



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### INTERNET ARTICLE

#### **DWS's offensive against Acid Mine Drainage records successes**

20 February 2017

The Department of Water and Sanitation's (DWS's) offensive against the acid mine drainage (AMD) is scoring successes with the launched Eastern Basin Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Plant in Springs on Friday, 17 February.

The plant, which began operating in June last year, is the largest of the two treatment plants in the Western and Central basins and is also said to be the largest in the world.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Nomvula Mokonyane, said the planned intervention was to turn the AMD problem into a long-term sustainable solution by producing fully treated water that would significantly increase water supply to the Vaal River System and defer the need for further costly augmentation beyond Phase 2 of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project for at least another 30 years.

The plant is pumping water from an abandoned Grootvlei mine and controlling acid mine drainage to prevent it from flowing onto the surface of the ground. In the absence of the department's intervention, the Blesbokspruit and the Marievale Bird Sanctuary would have been contaminated with the acidic mine water. The Blesbokspruit forms part of the Vaal River catchment.

Minister Mokonyane said due to the scale of mining in the last century it has been determined that the impact of the mines on the water resources and the resultant challenges of AMD cannot be avoided and left unattended, adding that given the socio-economic impact of these basins and the potential we have to unlock significant flows of water that could contribute to the water mix of our country.

She said significant strides have already been made in tackling the challenge of acid mine drainage with intervention gaining momentum.

She said: "Over the last six years, working through Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), we have successfully initiated and implemented successful short-term interventions in the three basins which have paved the way for the long-term solutions we are now launching and implementing."

Mokonyane said the Phase 2 of the pilot study, which involved drilling of boreholes in the mine void to allow disposal of sludge into the mine void, would commence shortly.

"While we launch these very important short and medium term solutions, it is critical that we look at the long term strategies more innovatively," Mokonyane said. She added that one of the crucial barriers in the technology choices her department has made is that while it has, through the research done by Water Research Commission and its partners locally and internationally, very sound laboratory scale proven solutions that are both lower cost and operate with lower energy budgets, have not yet been proven at scale.

"This is a significant investment by the government aimed at guaranteeing our water future in support of our economic and social needs and as a means to promote the economic inclusion



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of the Africans, women, youth and people with disabilities in the mainstream economy of our country,” said Minister Mokonyane.

She thanked the support of the community and the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in ensuring that the people accessed employment opportunities during the course of the construction in a fair transparent and equitable manner.

**Hosia Sithole**