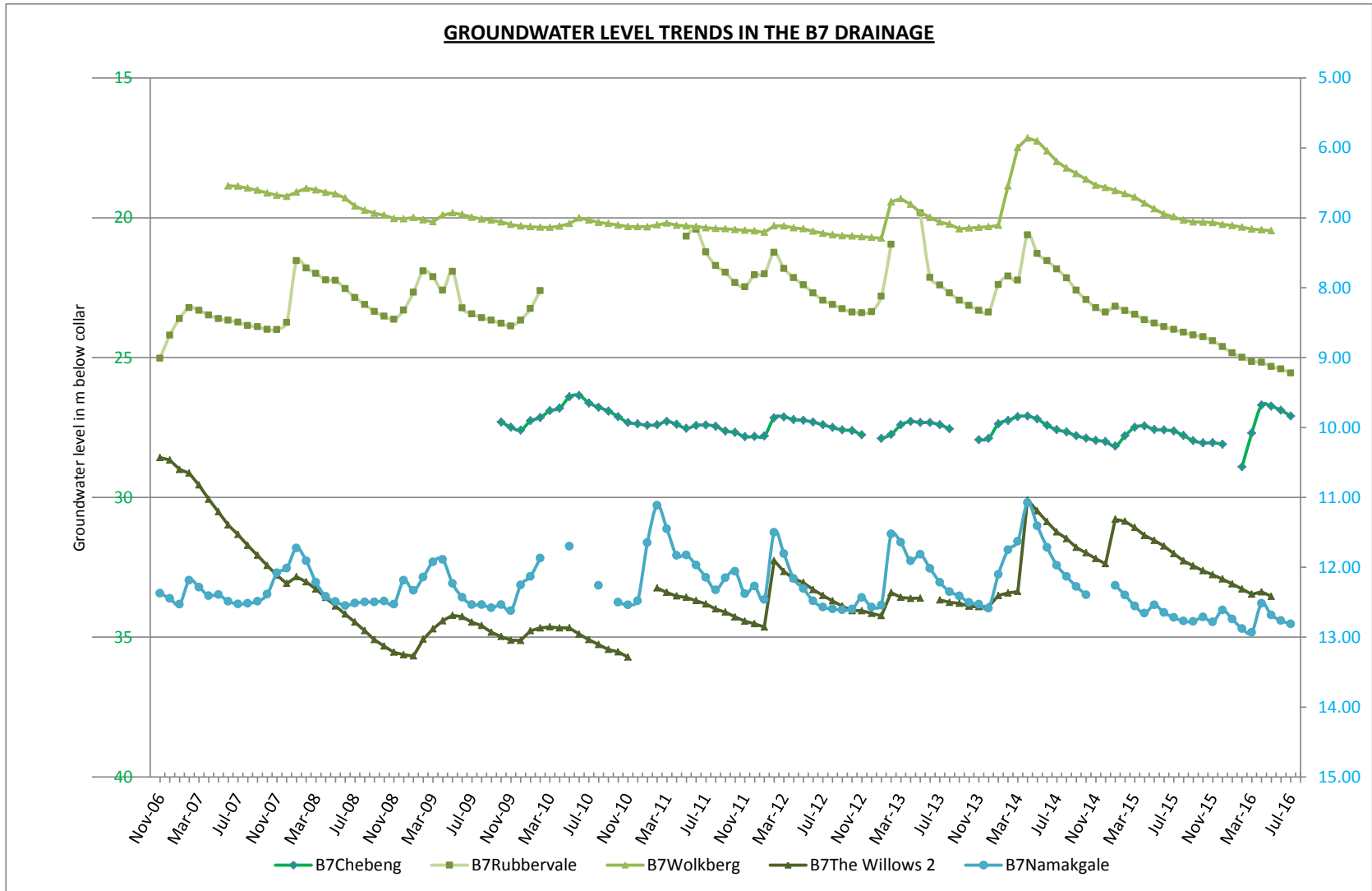
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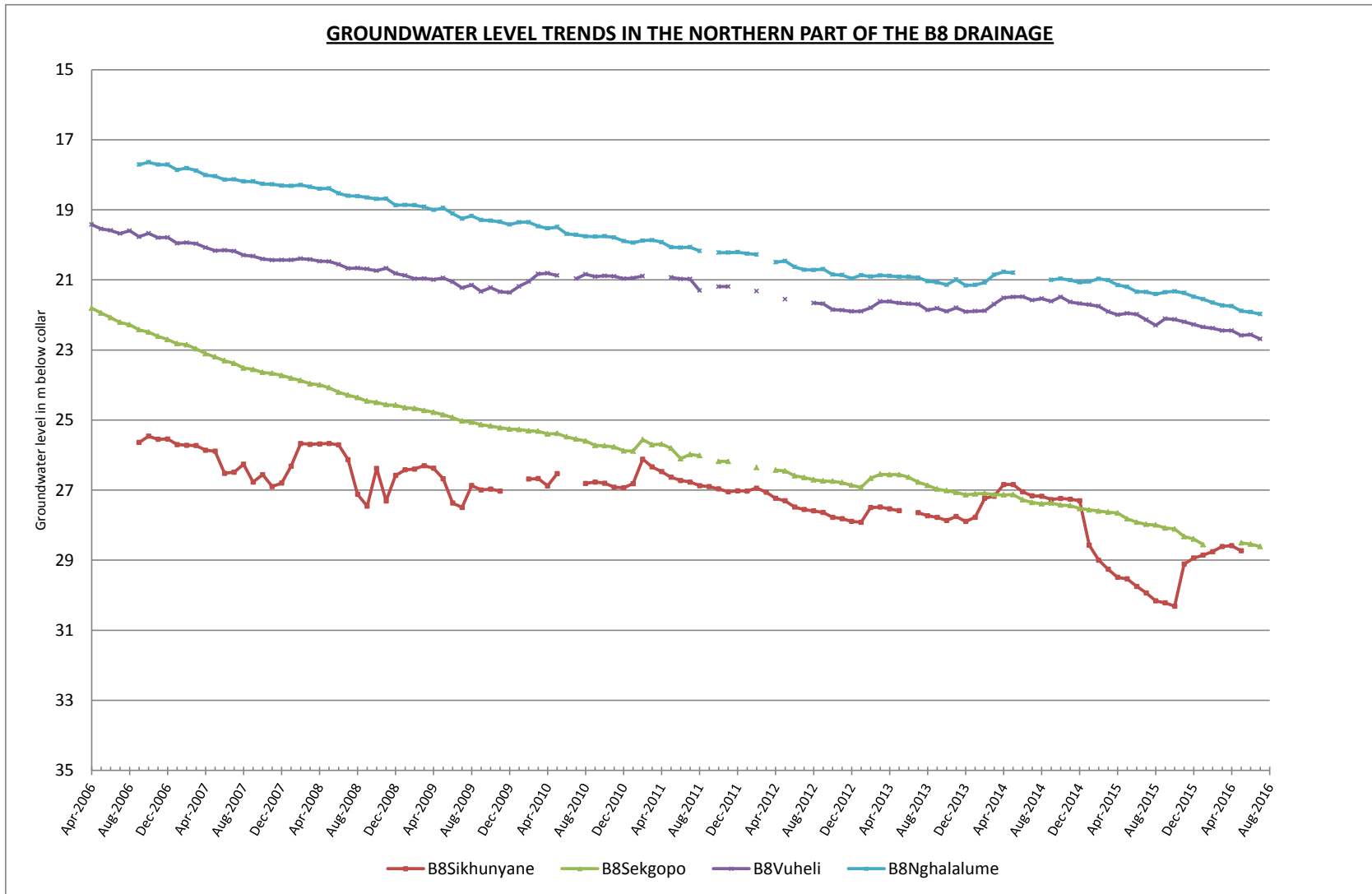
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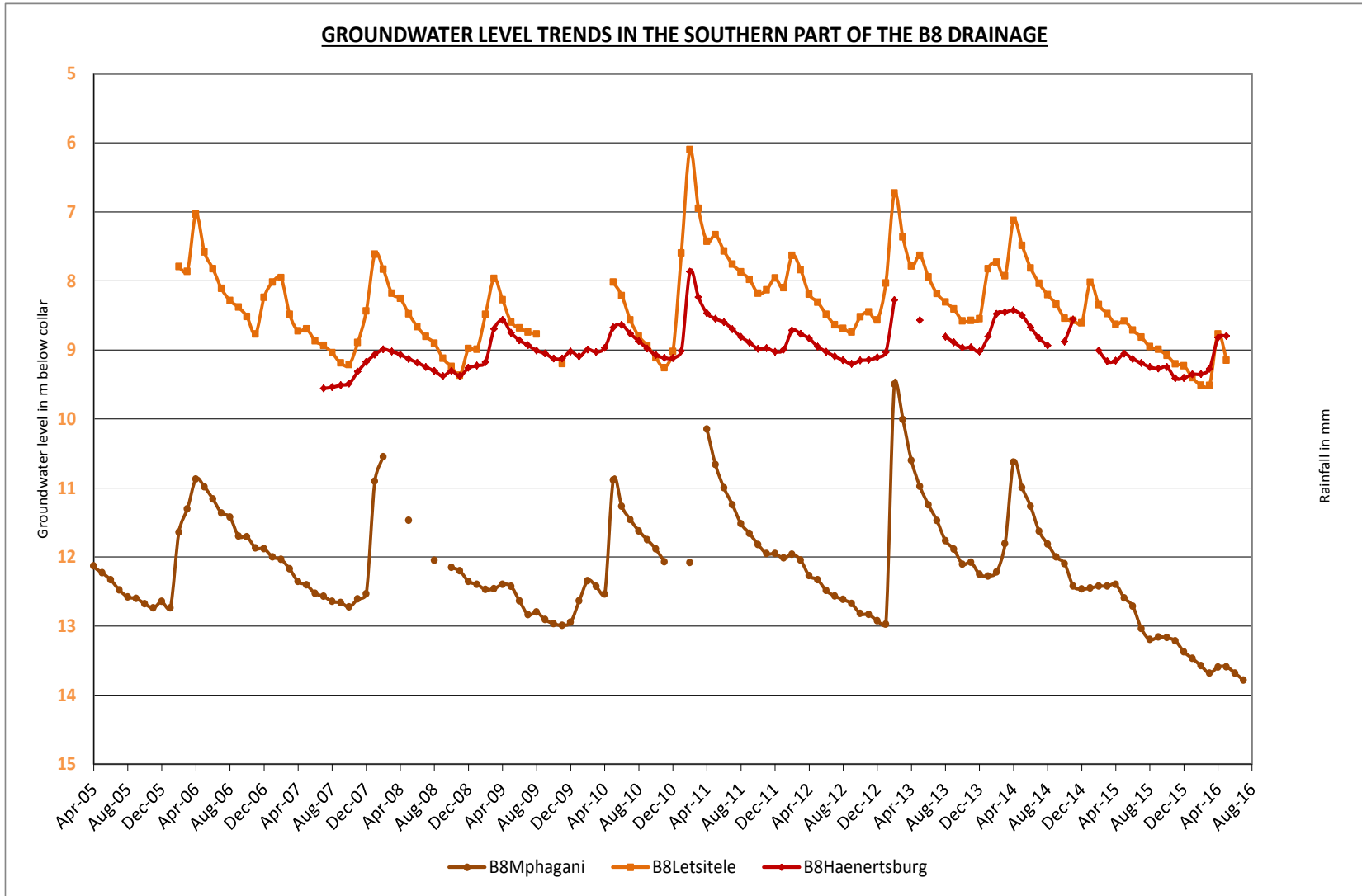
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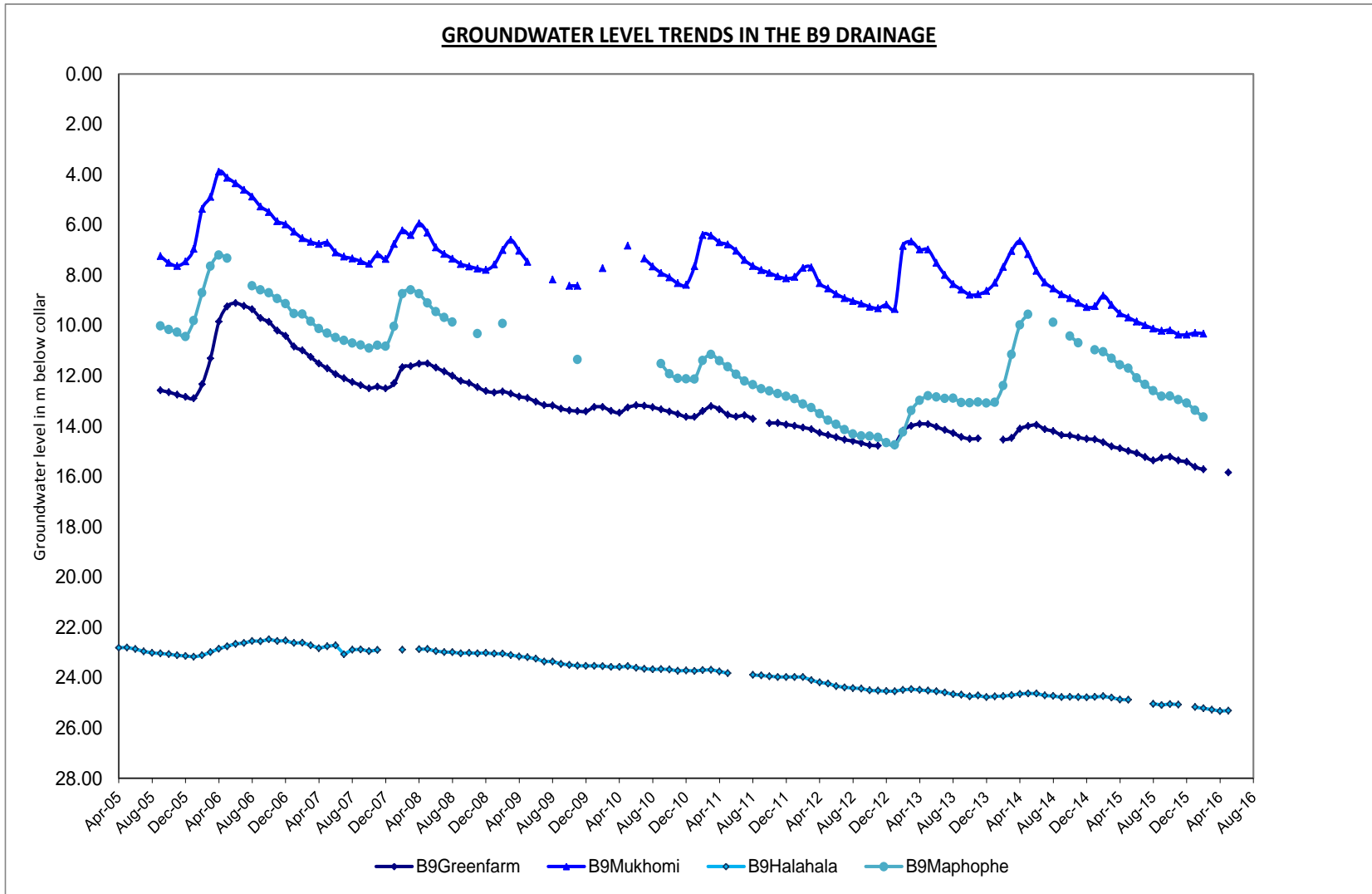
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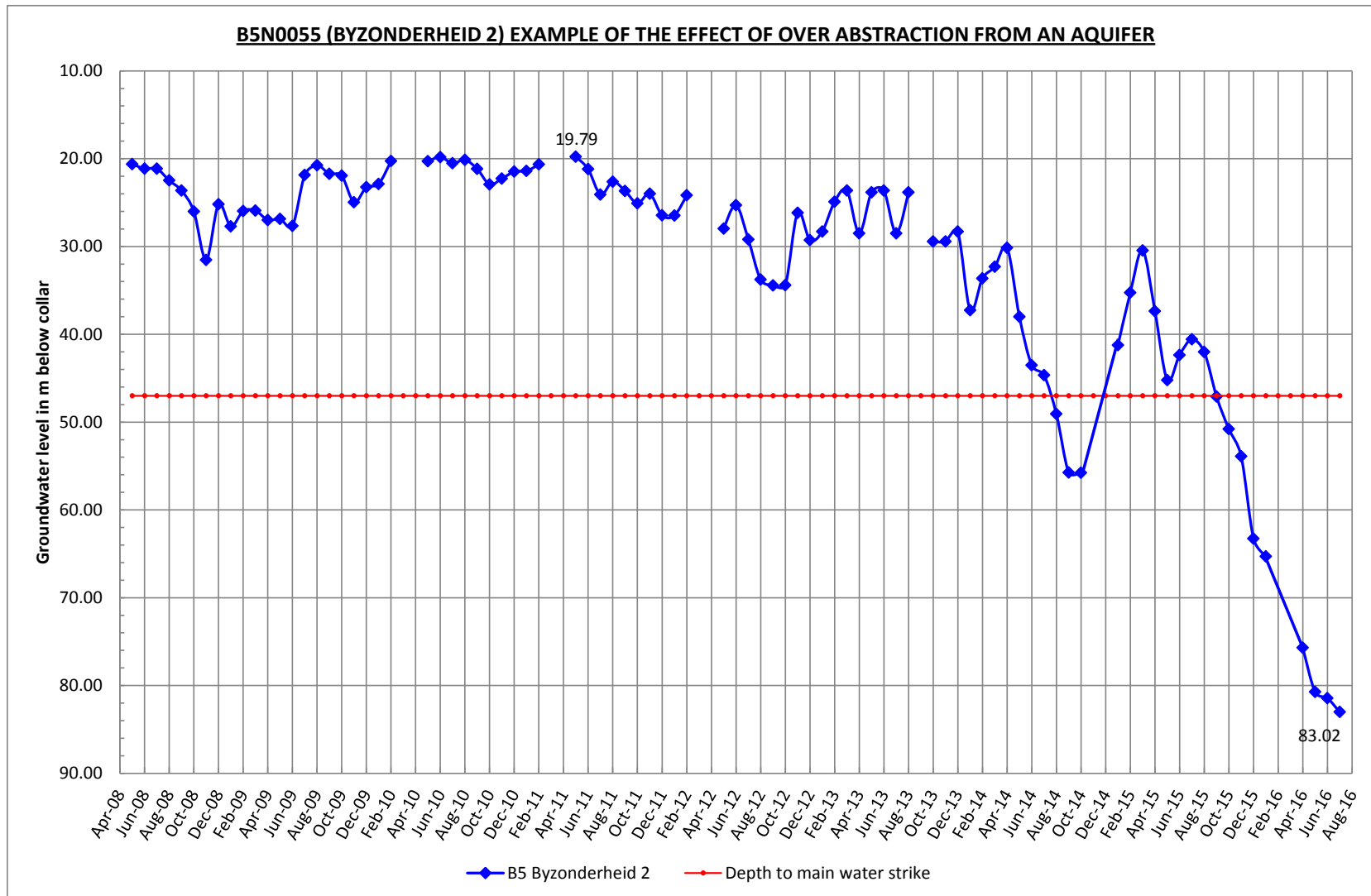
GRAPH 15



GRAPH 16

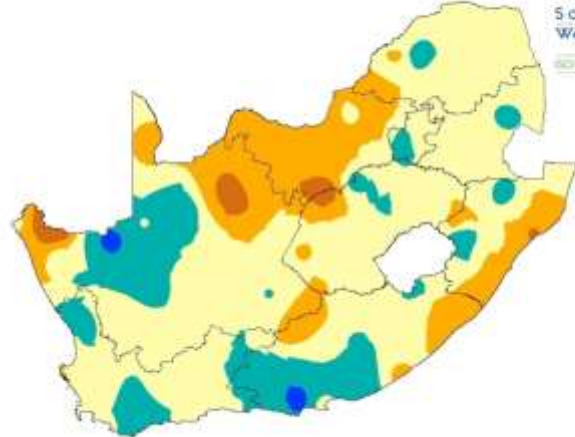


GRAPH 17



GRAPH 18

**Percentage of normal rainfall for season
July 2014 - June 2015**
(Based on preliminary data, Normal period 1981-2010)



**Percentage of normal rainfall for season
July 2015 - June 2016**
(Based on preliminary data, Normal period 1981-2010)

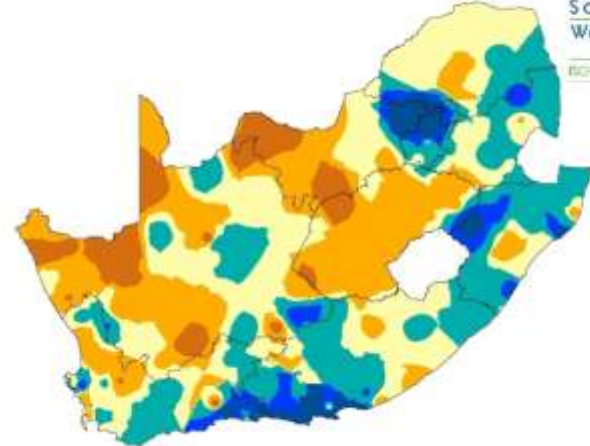
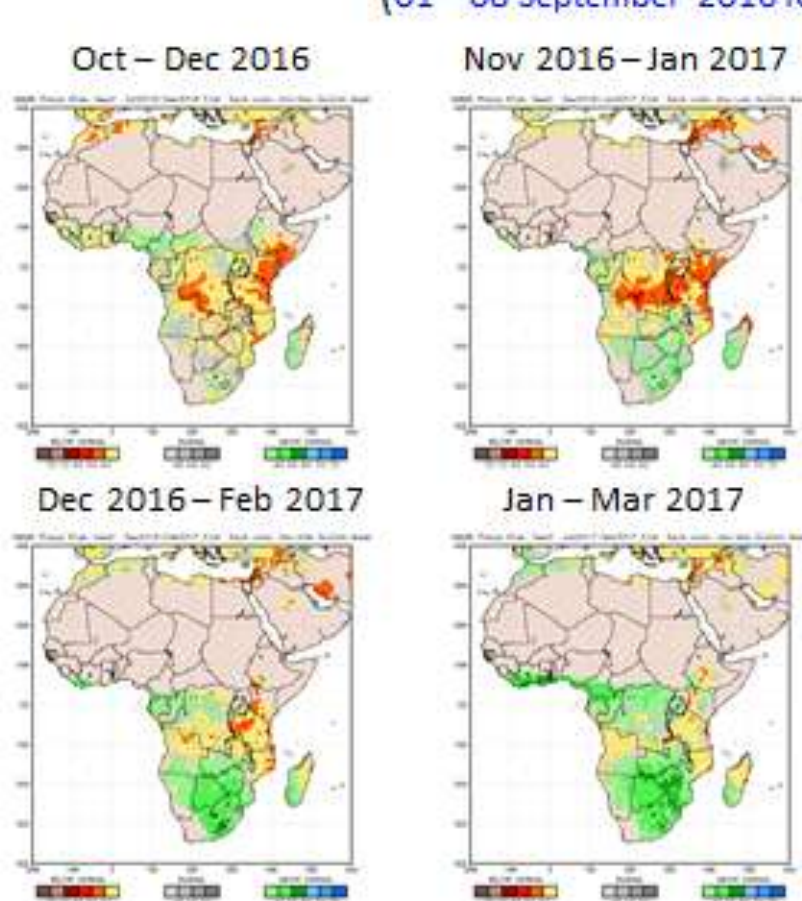


FIGURE 1

**Rainfall Guidance, Africa: NMME, Precipitation Probability Forecasts,
(01 – 08 September 2016 IC)**



Gray shade indicates indicate dry climatological mask

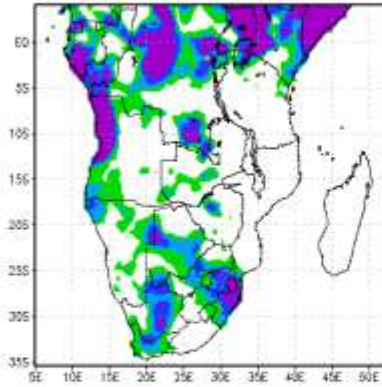
The forecasts call for a slight to moderate tilt in the odds to favor below-average rainfall over portions of the Central and East Africa during the northern hemisphere fall and winter. In contrast, there is a slight to moderate tilt in the odds to favor above-average rainfall over Southern Africa and parts of the Gulf of Guinea region through the northern hemisphere winter and early spring.

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>

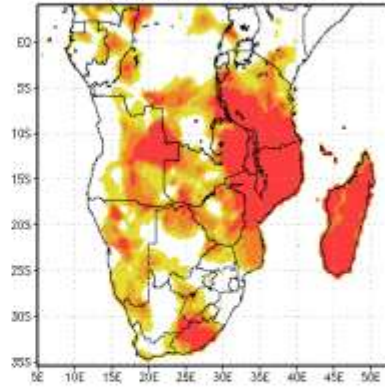
Individual model forecasts can be found here:
http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/international/nmme/nmme_sht.mr

FIGURE 2

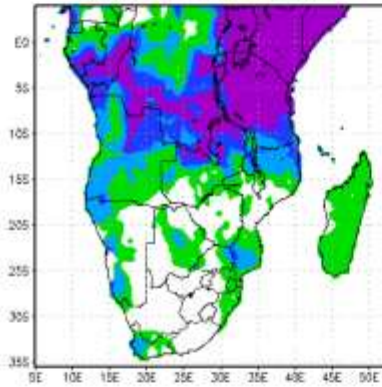
SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER–NOVEMBER
Above-Normal Rainfall



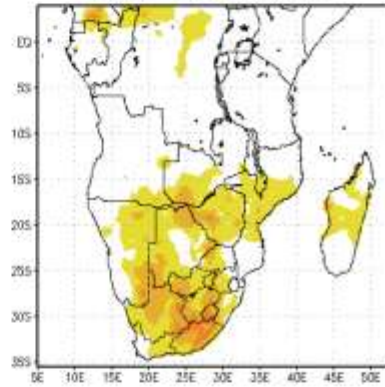
SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER–NOVEMBER
Below-Normal Rainfall



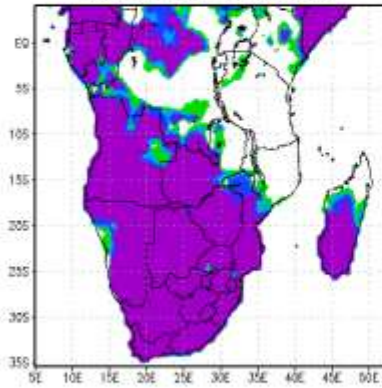
OCTOBER–NOVEMBER–DECEMBER
Above-Normal Rainfall



OCTOBER–NOVEMBER–DECEMBER
Below-Normal Rainfall



NOVEMBER–DECEMBER–JANUARY
Above-Normal Rainfall



NOVEMBER–DECEMBER–JANUARY
Below-Normal Rainfall

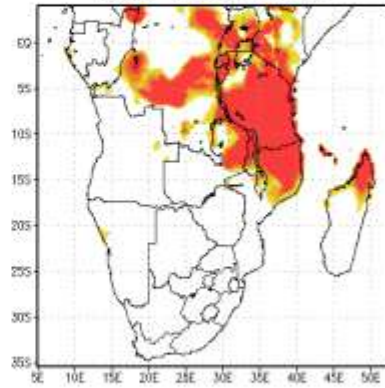


FIGURE 3