

NATIONAL AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM HEALTH MONITORING PROGRAMME (NAEHMP)
RHP e-COMMUNICATION

MARCH 2009 VOLUME



Wetlands IHI Training
Picture by: Pumza Maseti



Water Affairs & Forestry
Environmental Affairs & Tourism



This newsletter is released every three months to keep you informed of what is happening on the NAEHMP.
Visit <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/ecommunication.html> for more information and
should you have any comments please send them to: sekweler@dwaf.gov.za

From the RHP desk

All the products of the National Coverage Phase of the River Health Programme have been completed and approved and they can be downloaded from the RHP website: <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp.html>. Well done to all those who have been involved in this development. As prescribed by the National Implementation Manual – RHP component to establish the National RHP Steering Committee, the inaugural meeting of the committee will be held on the 26th of May, 2009. For more information please contact Ramogale Sekwele (+27(0)12 808 9614 / Sekweler@dwaf.gov.za).

Capacity problem days on uploading of RHP data to the National Rivers Database are over. During the last Rivers Database training which was held on 27 & 28 January 2009, two officials from DWAF RQS, Ms. Sinazo Mgozeli & Ms. Zinzi Mboweni, were trained and immediately started with providing the national function of loading information onto the Database. All practitioners who do not have time to load their information onto the Database are encouraged to make the information available to RQS to be captured. Please send either soft or hard copies to Ramogale Sekwele. If you wish to load your own data, the CDs and procedures for installation of the National Rivers Database are obtainable from Ms. Joyce Maluleka DWAF: RQS (+27(0)12 808 9552 or MalulekaJ@dwaf.gov.za).

The Limpopo Provincial presentation at the Yellowfish Working Group conference held at Sterkfontein Dam, 6-8 March, 2009, by Mr Mick Angliss questioned whether the RHP was providing potentially contradictory information to the public given the poor level of implementation of DWAF water quality and flow issues at ground level. Furthermore, while the RHP may be the best designed monitoring programme of its sort, there is little value to the monitoring work, if supporting resource protection measures for water quality and flow are being neglected at ground level, i.e. there is no value to monitoring a rapidly deteriorating system. Some information was presented in the press, at: http://jv.news24.com/Beeld/Suid-Afrika/0,,3-975_2485974,00.html. We would like to make it clear to the general public and all interested parties, that the RHP is responsible for data collection and reporting to support decisions being taken about resource protection. The RHP does not have a mandate to police non-compliance with relevant legislation governing environmental protection.

The *Nepid cc* together with DWAF: RQS will be conducting the SASS5 training from 15-17 April, 2009. This training provides participants with the practical experience of applying the method for the assessment of aquatic health and basic knowledge about use of information collected through such a method in resource management. For more information visit: <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/training.html>.

FETWater Training Rivers & Wetlands modules will also be presented by University of Johannesburg during this year, visit <http://www.uj.ac.za/FETWater/tabid/15609/Default.aspx> for more information.

The WRC project undertaken by Monash University and CSIR to assess the impacts of the WRC's research investment made in the RHP has been completed. The study acknowledges the progress made in certain areas while also recommending ways to improve in other areas. To obtain the product, Report No. TT360/08, contact WRC Publications at +27(0)12 330 0340 or email: orders@wrc.org.za to read more about the outcomes of the study.

The RHP community, friends and family have been shocked by the untimely death of **Mr. Xola Gwadana** who was based in the DWAF: East London office when he unfortunately slipped, was overpowered by the river current and drowned. We here appeal to everyone working and or using the water resources for whatever purpose to take extra caution to ensure that casualties of this nature are reduced to zero. We sadly will miss Mr. Gwadana and his active role in our society, may his soul rest in peace.

Following the departure of **Mr Madikizela** to join DEAT, another critical long-time supporter of the RHP was lost when **Dr. Anneli Kuhn's** support contract to DWAF: RQS terminated at the end of 2008. **Dr. Steve Mitchell** of WRC, who has served through all the RHP developments since inception of the programme, will also be retiring from the WRC and we would like to express our special thanks to all the above for the support given to the programme. We will still rely on your support for advice and future developments. Two officials, **Ms. Zinzi Mboweni** & **Ms. Nobubele Boniwe** from the Department's Graduate Trainee Programme have been deployed to the Sub-Directorate: Resource Quality Monitoring, to support the NAEHMP. The two young and energetic people are already tops on the Rivers Database support and they will receive more skills development training in order to support the RHP effectively. We welcome you to the community and we look forward to your further development and investment in the programme and overall contribution to resource protection in South Africa.

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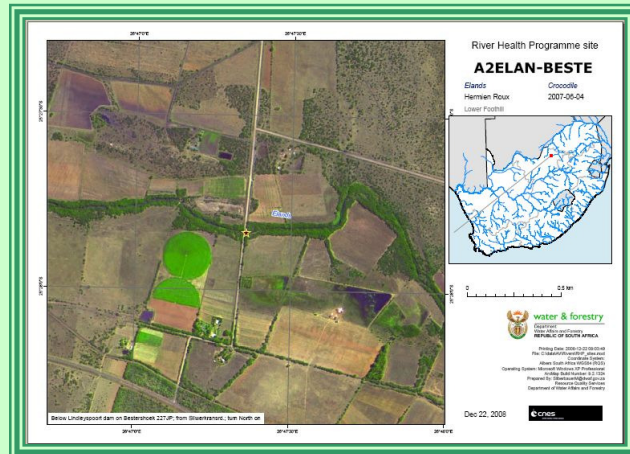
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Readers' column

The 2007 national SPOT Image coverage of South Africa

RQS has produced two sets of locality maps of the RHP sites, one map per site, showing the position of each site and the surrounding 5 square kilometres. One set of locality maps has the 2007 national SPOT Image coverage of South Africa as a backdrop and the other shows the orthophotos from Surveys and Mapping. Where background images were not available, the 2006 SPOT image or 1:50000 map is shown.

The complete set in high-quality PDF takes up 27Gb of disk space, so currently the most effective means of distribution is by external hard disk. For this reason, we have also produced a just-legible low-resolution JPEG set of locality maps that takes up only 200Mb and fits on a CD.



Examples of the different formats are available on the NAEHMP site: <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/naehmp.htm> :

Spot 2007 PDF (13Mb) - <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/images/locmap/spot/A2ELAN-BESTE.pdf>

Spot 2007 JPG (0.1Mb) - <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/images/locmap/A2ELAN-BESTE.jpg>

Orthophoto PDF (5Mb) - <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/iwqs/rhp/images/locmap/spot/A2ELAN-BESTE.pdf>

By Mike Silberbauer:silberbauer@dwaf.gov.za

Provincial Activities

KwaZulu Natal

The Institute of Natural Resources has been appointed by WS Atkins International (UK) to work with SADC and ORASECOM (the Orange-Senqu Commission) to develop an aquatic ecosystem health programme that will link all four countries in the Orange-Senqu River basin (i.e. Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia). This programme needs to make use of existing programmes in each of the countries and thus will be intimately linked to the RHP in South Africa. There not only need to be some harmonisation of the methods to be used, but also links to the databases and monitoring programmes.

This contract is of relatively short duration, running from January to April 2009, so the work schedule will be intense. Those persons who would like to be part of these consultations should contact Chris Dickens at dickensc@ukzn.ac.za as soon as possible.

For more information contact Chris
Dickens Cell: +27(0)83 2696207
Email: dickensc@ukzn.ac.za

Northern Cape

Over the past several years, the malfunctioning of wastewater treatment works in Warrenton, Northern Cape Province, resulted in untreated wastewater flowing into the Vaal River in the Lower Vaal Catchment Management Area. The malfunctioning was mainly due to poor operation and maintenance of



treatment works' infrastructure.

The sewage caused such a pungent smell to the surrounding areas that when people passed by the area they had to cover their noses. At this stage the

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residents of Warrenton and Warrenvale lodged complaints with government departments, raising their concerns about their health and safety as raw sewerage was oozing along communities' streets. With the pump malfunctioning and sewer lines being blocked, the effluent started to also wash into the aquatic ecosystem. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, together with the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, were concerned about the water quality of the Vaal River and human health. They accordingly made a concerted effort in working out a strategy that persuaded the Municipality to cease neglecting their responsibility.

But it is not only untreated wastewater spillages that



are impacting on the health of rivers, mining and agricultural activities also negatively influence aquatic systems. Last year the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry stopped one of the illegal mining activities adjacent to the Vaal River. The mine abstracted and stored water illegally, discharged and disposed waste and water containing waste into the Vaal River near Douglas. Agricultural activities, on the other hand, contribute significantly to nutrient influx in the Vaal River which results in nuisance, and sometimes detrimental algal blooms. Water is the most important resource needed by all life forms, including humans, to survive. Lets work together to protect and conserve this irreplaceable resource that will determine our future survival.

For more information contact Peter Ramollo /Malise Noe Tel: +27(0)53 807 4800/+27(0)53 830 8800 or Email: pramollo@half.ncape.gov.za/noem@dwaf.gov.za

Free State

The National Water Week was celebrated from the 2nd to the 8th of March 2009. Celebrations were also held in the Free State and the purpose of the celebrations was to create awareness of the RHP amongst school children and to give effect to the ministerial directive to focus on water pollution during the Water Week.

Competitions were conducted amongst grade 3 pupils from ten schools. Of the ten, three schools were visited and these took 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize in the competition. Panorama Primary in Jacobsdal took 1st prize, Memel primary in Memel took 2nd and 3rd prize and there was a special mention of Bergmanshoogte Primary in Philippolis. The kids were given prizes sponsored by Bloem Water and got involved in a number of fun activities.



Working for Wetlands instituted a best project award for the first time in 2008,

covering work done across the programmes 40 projects in 2007/8. The Seekoeivlei project near Memel in the Free State received the inaugural best project award. Visit wetlands@sanbi.org

For more information contact Gerda

Venter Tel: +2751 405 9201

Email: venter.gerda@dwaf.gov.za

NAEHMP events and related

SASS accreditation in South Africa

SASS accreditation is progressing very well in South Africa with all provinces except the Northern Cape not having accredited practitioners. Unfortunately the success rate is still disappointingly low. The majority of failures are due to candidates failing the identification section of the process. What is also worrying is that a number of candidates arrive at the accreditation session ill-prepared; this is particularly obvious in the oral part of the accreditation.

There are currently 81 accredited SASS practitioners in South Africa as well as an additional five whose accreditation expired late last year and either still need to be retested or have failed their retest. As is to be expected due to the large number of consultancies based here, Gauteng has the most accredited SASS practitioners (25), followed by the Eastern Cape (10), Mpumalanga (8), Western Cape (7), Kwa-Zulu Natal (4), Free State and Limpopo (3 each) and one in North West.

Candidates are reminded that it is their responsibility to contact their provincial auditor in time when they are due for re-assessment, it is not the duty of the provincial auditors to inform you that your accreditation is about to expire.

The following SASS5 accreditation sessions are planned for 2009:

Gauteng and North West: 19 March (fully booked), 21 May, 20 August and 5 November. Candidates wanting to be audited should contact Colleen Todd (Colleenptodd@gmail.com)

Mpumalanga: 17 April in Sabie to coincide with the SASS5 course held from 15-17 April. Candidates wanting to be audited should contact Gerhard Diedericks (gerhardd@mweb.co.za)

Western Cape: No specific date yet but will be towards October/November. Candidates wanting to be audited should contact Dr Helen Dallas (Helen.Dallas@uct.ac.za)

Eastern Cape: Provisionally planned for 1 April. Candidates wanting to be audited should contact Helen James (H.James@ru.ac.za)

No information is available about accreditation in Free State, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Limpopo, but candidates who want to be audited should contact the provincial SASS auditor in those provinces.

By Christa Thirion: thirionc@dwaf.gov.za



Wetland Index of Habitat Integrity Training

The training on the use of Wetland IHI for floodplains and valley bottoms was successfully conducted on the 10-11



November 2008 at Roodeplaat Training Centre in Pretoria. Twenty two participants from DWAF Head Office, Eastern Cape and Kimberley Regional Offices, GDACE, Mpumalanga Parks Board, ARC and consultants attended the training. The first day of the training was an introduction to the Wetland IHI and the

modules within the index. On the second day the participants were taken to the field to perform an assessment using the index on a floodplain wetland located on the Apies River catchment near Hammanskraal. The next training is will be conducted before June 2009. Detailed information about this training will be posted on the RHP website in due course.



By Pumza Maseti: masetip@dwaf.gov.za

Adopt-a-River Programme

The Adopt-a-River Programme Phase II project is running on time with some budgetary constraints which are being addressed. Several draft products include Water Resource Quality Situation Analysis, Literature Review on Monitoring Models, Manual for Volunteer Programme and communications documents. Should you be interested in commenting on these documents please contact us.

The next Project Study Team Meeting is scheduled for the 29th of April 2009 in Pretoria.

For more information on the project contact Ramogale Sekwele at: +27(0)12 808 9614 or sekweler@dwaf.gov.za