



## water & sanitation

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# MEDIA STATEMENT

## Illegal sand mining threatens environmental loss

20 October 2017

The Minister of Water and Sanitation Mrs. Nomvula Mokonyane addressed KwaZulu-Natal traditional leaders during a stakeholder engagement on unlawful water use through sand mining on 20 October 2017 in Durban.

Speaking to the delegates Mokonyane said, “As a country, we need to proactively root out unlawful water use, non-compliance to water use authorisation, and water losses and leaks. Abiding by the law and authorisations will assist in achieving our vision of equitable and sustainable water use.”

Today’s stakeholder engagement with the traditional leaders was intended to improve understanding of the impacts on unlawful water use through sand mining, educate traditional leaders on legislative requirements for engaging in sand mining activities and also to get buy-in to educate communities about unlawful sand mining.

“Another challenge faced by KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces is that we as community leaders give permission to the sand miners to undertake sand mining activities in rivers without obtaining the necessary environmental authorisations”, said Mokonyane.

“Sand is often sold to buyers in Gauteng but this comes at a great environmental loss. Sand mining is a lucrative age-old business that involves excavating sand from the riverbanks. This leads to an excess of problems, including diverting the river’s natural flow, increased evaporation and soil erosion”, Mokonyane continued.

Mokonyane said that the department will ensure that good relationships with traditional leaders are maintained to ensure that sand and gravel are mined in a sustainable way.

KwaZulu-Natal is currently facing unlawful water use activities through sand mining in rivers such as Illovo, Umzumbe, UMthwalume, UMvoti, Buffalo, UMdloti, Amatikulu, UMhlathuze, Umfolozi and uMgeni.

Unlawful water use through sand mining activities is causing numerous and serious problems such as the disruption in potable water supply and pollution of water resources. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has implemented all its enforcement actions in different parts of the province jointly with other relevant authorities including district and local municipalities, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), Department of Mineral Resources (DMR), Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DEDTEA) and the South African Police Services.

While the department continues to enforce the stopping of unlawful water use activities through various means including administrative actions, opening of criminal cases and application of court interdicts, it has noted that the perpetrators disregard these enforcement actions and continue to benefit millions of rands by selling the river sand to construction and hardware companies. This is very costly to the local communities who end up incurring the



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cost for the restoration of water resources and water services disrupted and distracted.

Mokonyane called on traditional leaders to participate in door-to-door awareness campaigns in affected communities and to work with the department on identifying illegal sand mining and report such transgressors.

**END**

**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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