



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Directorate: National Water Resource Planning

**VAAL RIVER SYSTEM
STRATEGY STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE RECONCILIATION
STRATEGY
MINUTES OF MEETING 1**

DATE: Thursday, 23 July 2009
TIME: 09:00 – 12:30
VENUE: Motsweding Conference Room, 16th Floor,
Gauteng Regional Office, Department of Water Affairs,
Sanlam Plaza East, 285 Schoeman Street, Pretoria

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairperson Mr Peter van Niekerk (Department of Water Affairs – DWA), welcomed all to the first meeting of the Strategy Steering Committee (SSC) for the Vaal River System (VRS). One of the recommendations of the recently completed Reconciliation Strategy Study was that a SSC be formed with a clearly defined mandate and scope of work. The SSC must oversee the implementation of the Reconciliation Strategy, the reason for today's meeting.

2. ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

An attendance register is attached to this document. The following apologies were received:

Mr Helgard Muller, DWA
Mr Solly Mabuda, DWA
Mr Louis Snyders, DWA
Mr Fred van Zyl, DWA
Mr Johan van Aswegen, DWA
Mr Beason Mwaka, DWA
Mr Nic Opperman, AgriSA.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

The agenda was accepted.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE SSC

4.1. Terms of Reference

Mr Johan van Rooyen, (DWA) presented the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) of the SSC and said this committee is the first line of defence against a crisis or problem in the VRS.

Organisations represented on the SSC must ensure that the recommendations made in the Reconciliation Strategy are implemented and assume collective responsibility for ensuring the ongoing reconciliation of supply and requirement.

The following objectives have been identified for the SSC:

- Ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the VRS Reconciliation Strategy;
- Update the Strategy to ensure that it remains relevant; and
- Ensure that the Strategy and its recommendations are appropriately communicated.

The ToR is still in draft format and will be ironed out before the next meeting. Mr Van Rooyen asked for comments on the ToR and requested feedback within the next few weeks. Members of the SSC will be kept informed of this process and copies will be emailed when changes have been made to the ToR.

Mr Van Rooyen further said that a Professional Service Provider (PSP) will be appointed to serve as a Technical Support Group to support the functions of the SSC.

4.2. Membership

The main role players in the VRS are the DWA, the DWA Regional Offices, the Department of Agriculture, organised agriculture, the relevant Provincial Departments, Metros and Municipalities dependent on the Vaal River System, Water Boards and big industry such as the mines, Eskom and Sasol.

These organisations must play a significant role in decisions regarding the operation of the VRS and need a forum such as this SSC to ensure that their requirements are met.

Mr Van Rooyen asked that only one person from each organisation attend the SSC or else the meeting would become too big.

The Department of Minerals and Department of Environmental Affairs must be invited to the next meeting. Not every municipality can be invited. The SSC will send information to the municipalities to keep them updated.

4.3. Discussion

Ms Bongwiwe Msane (DWA – Free State) suggested a change in the wording of Point 3 in the ToR. Mr Van Rooyen said they will work on it and finalise it before the next meeting.

Mr Martin Ginster (Sasol) suggested that civil society and other non-governmental organisations should also be included in the SSC. He also emphasised the importance of obtaining the buy-in of politicians as part of the communication activities of the SSC. Mr Van Niekerk answered that civil society could be included in another meeting such as a public meeting, but the question is also who is being represented by civil society.

Mr Coenie Erasmus (Free State – Department of Tourism, Environment and Economic Affairs) commented that the Vaal River is critical to the Free State. His Department must also give feedback to Unesco on the Vredefort Dome and the water quality of the Vaal River may impact negatively on it. Eutrophication in the Bloemhof Dam is also a major problem. Mr Van Rooyen responded that this meeting will focus on the Reconciliation Strategy and not on specific water quality issues. This will be covered by another meeting at a later stage (*See related discussion under Point 7*).

Mr Deon Dippenaar (Sedibeng Water) asked what happened to the Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) and if all three relevant CMAs should not be invited to this meeting. Mr Hennie Smit (DWA – Gauteng) said the DWA Regional Offices represent the relevant VRS CMAs and there is currently talk of reducing the three CMAs to one for the whole VRS.

Mr Rickus du Plessis (North West Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Rural Development) asked why organised agriculture has not been invited to the SSC. Mr Van Rooyen explained that Mr Nic Opperman of AgriSA was invited, but he could not attend. He has been an integral part of the previous phase of this process and in an effort to keep the size of the SSC as small as possible; the number of representatives has been limited to one per organisation. Representatives from different agricultural unions can be invited if they are not affiliated to AgriSA. Mr Van Rooyen said he will discuss this with the National Department of Agriculture.

5. OVERVIEW OF THE RECONCILIATION STRATEGY

Mr Johan van Rooyen (DWA) gave an overview of the Reconciliation Strategy of the Vaal River System. Following on the National Water Resource Strategy, Internal Strategic Perspectives (ISPs) were developed. The Vaal Overarching ISP identified the need for four detailed studies:

- Integrated Water Quality Management Plan;
- Water Conservation/ Water Demand Management (WC/WDM);
- Vaal Reconciliation Strategy; and
- Comprehensive Reserve Determination.

The VRS supplies water to 60% of economy and 45% of population – the mines and industry on the Mpumalanga Highveld, the bulk of Eskom's coal fired power stations, Gauteng, the North West and Free State goldfields, Kimberley as well as large irrigation schemes. There are complex issues impacting on the VRS, because it is a dynamic area with a huge growth in requirements. All users in the area contribute to the effluent and the complex water quality issues.

The DWA needs to ensure there will be enough water in the future for this important area and it is also vital that Local Government takes responsibility.

The recommendations of the Reconciliation Strategy were to:

- Eradicate unlawful irrigation;

- Implement Water Conservation and Water Demand Management - focus on loss management (aim to save 15%);
- Treat and use effluent - start with mine water;
- Prepare for next augmentation scheme;
- Implement water quality management measures; and
- Establish a Strategy Steering Committee.

Mr Van Rooyen summarised his presentation by saying that we have all the solutions at hand to the problems facing the VRS. New solutions that must be concentrated on are:

- WC/WDM must be implemented extensively; and
- Water re-use must be done on a large scale.

5.1. Discussion

Mr Erasmus asked if the Ecological Reserve was included in the study. Mr Van Rooyen said the Comprehensive Reserve Determination Study is not yet finalised. The DWA does not want to speculate and will rather wait for the final results, which will be incorporated into the Reconciliation Strategy.

Mr Erasmus asked if mine water has been included in the Strategy. Mr Van Rooyen said it has been included and the re-use of mine water is one of the recommendations of the Strategy. The mine water will, however, be treated very thorough to remove all harmful materials.

Mr Anesh Surendra (Eskom) asked if funding is available for municipalities to achieve a 15 % saving of water with WC/WDM. Mr Van Rooyen said municipalities must look at their own resources. Government must also look at funding mechanisms to assist municipalities. In the long term municipalities will eventually save on the investment they have made to conserve and manage water.

Mr John Critchley (Rand Water) said there has been no drop in demand due to the economic downturn and he still thinks that the future demand for water in the VRS will be higher than what the DWA is projecting in the studies. The re-use of mine water features prominently in the future plans of Rand Water.

Mr Wandile Nomqophu (Water Research Commission) asked if any groundwater sources were used in these projections. Mr Van Rooyen said all available groundwater sources are already being used. No new groundwater sources have been included due to the danger of sinkholes. Pretoria and Centurion, for example, get a lot of their water from groundwater sources. Mr Critchley said Rand Water cannot increase its groundwater sources due to the sinkhole danger.

Mr Surendra suggested Department of Minerals must be invited to the next meeting to discuss mine water and making funds available to re-use this water.

6. FEEDBACK ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGY

6.1. Water Use Compliance Enforcement

Mr Hennie Smit (DWA - Gauteng) explained in his presentation that compliance enforcement in the VRS is divided into three according to the three provinces sharing the VRS – Gauteng, Free State and the Northern Cape. It would have been impossible if each

province followed its own approach. Instead a Task Team has been formed to tackle unlawful water use. The biggest problem is in the Upper Vaal.

Water use compliance is done by validation and verification, which should be completed by the end of 2010.

The need was also identified to have regulations published in the Government Gazette relating to the process of controlling unlawful water use. On legal advice it was decided to draw up water use regulations for the whole country and not just for the VRS. The DWA does not have the capacity to monitor water use compliance and need a support team to bring this under control. A Terms of Reference has been compiled and approval has been requested for appointing PSPs. This team should oversee the implementation of the water use regulations.

The DWA must work out a contingency plan should the unlawful water use not be brought under control by 2011, because experience has shown that legal matters can take a very long time, said Mr Smit.

6.1.1. Discussion

Mr Surendra asked what percentage of the VRS water users belong to the agricultural sector. Mr Seef Rademeyer (DWA) said it is about 35%.

Mr Surendra asked if the DWA is confident of keeping to the 2011 deadline. Mr Smit said it is a very complex problem. The biggest problem will be the delaying tactics from the farmers who will stretch out the process. Taking all farmers to court is also impossible. The DWA will try and convince people to abide by the law. One or two of the biggest culprits will be taken to court to make an example of them.

Mr Hanke du Toit (DWA - Northern Cape) said water use compliance has been communicated to the farmers in the Northern Cape and four cases have followed the legal route to the Water Tribunal or High Court, with all the finalised cases ending positive for the DWA.

Mr Martin Ginster (Sasol) requested clarification regarding the different processes presented and Mr Smit replied that water use registration was the first step, which was followed by the validation of actual water use and there after verification of the lawful water use is determined.

6.2. Water Conservation and Water Demand Management

Mr Paul Herbst (DWA) said in his presentation there are metros and municipalities with WC/WDM measures in place but it is still not near enough to reduce the water consumption. The City of Tshwane has had some successes but this is more to do with its financial department that increased tariffs for water use. The higher water users reduced their water use, but the lower and middle users are still using the same quantity of water as before.

The targeted savings of 15 % per metro/municipality are not achieved. The problem is that ownership of Project 15 % seems to be lacking. The metros and municipalities are responsible for WC/WDM and should take ownership of it. Substantial investment in infrastructure maintenance and WC/WDM are required by the metros and municipalities before there will be any significant advance towards the target of 15 %.

The way forward for WC/WDM is:

- A Core Team has been established and a draft ToR has been developed, distributed for comments and finalized;
- Assess status of implementation – develop actions to fast track implementation;
- Some metro's have been engaged – information gathering;
- Start escalating the process with provincial intervention;
- Letters from the DWA to the municipalities (through the MEC's office) on the need to increase efforts for implementation; and
- A Steering Committee to be established with the DWA, Metro's, Rand Water, etc.

6.2.1. Discussion

Mr Critchley said all studies have shown that money invested into WC/WDM will always be recovered. He feels that the political will is not there to solve this problem. Mr Van Rooyen said the Water for Growth and Development Framework has shown that there is an increase in the political will to solve our water problems. He agrees with a suggestion made by Mr Herbst to get political buy-in for WC/WDM at municipal level from the mayors and councillors who can then canvas their relevant provincial MECs.

Mr Erasmus agrees that political buy-in is increasing and it is also being helped by the recent riots due to a lack of service delivery.

Mr Surendra asked if there would be a significant saving with WC/WDM in the agricultural sector that can be utilised. Mr Van Rooyen said any savings made in the agricultural sector will not be given to another sector, but it would rather be given to the emerging farmers. He said the agricultural sector has in the past been accused of being very inefficient water users, however, this has been shown not to be the case in various schemes. Conditions in each irrigation scheme differ and the need for leaching, (in the Vaalharts Scheme) is for example essential for sustainable irrigation.

Mr Van Niekerk commented that if farmers were forced to use less water, then they will be forced to use water more efficiently. Another option will be to buy water from other farmers or to use an efficient irrigation system and sell excess water to neighbouring farmers.

Mr Surendra asked if the DWA has investigated a water levy that may only be used for WC/WDM. Mr Herbst said this was investigated, but the Department of Treasury vetoed this notion.

Mr Benedict Itholeng (Gauteng – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) suggested the need for integration between all departments with regard to future developments. He used the example of housing developments that are approved by the relevant provincial housing department without investigating the availability of water for such a project. Mr Van Niekerk replied that determining where a development takes place is very seldom dictated by water, because water is very mobile and can be piped from anywhere at a relatively low cost.

Mr Herbst said new housing developments must look at WC/WDM measures when planning such houses and this is controlled through municipal by-laws. Low quality plumbing products is the biggest contributor to water losses. Metros and municipalities can contribute by checking that no sub-standard products are being used.

6.3. Utilisation of Treated Effluent

Mr Rademeyer did a brief presentation of the re-use of water. This is potentially a large resource that is available, but sophisticated treatment will be required before this treated water can be used. Mine water (Acid Mine Drainage - AMD) is the first priority followed by the re-use of effluent from Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTWs).

Mines must come up with close-out plans as a solution for AMD. An intergovernmental task force including the National Departments of Water, Environment and Minerals is investigating this problem, said Mr Rademeyer.

6.3.1. Discussion

Mr Critchley commented that cleaning mine water will have a positive knock-on effect on the Vaal River. Mr Van Rooyen added that it will reduce to the need for releasing water from the Vaal Dam to dilute the Vaal River.

Mr Erasmus asked if the task force on mine water is also operating in the Free State. Mr Rademeyer said it started in Gauteng and only very recently extended its operations to Welkom.

Mr Van Niekerk said it will be good to find out exactly how many task teams/committees are working in the VRS and if there is room for co-operation.

Mr Nikisi Lesufi (Chamber of Mines of South Africa) asked when the public service provider will be appointed to start with the technical work of the Reconciliation Strategy. Mr Van Rooyen said it will be soon.

Ms Marina Kruger (Midvaal Water Company) asked if the quantities of additional water and natural water from the mines have been worked out. Mr Rademeyer said initial investigations showed that this can only be done through detail studies, which have not yet been carried out.

Mr Itholeng said the biggest problem with mines is that most of them are closed and have been closed for a long time, making it difficult to find the owners. Who will carry the cost of treating the AMD? Mr Rademeyer said the intergovernmental task force is investigating this issue. Government will pay a portion of this cost, through the Department of Minerals who is the responsible department in this case.

Mr Lesufi commented that maybe the Department of Minerals does not have a sense of urgency regarding the problem of decanting AMD on the West Rand.

Mr Van Wyk said many WWTWs are not working and technical support must be organised for those municipalities with sewage problems.

6.4. Implementation of Infrastructural Augmentation Option

Mr Peter Pyke gave an overview of the Feasibility Study of Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. This joint study with Lesotho started in 2005 and cost R60 million.

The study identified the building of the Polihali Dam on a higher altitude than the Katse Dam, which means the water can free-flow into the Katse Dam from where it will use the

pipng system. Total cost will be about R7 billion and the Polihali Dam should be finished in 2020.

Mr Pyke presented a schedule of activities that will be required to implement the project which include:

- A feasibility study including a decision whether to include Hydropower as a joint project option by August 2009;
- Sign Protocol to the Treaty Agreement between South Africa and Lesotho by July 2010;
- Design the project – start December 2010;
- Tender for construction from July 2012;
- Construction – start December 2012; and
- The dam will be ready by April 2020.

6.4.1. Discussion

Mr Ginster said he understands the need for another dam, but he personally feel it would be unethical to build a new dam without exhausting all WC/WDM options. Has Rand Water looked at a pipeline from Lesotho all the way to Gauteng, bypassing the VRS? Mr Critchley said a pipeline from Clarens to Gauteng was investigated to transport clean, potable water. This was, however, very expensive and financial models showed that cost would only just be recovered over a period of 20 to 30 years.

Mr Johan van Rooyen added the financial benefits for the pipeline was small and is therefore not considered at this stage.

7. THE NEED FOR A SEPARATE SSC FOR WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT?

Mr Van Niekerk asked if this SSC should also handle water quality as well or do we need a dedicated SSC for water quality management. After some discussion the delegates agreed that due to the integration of quantity and quality management one high level SSC is appropriate.

7.1. Discussion

Mr Van Rooyen said one can never totally split water supply reconciliation and water quality management. There are also, too many meetings and we end up with stakeholder fatigue. A few organisations also have a split between functions relating to water supply reconciliation and water quality, which means different officials are handling the two study fields. On the other hand there is a long list of water quality management measures requiring specific attention.

Mr Erasmus also said there are too many forums. He supports an integrated approach and will then co-opt colleagues to sit in on specific meetings that will focus on water quality issues. Mr Critchley agreed with this and said he will have to bring a colleague to water quality related meetings, because that is not his field of expertise.

Mr Jurgo van Wyk (DWA) also supports one committee supported by technical work groups.

8. COMMUNICATION

The objectives of the SSC must be made more visible to the public, said Mr Van Niekerk. This can be done with brochures, flyers and news releases to the media on the progress of the implementation of the Strategy.

Mr Van Rooyen said the first task of the SSC is to find out how communication can be improved. A media release will be a good start to explain the role of the SSC – a watchdog for implementation.

Other stakeholders should also be informed about the SSC, said Mr Van Rooyen. He did a presentation to the senior managers of Rand Water and will be doing one to the Gauteng Provincial Government. The other provinces sharing the VRS should also be visited.

We should also focus on our successes and not only on our problems and being on the defensive all the time. The content of the executive summary of Reconciliation Strategy can also be used to inform people.

Mr Erasmus said a lack of information is always a problem. All information generated by the SSC will be accepted with thanks and it will be used.

Mr Surendra said it must be communicated what will happen if we do not make a success of the VRS Reconciliation Strategy. The result will be water restrictions and this must be spelt out to the people.

Mr Glinster asked for material regarding the VRS on the DWA website with interactive water-related information to make it more interesting to the general public.

Mr Dippenaar said these information brochures and flyers must also be sent to the municipalities in the VRS and local politicians.

Mr Van Wyk said a communication strategy is also required to obtain buy-in from politicians at local level to deal with the water quality problems currently facing municipalities.

9. FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Mr Van Niekerk asked if two meetings per year will be sufficient for the SSC.

9.1. Discussion

Mr Erasmus said two meetings a year is not enough. If the meetings are going to be kept at two per year, then regular information should be sent out to members of the SSC. This information is also needed to compile progress reports for this manager.

Mr Van Rooyen said they must report on a monthly basis to the DWA top management. This information could be sent to members of the SSC as well on a regular basis Ms Kruger supported this suggestion.

Mr Lesufi commented that if the SSC will only review, then two meetings is enough, but if the SSC must respond to problems or a crisis, then it will not be enough.

It was finally agreed that two meeting per year is sufficient.

10. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS and COMMENTS

None

11. WAY FORWARD

Mr Van Niekerk thanked everybody present and said good discussions took place that will take this process further.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 24 February 2010.

13. CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 12:30.