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Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

INTERNET ARTICLE

Development must be balanced by an increased supply of water

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Poor water quality impacts negatively on human health, threatens downstream irrigation areas and food security, increases industrial costs and raw water treatment costs arising from removing pollutants, reduces income generated from recreation and ecotourism, destroys ecosystems and affects biodiversity.

According to the report adopted after a gathering to develop the country's Integrated Water Quality Strategies held in Pretoria recently, the deterioration of water quality is therefore an issue identified as a threat that can affect many national priorities and strategies. These include strategies for economic development, health management and biodiversity conservation (DWS, 2015).

Sustainable development in South Africa is critically dependent on assurances of good quality of the country's limited water resources.

Development must be balanced by an increased supply of water of an appropriate quality to satisfy human needs. Demand for water will continue to grow as the country's population increases as well as social and economic conditions improve in South Africa.

This consequently, places an increasing pressure on the country's scarce water resources. Further, there is then increased potential threats to water quality (DWAF, 2003). Water quality management has to be conducted within the realities as outlined above.

The challenge has always been to clearly articulate water user requirements for specific circumstances and matching them with appropriate measures to ensure on-going beneficial water use. It is recognised that the existing Water Quality Management (WQM) policy is dated (Water Quality Management Policies and Strategies in the RSA in 1991 and the Resource Directed Management of Water Quality in 2006), and whilst innovative at the time of publication, is now in need of revision in order to align with current overarching policy and legislative frameworks.

Key amongst these issues are fundamental changes in governance and institutional frameworks, and the need to consider more carefully the role of various public and private actors. It is also recognised that there is a range of supporting operational policies, strategies, management instruments and methodologies that have been developed and implemented in recent years.

These provide a significant platform for the development of new strategies and policies, based upon the pragmatic experience of implementing these instruments.
It should be noted that the integration of the WQM Policy and IWQM Strategy with wider national policies provides the opportunity to align the approaches toward managing water quality with other activities of the department, and in government as a whole. This will help entrench this project and secure its sustainability going forward.

Therefore, this report aims to understand the evolution of WQM policies and strategies that currently govern South Africa. It also aims to highlight innovative ways in which the key identified water quality challenges have been addressed internationally, particularly in the context of challenging landscapes/futures by looking at specific case studies.

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