

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Mzimvubu Water Project

Newsletter 3 / July 2014

Activities and Achievements to Date

The Scoping Phase, as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Mzimvubu Water Project has been completed. The Final Scoping Report was submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs on 13 June 2014 for approval and was approved with certain conditions on 15 July 2014.

ILISO Consulting (Pty) Ltd has been appointed to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Mzimvubu Water Project which commenced early in 2014. The Mzimvubu Water Project was launched at the sod turning Ceremony by President Jacob Zuma on 11 April 2014. Although construction is anticipated to commence this November, it is dependent on environmental authorization being obtained from the Department of Environmental Affairs.

The Environmental Impact Assessment consists of three phases, the **Announcement Phase**, **Scoping Phase** and the **Impact Assessment Phase** before the Department of Environmental Affairs can make a decision regarding an authorization.

The **Announcement phase** included a project team site visit to the Eastern Cape in order to familiarize the team with the area, a Background Information Document being compiled, and stakeholders being identified. An application was made to the Department of Environmental Affairs, where references numbers were obtained and a case officer was assigned to this project before commencement of the Scoping Phase.

The **Scoping Phase** comprised of the compilation of a Draft Scoping Report which was made available to the public for comment, the first round of public meetings in the affected areas and the submission of the Final Scoping Report to the Department of Environmental Affairs Case Officer.

The final phase is the **Impact Assessment Phase**. The Scoping Report has since been approved by the Department of Environmental Affairs thus the Impact Assessment phase will commence. This will include specialist investigations, further public participation and the submission of the Final Environmental Impact Assessment Report as well as an Environmental Management Programme to the Department of Environmental Affairs. The Department of Environmental Affairs will then review the report and potentially provide an Environmental Authorization. Only once this has been received will construction be able to commence.



Feedback from the Feasibility Investigations

The previous newsletter was published in September 2013, which provided feedback on the 19 potential dam development sites that were identified under previous studies, and the three sites which showed the most promise in meeting the specific requirements (i.e. domestic water supply, irrigated agriculture and hydropower), namely, Thabeng, Somabadi, and Ntabelanga sites. Further information regarding the

hydropower potential assessment was provided and it was stated that the Ntabelanga Dam site would have the advantage in that it can be used in tandem with a potential and significant hydropower scheme that was previously identified by ESKOM.

Thus Ntabelanga became the preferred option and the development of the Ntabelanga-Lalini Conjunctive Scheme began (Figure 1). In February 2014 ILISO Consulting (Pty) Ltd was appointed to complete a full Environmental Impact Assessment for the Ntabelanga-Lalini Conjunctive scheme, including the dams and associated infrastructure (primary and secondary

pipelines, pumping stations, reservoirs, waste water treatment works, water treatment works, flow gauging stations, staff accommodation and information centres), road upgrades and hydropower components. The following sections provide detail on the Environmental Impact Assessment process to date as well as what is to come.

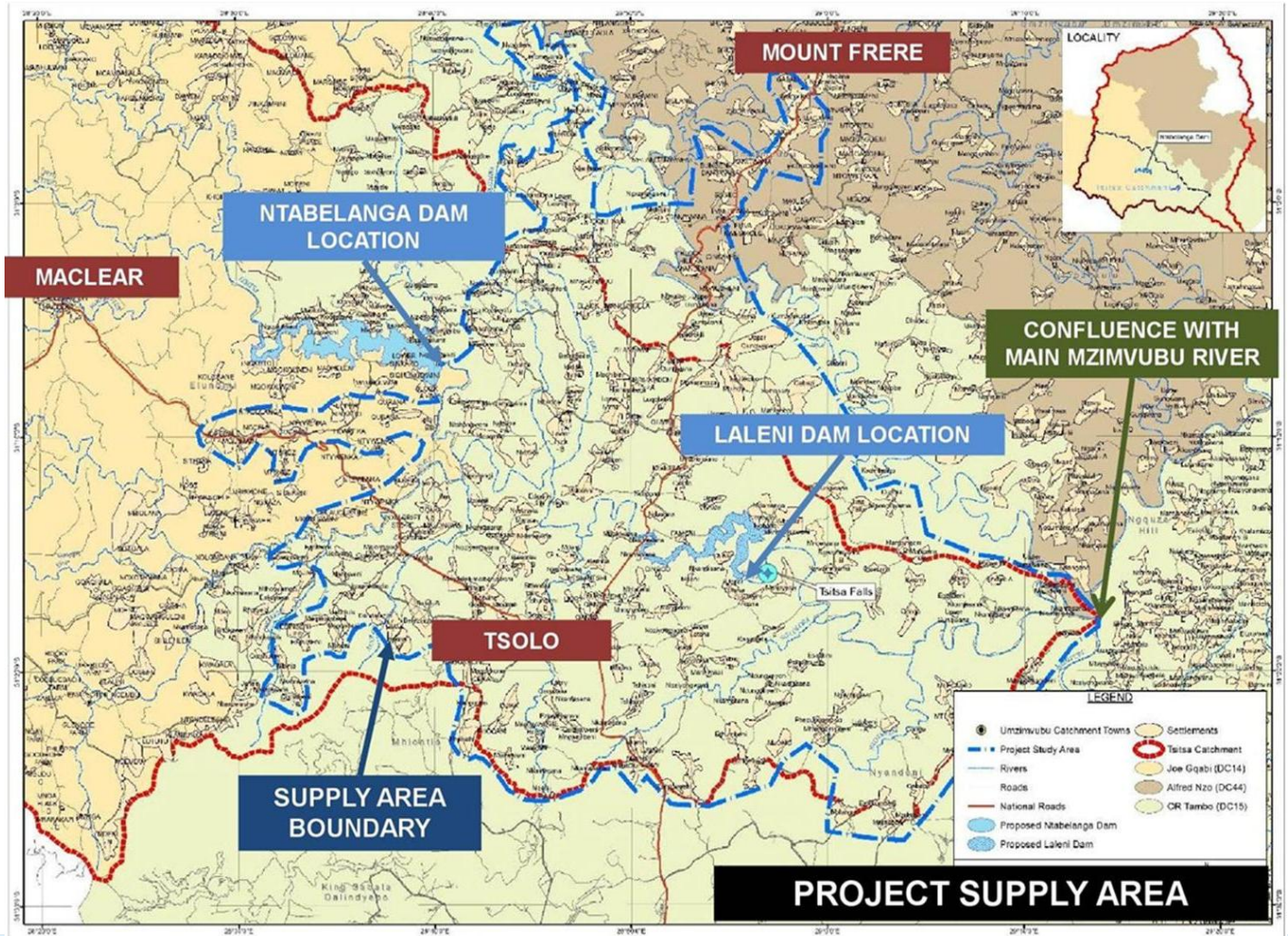


Figure 1: Locality map of the Ntabelanga and Lalini Dams

Announcement Phase: What was done?

The announcement phase saw the Mzimvubu Water Project being announced to the public. This included:

- A pre-application meeting which was held at the Department of Environmental Affairs offices in Pretoria on 25 March 2014. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to the Department of Environmental Affairs, and agree on the proposed process and programme to be followed as well as associated roles and responsibilities;
- A team site visit was undertaken in March 2014 to familiarise the project team with the surrounding area;

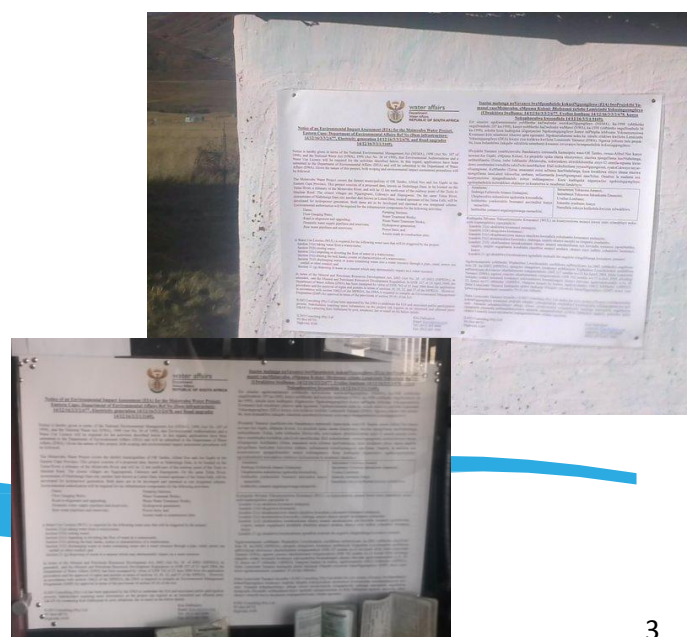
- Application forms were submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs on 31 March 2014 and the project was assigned reference numbers by the Department. Due to the varying components of this project it was advised that three separate reference numbers be obtained for the various activities:
 - **14/12/16/3/3/2/677** (Dams and associated infrastructure);
 - **14/12/16/3/3/2/678** (Electricity generation); and
 - **14/12/16/3/3/1/1169** (Roads).
- A letter notifying Interested and Affected Parties of this application for environmental authorisation, as well as the applications for the Water Use Licence, heritage permits, and borrow areas approval was sent to registered stakeholders;
- Two local facilitators from the study area were appointed through the traditional authorities to assist with the public participation process;
- A Background Information Document, available in both English and isiXhosa, was distributed electronically by email, placed on the Department of Water Affairs website and hard copies were distributed with the help of the local facilitators as well as at public meetings. The Background Information Document covers all the applications that form part of the project.

The Background Information Documents are available on www.dwa.gov.za/mzimvubu/announcement.aspx for download.

- A newspaper advertisement was published in two local (Mthatha Fever and the Daily Dispatch) and one provincial (The Herald) newspaper announcing the Environmental Impact Assessment process for this project and providing contact details for Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) to register as a stakeholder; and



- On-site notices were posted providing a brief background on the project and contact details in order for Interested and Affected Parties to request further information and/or to register as a stakeholder. The posters provided both English and isiXhosa versions.



Scoping Phase: Report back on the findings of the studies and the public participation to date

The Final Scoping report was submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs on 13 June 2014. This report contains various information regarding the Mzimvubu Water Project. This included information on the legislation and guidelines that were considered, a detailed introduction and description of the proposed activities, alternatives considered, key issues identified, including a brief summary of the key issues that would be further investigated during the Impact Assessment phase, public participation to date and recommendations going forward.

a) Legislation and Guidelines

The Environmental Impact Assessment includes the assessments required to apply for the following authorisations for the Mzimvubu Water Project:

- Water Use Licence;
- Approval of the Environmental Management Programme for Borrow areas and Quarries;
- Heritage permits;
- Waste Management Licence (may be required); and
- Licence for the removal of protected trees.

b) Description of the proposed activities

The project footprint spreads over three District Municipalities (DMs):

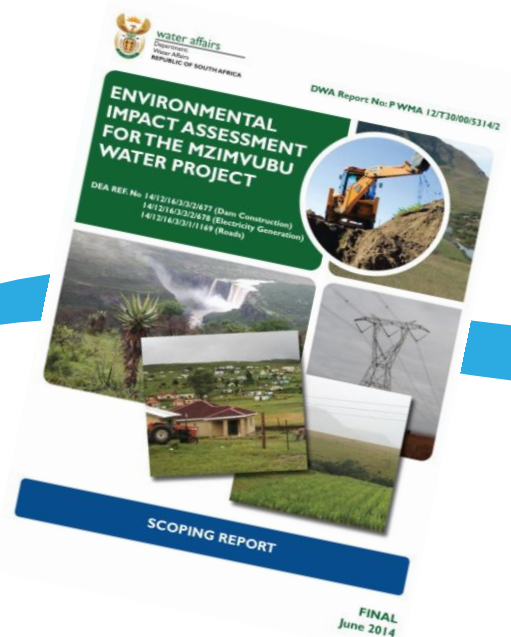
- Joe Gqabi DM in the north west;
- OR Tambo DM in the south west; and
- Alfred Nzo DM in the east and north east.

The proposed Ntabelanga Dam site is located approximately 25 km east of the town of Maclear and north of the R396 Road and will supply potable water to 539 000 people, rising to 730 000 people by year 2050. The proposed Lalini Dam site is situated approximately 17 km north east of the small town Tsolo. Both are situated on the Tsitsa River.

There will be a small hydropower plant at Ntabelanga Dam to generate between 0.75 MW and 5 MW (average 2.1 MW). This will comprise a raw water pipeline from the dam to a building containing the hydropower turbines and associated equipment, and a discharge pipeline back to the river just below the dam wall.

The hydropower plant downstream of the proposed Lalini Dam (used conjunctively with the Ntabelanga Dam) will generate an average output of 30 MW when operated as a base load power station and up to 180

MW when operated as a peaking power station. The power plant will require a conduit/tunnel of approximately 7 km linking the dam to the power plant in the gorge downstream of the dam.



c) Alternatives

Previous investigations done in the feasibility phase of the project assessed alternative dam sites for the project. These assessments have been reviewed and are considered adequate for the Environmental Impact Assessment requirements. Further studies on alternative dam sites will therefore not be undertaken in the impact assessment phase of this study. The following project level alternatives will be assessed:

- Three hydro power conduit/tunnel positions and associated power lines;
- Peak versus Base load power generation;
- Three different dam sizes for the Lalini Dam; and
- The no project option.

For the pipeline routes and new roads the specialists will identify any sensitive areas and deviations to avoid these will be proposed in consultation with the technical team.

d) Key Issues

The main objective of the Environmental Impact Assessment is to provide the competent authority with the information that they require to make a decision on whether this project should be authorised or not, and if so then on what conditions. The purpose of identifying key issues during the scoping phase is to focus the specialist studies and impact assessment on the issues and impacts that are critical to the authorisation decision and conditions.

The following key issues will be addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment:

- The impacts on plants and animals;
- The impacts on rivers and wetlands;
- A Reserve determination downstream of the Lalini site;
- Social impacts;
- Economic impacts;
- Heritage impacts, including paleontological investigations; and
- Visual impacts.

e) Public Participation

The draft scoping report was made available to Interested and Affected Parties for a 30-day public comment period, from 9 May 2014 to 9 June 2014.

Hard copies of the Draft Scoping Report were made available at the following venues:

- East London Central Library;
- Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha;
- Mhlontlo Local Municipality, Tsolo;
- Mhlontlo Local Municipality, Qumbu; and
- Siqhungqwini Junior Secondary School.



In addition to the public comment period, three public meetings were held during the week of 12 May 2014

near the proposed Ntabelanga Dam site, in Tsolo and in Lalini. The purpose of these meetings was to engage with the public, provide information and allow stakeholders to raise any comments or objections.



An Authorities Forum meeting was held on 28 May 2014 to present the project and the findings of the Draft Scoping Report to the various organs of State involved, and to obtain their comments on the draft report.

Feedback received from stakeholders was recorded in the Issues and Responses Report and incorporated in the Final Scoping Report where applicable.

f) Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of the Mzimvubu Water Project is the socio-economic upliftment of the largely undeveloped and impoverished communities within the area. This is to be achieved through:

- Supply schemes for domestic and industrial water requirements;
- Supply schemes for irrigated agriculture;
- Hydropower generation; and
- The creation of temporary and permanent jobs.

The project involves some positive and negative impacts. Potentially significant environmental impacts of the project have been identified and will be further investigated and assessed in the Impact Assessment phase.

The complete Final Scoping Report including the Draft Summary reports in both English and isiXhosa are available for download on www.dwa.gov.za/mzimvubu/scoping.aspx.

The Impact Assessment Phase: What's next?

The Scoping Report has been approved on 15 July 2014 by the Department of Environmental Affairs including certain conditions that are to be met during the Impact Assessment phase.

The contents of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report will be as prescribed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2010 (Regulation 31(2)) and will build on the Scoping Report, focusing on assessing the key impacts, determining their significance, and recommending appropriate measures to mitigate negative impacts and enhance benefits.

Some of the key issues identified during the Scoping Phase will require further investigation by appropriately qualified and experienced specialists. These studies will be synthesised and integrated into the overall impact assessment (full reports will be included as appendices to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report), and recommendations for mitigation will be included in the Environmental Management Programme.

a) Public Participation to come

The requirements of the National Environmental Management Act, Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2010) for the Public Participation Process will be adhered to. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) best practice principles will also be applied, including special measures such as additional focus group meetings, the use of local facilitators at meetings, and the translation of documents, advertisements and notification letters from English into isiXhosa.

ILISO will provide feedback to stakeholders throughout the process. Interested and Affected Parties and the public will be informed of the availability of the draft Environmental Impact Assessment Report (through written notification to registered stakeholders), as well as of the authorities' decision and the appeal process in respect of the various applications (through newspaper advertisement and written notification to all registered stakeholders).

Newsletter 4 will be published with the findings from the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

Further information

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Documentation and Reports:

For more information as well as all available documents to date please visit www.dwa.gov.za/Mzimvubu

