## National River Health Programme (RHP)

## e-Communication - July 2005

This issue of the e-Communication will focus on the national River Health Programme (National Coverage Phase) and will provide feedback with regards to the Inception Phase, as well as key components of the National Coverage Phase that will be addressed over the next two years. We are also reporting back on the recently held Steering Committee meeting, State-of-Rivers reports that have been published in recent months, the ten year report and new developments coming up.

#### NATIONAL COVERAGE PHASE

### Inception Phase: Progress to date

Following on the Planning Phase (October 2003 to March 2004), the Inception Phase started in July last year and is due to be completed towards the end of March 2007.

The main purpose of the Inception phase is to review the current design of the national RHP as part of the National Aquatic Ecosystem Health Monitoring Programme, and to align it with the requirements of the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998). This is being done according to the guidelines provided in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's "Strategic Framework for National Water Resources Quality Monitoring Programmes" document.

The review process is structured around the following three core functions of monitoring:

- Data Acquisition (What, where and when to monitor);
- Data Management and Storage (Rivers database, quality assurance and control procedures);
- Information Generation and Dissemination (information requirements of primary information users).

The Inception phase part of the project focuses on two of the three core functions, namely Data acquisition and Information Generation and Dissemination. The Data Management and Storage component forms part of a project that runs in parallel with the Inception phase and which addresses certain key components of the National Coverage Phase (see Priority Components Project below).

A revised national RHP design and a manual for national implementation will be produced by the end of the Inception phase.

## What has happened to date and documents available?

### **Project Planning**

February 2004

RHP Planning workshop.

Workshop proceedings available on the RHP webpage (<a href="http://www.csir.co.za/rhp">http://www.csir.co.za/rhp</a>) / or contact Liesl Hill at Lhill@csir.co.za.

#### **Information Generation and Dissemination**

September 2004 Primary stakeholder workshop to identify river health information

requirements

Workshop notes available on the RHP webpage or contact Liesl Hill.

#### **Progress meeting**

December 2004 A feedback on progress meeting with the RHP Provincial Champions

and DWAF Regional Office representatives.

Workshop proceedings available on the RHP webpage (<a href="http://www.csir.co.za/rhp">http://www.csir.co.za/rhp</a>) / or contact

Liesl Hill at Lhill@csir.co.za.

## Continue

## Data acquisition

October 2004	Network design workshop to identify which indices to monitor,			
	where to monitor, and at what frequency.			
Workshop notes available o	Workshop notes available on the RHP webpage or contact Liesl Hill			
January 2005	A site characterisation workshop was held to review and revise the			
	RHP site characterisation field data sheets (NAEBP Report Series			
	No.:18 - Site characterisation field manual and field data sets (H F			
	Dallas, 2005))			
NAEBP Report Series No.:18	3 - Site characterisation field manual and field data sets (H F Dallas,			
2005) available on the RHP	webpage or contact Joyce Malulele at DWAF, RQS at			
malulekaj@dwaf.gov.za).				
February 2005	The first of four macro site selection workshops was held in			
	Pretoria. The purpose of these workshops is to, at a national scale,			
	identify monitoring sites that would represent the heterogeneity of			
	South African rivers. This first workshop dealt with the Water			
	Management Areas of the northern parts of the country (Water			
	Management Areas: Limpopo, Levuvhu & Letaba, Crocodile (west)			
	Marico, Olifants, Inkomati). Various River health and biomonitoring			
	practitioners as well as water resource planners and managers			
	participated in this workshop. Approximately 32 river health			
	monitoring sites are proposed per Water Management Area.			
March 2005	The second macro site selection workshop was held in Pretoria and			
	covered the central parts of the country (Water Management			
	Areas: Upper Vaal, Middle Vaal, Lower Vaal, Upper Orange and			
	Lower Orange)			

#### Data acquisition (continue)

May 2005 The third and fourth macro site selection workshop was held in Port

Elizabeth and Cape Town respectively. During these two

workshops, all the coastal and adjacent Water Management areas

were covered (Water Management areas: Usutu to Mhalatuze,

Thukela, Mvoti to Umzimkulu, Mzimvubu to Keiskamma, Fish to

Tsitsikamma, Gouritz, Olifants/Doring, Breede, and Berg).

An inventory of national RHP sites will be completed by September 2005. For any queries in this regard, contact Dr Helen Dallas at: hdallas@botzoo.uct.ac.za or Lies! Hill at Lhill@csir.co.za.

## **Priority Components Project**

The purpose of this project is to address aspects identified during the RHP Planning workshop in 2004 as key issues requiring urgent action. These aspects are:

- Quality Control and Assurance
- Data Storage and Management (i.e. Rivers Database)
- Revision of the Biomonitoring Course

This project will run over the next two years and will be completed by March 2007.

A consortium comprising the Institute of Natural Resources, the Freshwater Consulting Group and Coastal and Environmental Services is spearheading this project. For any queries in this regard, contact:

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#### THE FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

The first National Aquatic Ecosystem Health Monitoring Programme Steering Committee meeting was held on 18 April 2005, at DWAF, RQS at Roodeplaat Dam. Invited to the meeting were representatives from DWAF, the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and representatives from Gauteng DEAT, SANParks, Water Research Commission (WRC), Universities, Water Boards and the CSIR. The overall purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide guidance to the RHP and its various projects. This committee will meet approximately twice a year. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in October 2005.

Contact person: Shamilla Jhupsee (jhupsee (jhupsee (jhupsee) waf.gov.za)

#### REPORTING ON THE PAST TEN YEARS OF RHP

Ten years have past since the initiation of the RHP in 1994! Reflecting back on our achievements and challenges of the past ten years we are in the process of compiling a River Health Programme Ten Year Report. This report will provide a brief overview of the history of the Programme (development to implementation), the key role players and stakeholders involved as well as to provide a summary of the state of rivers that have been reported on to date through State-of-Rivers reporting initiatives. Updates on progress will be provided on the RHP website.

**Contact persons:** Bonani Madikizela, DWAF (RQS) (<u>madikib@dwaf.gov.za</u>) or Wilma Strydom, CSIR (<u>wstrydom@csir.co.za</u>).

## REASEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

For quite some time now, a need has been expressed to either revise the current Riparian Vegetation Index (RVI) or to develop a new approach that would suit the needs, and meet the objectives of the RHP. In August 2002 a workshop in this regard was held that was attended by various practitioners, but the process was not taken further at the time. A process has since been initiated between DWAF and the WRC to look at funding possibilities and an how to approach this project. Updates on this initiative will be provided in e-Communications to follow.

**Contact person:** Dr Neels Kleynhans (kleynhansn@dwaf.gov.za)

### RHP WEBSITE

Provincial Champs, please remember to send us photos of events / field trips and reports that you would like to be viewed on the website. Your contributions can be sent to Thabo Sekonyela (Tsekonyela@csir.co.za).

## CONTACT DETAILS

### **Provincial contact details**

For information on the different provincial initiatives, contact either the provincial champions (details below) or visit the RHP's website at (http://www.csir.co.za/rhp/):

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