



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS continues to monitor the Modimolle chemical spillage

24 June 2015

The environmental damage caused by a sulphuric acid spill into the Nyl River in Limpopo has been noted as a matter of urgent concern by the Department of Water and Sanitation. A truck containing 28,000 litres of sulphuric acid overturned in Modimolle in May and spilled into the Nyl River.

A number of Modimolle farmers in Limpopo have since the spillage suspended farming activities in the area fearing contamination of the Nyl River since the incident. Water and Sanitation officials carried out clean-up operations promptly after the accident.

The Compliance, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (CME) immediately set up a disaster team in the town which still continues to monitor the matter progressively. The pollution has been contained whilst further investigations into the disaster are underway.

The Nyl River is the source of water for farmers in the Modimolle area. Water and Sanitation officials also attended to the area where the truck overturned at corner Thabo Mbeki and Nelson Mandela Streets. The officials then proceeded to put lime into the river to neutralise the acid.

The river was so heavily polluted that fish in the affected area of the river died, most farmers downstream of the incident couldn't irrigate their fields, and have been forced to move their livestock because of the accident. Residents up to 10km downstream have been warned not to use the water.

The current situation is that government experts have neutralised the acidic water with lime. Tests show that some pH levels have stabilised.

Departmental spokesman Sputnik Ratau explained that the first priority was the process of using lime to stabilise the situation. Lime is one of the most common alkalis used for neutralizing acids for both water and soil, and it will assist the pH level to increase. He said that once the government has the pollution under control, the next step will be to rehabilitate the river course, ensuring the environment and river can also support the fauna and flora dependent on it.

Thabang Molai