



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Pollution of the Great Fish River**

24 June 2019

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is taking legal action to force an Eastern Cape municipality to stop polluting the Great Fish River in the Province.

The DWS' Andrew Lucas, responsible for Water Regulation: Eastern Cape, confirmed that the court action is against the Inxuba Yethemba Local Municipality in the Chris Hani District Municipality.

The Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) at Cradock is non-functional and all that is done is add some chlorination to the effluent. Some settling of solids occurs in the tanks, but these results in an untreated overflow to the Great Fish River.

The matter is now being handled at a higher level to resolve the problem.

The DWS' Eastern Cape Region first issued a Directive to the Chris Hani DM - Cradock WWTW - in Oct 2016 to apply for authorisation for the WWTW, and to stop pollution from occurring, as well as to rehabilitate the affected area. The DM submitted an action plan which was not approved as it did not adhere to the requirements of the directive.

Two more notices were issued in mid-2018 to submit an action plan with immediate actions to address the current status of the non-compliances with the WWTW. No response from the DM was received.

On the 3rd April 2019 the DWS EC region referred the matter to DWS' Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement (CME) Unit - National Office - for application of a court interdict. The CME (National Office) is awaiting outstanding reports to secure a successful application from the EC office. The reports are expected on the 26th June 2019.

The full application documents will be with DWS Legal Services by the 28th June 2019 to approach the State Attorneys.

This process indicated above shows that contrary to the general belief that the DWS has been inactive with regard to the pollution, action has been underway primarily as per the prescripts of the Inter-Governmental Relations Framework, as well as allowing for an opportunity to the transgressor to make right.

The DWS also dispatched an Environmental Inspector who found that:

Upon a routine oversight inspection at the WWTW in Cradock (Inxuba Yethemba Municipality) last week, which is managed by the Chris Hani District Municipality:

1. The WWTW has completely shut down. There is not a single municipal employee at the plant and the only people present on site, were two security guards;
2. Waste Water continues to flow into the non-functional plant, but is then channeled, untreated, into the Great Fish River;





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3. The problems at the plant are mechanical in nature, as most of the pumps and all the brush aerators are dysfunctional;

4. As a result of the WWTW and pump stations being non-operational, raw sewage is also being discharged at different places along the sewer lines, most notably out of manholes.

It is further noted that the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTW) appears to be in this state for a number of weeks now, prior to the recent electricity cuts for non-payment and public unrest.

Chris Hani has had a poor record of sewage problems in Cradock and DWS has issued notices and Directives in the past year for:

- pollution from un-fixed sewer blockages,
- Failed sewer pump stations and
- for non-compliance at the WWTW.

**End**

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

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