



water affairs

Department:  
Water Affairs  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## MEDIA RELEASE

Date: 23 October 2012

### **Interventions to address water supply concerns in the Kwazulu Natal Coastal Metropolitan Area**

The construction of Spring Grove Dam in Kwazulu -Natal, is progressing well and is scheduled to deliver its first water by April 2013 while investigations and the implementation by Umgeni Water of the planned Lower Thukela Bulk Water Supply Scheme to bring additional water from the uThukela River to the North Coast Area are also well advanced.

These were among the key interventions to ensure sustained water supply, discussed at the September meeting of the Strategy Steering Committee for the implementation and maintenance of the Reconciliation Strategy for the KZN Coastal Metropolitan Area Water Supply System.

This Reconciliation Strategy was finalised in 2009 by the Department of Water Affairs (DWA) in close cooperation with Umgeni Water, the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, other municipalities and stakeholders to address the water supply situation.

Various actions supporting the strategy implementation to address potential water shortages are underway. These include major infrastructure development such as the construction of the Spring Grove Dam, the Lower Thukela Bulk Water Supply Scheme and the raising of the Hazelmere Dam. In the short- to medium-term, measures like water conservation and water demand management, the use of treated effluent from wastewater treatment works, and the desalination of seawater are currently measures being implemented and studied in the area to deal with potential shortages. Investigations of the feasibility of longer term options that are underway include the uMkhomazi Water Project and the Mvoti River Development. The building of dams and supply schemes are major undertakings that take time to get the required regulatory approvals, designs, funding and to implement.

The cost estimate for the raising of the Hazelmere Dam was increased due to dam safety issues related to the dam wall geotechnical conditions. An economic assessment of the raising of Hazelmere Dam compared to Phase 2 of the Lower Thukela Bulk Water Supply Scheme was undertaken using the revised costs. The analysis showed that the economics of the two schemes are similar, however the Hazelmere Dam raising has the advantages of flexibility that water can be supplied from the dam to support the Mgeni System to the south and the raising does not have the risk of delays due to flooding that the Lower Thukela Bulk Water Supply Scheme has. The dam raising is scheduled for completion in September 2014.

A measure to address the water shortages over the medium term included a feasibility study conducted by Ethekeeni Municipality to investigate the use of domestic effluent treated to very high water quality standards for direct use as potable water. The basic assessment document, as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is complete and will be put into the public domain for comment later this month. The Department of Water Affairs together with the stakeholders in the Strategy Steering Committee has also acknowledged the receipt of a 5000 signature petition against direct water re-use lodged recently. At this stage, a meeting with the facilitator of the petition is planned to seek a way forward. It is planned that the final Basic Assessment report, which will incorporate any additional comments which are received, will be submitted to the KZN Department of Agriculture & Environment Affairs by early November 2012. A decision on whether to proceed with the scheme is still to be made based on an assessment of costs and risks. This will be done once the results of the other feasibility studies become available. It is envisaged that this will be possible by July 2013.

The feasibility study for the uMkhomazi River Transfer Scheme is also progressing well. The hydrology and environmental screening tasks of the project have been completed. The Environmental Impact Assessment is to begin in January 2013. At this stage, the Smithfield Dam and tunnel is planned to deliver water in 2023 which fits in with the current augmentation schedule.

A further intervention strategy being considered by the Strategy Steering Committee is the desalination of seawater. Umgeni Water is currently conducting a feasibility study into this option. The location of the north coast plant site is being finalized. The collection of baseline information on seawater quality and currents is underway with the launching of two offshore buoys to record the data. The practitioner for the Environmental Impact Assessment will be appointed by November 2012 and a meeting is to be held with eThekweni in September 2012 to determine how to feed the treated seawater into the bulk water supply system.

The Strategy Steering Committee will meet again in February 2013 to assess the further progress of the interventions and implementation actions to meet the target delivery dates. As a co-operative governance body, the Committee is achieving its objective of facilitating the implementation of the Reconciliation Strategy to ensure water availability and sustainability for the region over a 25-year planning horizon. The various stakeholders in the body understand the seriousness of the situation and are working together to ensure that the Strategy is updated and adjusted to meet the changing situation in the water supply and intervention actions.

ISSUED BY: THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER AFFAIRS

Enquiries: Linda Page (Media Liaison)  
012 -336 8250/ 083 460 4482  
Or Peter van Niekerk (Water Resource Engineering)  
012 -336 8762/ 082 807 4981