ADDRESS BY MR RONNIE KASRILS, MP, MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY AT THE BERG WATER PROJECT SIGNING CEREMONY ON 15 APRIL 2003, IN CAPE TOWN

For me and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry this is a milestone event in ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of water to support the rapid development of this part of the Western Cape.

AN example of integrated water resources management in practice

Considerable effort has been made to identify the best ways to provide for the needs of this area. And, in taking the final decision, we were fortunate to be guided by the principles of equity, sustainability and efficiency that underpin South Africa's National Water Policy and our National Water Act of 1998, policy and legislation that is recognised to be world class and even world leading.

The process has been an example of **Integrated Water Resources Management in practice, with extensive consultation** with the public - **stakeholders**.

Part of the National Water Resource Strategy

Similar processes are underway for the whole country that will in future guide and direct the management of our very scarce water resources.

The first draft of the **National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS)** describes the ways in which we will achieve ***our goal*** of ensuring that water is available for social and economic development while protecting the water environment. Because South Africa is a diverse country, in water availability and use as well as in so many other dimensions, different approaches are needed at different regional, catchment and local levels. In many cases, dams will be required to store water against the lean years of drought, years which may become more frequent as a result of climate change.

The Challenge for the Western Cape

The NWRS provides information about the availability of and requirements for water in each of the country's 19 Water Management Areas. It indicates that, in the four water management areas in the Western Cape (Berg, Breede, Gouritz, and Olifants-Doring), the requirements for water will soon exceed its availability. This may be aggravated by the impact of climate change that could increase the variability of rainfall and the intensity of floods and droughts.

There are few viable opportunities for increasing the amount of water available in the Western Cape by, for instance, transferring water from better watered parts of the country, as has been done to serve Gauteng. The Western Cape is too geographically isolated for that. This reality must guide the development of the region.

For this reason I am pleased that the Provincial Government is planning to hold a "water bosberaad" next month. We are going to have to learn to live within our means in this part of the country and the decision makers must come to terms with that. In future, any new water use will require water savings elsewhere – or, eventually, further recycling of waste water or the desalination of seawater, both of which come at a high price.

Catchment Management Agencies in the Western Cape

During the course of the next few years four Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) will be established in the region. Proposals for establishing CMAs in the Breede, Gouritz, and Olifants-Doring are well-advanced, and are expected to be submitted in the near future.

Establishment of the Berg CMA may take longer. The Berg River Water Management Catchment is of particular importance to the Western Cape region because, although it generates only about 3% of the country's water resources, it is home to about 8% of South Africa's population, and produces about 12% of GDP.

The water system in the region is complex, comprising an inter-linked system of dams, pipelines, tunnels and distribution networks, some of which are owned and operated by my Department and some by the City of Cape Town. We work closely together to operate the system in an integrated way to make the best use of the stored water.

It is this infrastructural and institutional complexity that demands a careful, considered and, above all, inclusive approach to the establishment of the CMA, to ensure that the new institution has the full support of and co-operation from all role players. Such a process cannot be rushed if the outcome is to be successful and enduring.

The Berg River Project

Against this background let us consider how the principles of the National Water Policy have been applied in the development of the Berg River Project.

Equity

The additional water from the project will be used in the Greater Cape Town Area for domestic and commercial purposes, thereby ensuring that water is available to meet the needs of people. The stepped tariffs that apply within the CCT supply area will ensure that free basic water can be provided. The increases in water tariffs resulting from the project's implementation will not impact adversely on the poor, and lower-use consumers. Consideration has also been given to the needs of other water users in the Berg River Catchment as far as Saldanha on the West Coast. Indeed, one benefit of the Berg River Project may be that to facilitate the management of the flows in the river and enable us to improve the naturally poor water quality in the lower reaches of the river.

Public Participation

One mechanism through which we ensure that all interests are equitably addressed is public participation in the planning process. The 1995/6 Western Cape Systems Analysis “Evaluation of Options” Study was a comprehensive exercise which involved the full range of stakeholders in water-related decision-making. More than 1 100 individuals and organisations took part in the process, which culminated in a stakeholder-elected Task Team, appointed by the Minister, making recommendations on options for further study. A final step, still to be taken, is to find a name for the project, a name that has resonance and is meaningful for all the people in the area.

Environmental Sustainability

Extensive impact studies were undertaken during 1996 and 1997, in accordance with the Integrated Environmental Management procedures developed by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

In 1999 the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and the Provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning issued a joint Record of Decision, valid for seven years, granting permission for the construction of the project.

An Environmental Management Plan will be prepared for the scheme prior to commencement of construction. This is a condition of the Record of Decision, which also requires the appointment of an Environmental Management Committee to oversee environmental management.

In addition, a Baseline Monitoring Programme was initiated in October 2002 to describe the natural and present states of the Berg River and its estuary, to facilitate monitoring and mitigating the project's impacts on the river, both during construction and subsequent operation.

Efficiency - water demand management

The Western Cape Systems Analysis public consultation process recommended that water demand management receive the highest priority of all options to address water shortages. This has been done.

The former Cape Metropolitan Council established a Water Demand Management Section in 1998 and developed a twelve-point strategy and implementation plan. Subsequently an Integrated Water Resource Planning Study was carried out to investigate water demand management options in parallel with supply augmentation schemes, in which demand management optimises water usage, whilst essential resources are developed to limit factors that could inhibit economic development.

The resulting Water Demand Management Strategy, which aims to reduce demand by 20% of projected consumption in 2010, is reflected in the City of Cape Town's December 2001 Water Services Development Plan.

World Commission on Dams Guidelines

We took advantage of our involvement in the World Commission on Dams to test the approach taken in the project development process against the recommendations in the report *Dams and Development: A New Framework for Decision Making*. The review showed that the environmental, public and engineering processes conducted for the Planning and Design of the Berg Water Project broadly comply with best international practice.

Conclusion

The Berg River Project, although commenced before the National Water Policy and National Water Act , and National Water Resource Water Strategy were developed, reflects their spirit and intentions and will meet the objectives of equity, sustainability and efficiency.

It is a landmark project, a flagship project for South Africa. During the implementation of the Berg Water Project my Department will be monitoring to ensure that the objectives of the agreements with the TCTA and the City of Cape Town are met. As partners in this joint venture we will work together to achieve the objective of integrated water resource management. This will be to the benefit of all water users in the Western Cape and will help to ensure that a “better life for all” in the Western Cape is not held back by water..