

**Extract from**  
**White Paper on: "Water Supply and Sanitation Policy"**  
**Department of Water Affairs and Forestry - November 1994**

"The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's policy on the environment is based on the unity and indivisibility of all aspects of human life and the total environment in which human development occurs. It is therefore a contradiction to talk of sustainable development from the perspective of service provision without ensuring that the environment from which the resource is derived is protected and sustained. In this regard the "indivisibility" of water as a natural resource is clearly evident - each activity or call on the resource has an impact and an effect. The environment should not therefore be regarded as a "user" of water in competition with other users, but as the base from which the resource is derived and without which no development is sustainable. Protection and conservation of the natural resource base is therefore imperative. Even the simplest and smallest of projects thus requires attention. The concept of water as having economic value should therefore be extended to it also having intrinsic environmental value.

The Department will compile guidelines for sustainable development in the near future, after due consultation. The guidelines will aim to ensure that, in all development irrespective of size, the following issues are addressed:

- The resource characteristics are understood,
- Abstraction is sustainable and does not degrade the resources,
- Provision is made for monitoring the resource,
- Protection measures are implemented where necessary,
- Simple environmental impact assessment procedures are applied,
- An auditing function is established to review development projects and to ensure that the guidelines are being applied.

Further policy perspectives of the Department in relation to environment are:

**Conservation and demand management** In a semi-arid country such as South Africa, different users are increasingly having to compete for water resources. This could lead to long term degrading of limited sources of water which will be difficult if not impossible to rehabilitate. An important element of both water supply and water resource management is the establishment of a culture of conservation and the introduction of stringent demand management strategies to reduce water usage and the stress on resources.

**Consultation** Arising from the unity and indivisibility of human development and the environment, the role, opinion, and local wisdom of communities and other interested and affected parties is essential in ensuring the sustainability of both development and the environment. Of particular importance is the role of women and youth."