



MEDIA STATEMENT

Department of Water and Sanitation urge water users to conserve water despite recent rains

17 April 2019

The country's dams are rising steadily following intermittent rains in most provinces in the past week, according to a weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation. At 67,7%, they have gone up by 0.8% compared to last week when they were recorded at 66,9%.

However, the department has warned that the sustainability of water will depend largely on the rate of consumption during the dry winter.

In terms of statistics, Gauteng tops the charts with levels having increased from 96,4% last week to 97,5% this week. This is thanks to torrential rainfalls that have engulfed most parts of the province recently. The dams are expected to increase next week following predictions of more rains by the South African Weather Services (SAWS).

Free State and Mpumalanga who are also experiencing regular downpours, are hot on the trails of Gauteng with each province recording 77,4% and 74,5% respectively.

The rains have increased the total water that is stored in the country to a staggering 21 866.8 cubic metres this, and this is likely to increase with the predicted rainfall later this week. However, Western Cape remains a source of concern as dam levels keep dropping week-on-week. The department's report indicates that the drought-prone province is currently teetering at a perilous 35,6%.

Western Cape has just recovered from a severe two-year drought that cost the government billions of rands through destroyed crops and infrastructure. Should the sliding trend persist, municipalities in various towns of the province will be forced to impose stringent water restrictions until the winter rainfall. Theewaterskloof Dam, one of the main dams that supply Cape Town, has also dropped its levels to 37,5%. However, Capetonians are pinning their hopes on Misverstand which is bursting at the seams at 100,8% and Voelvllei and Berg River dams that recorded 58,7% and 68,6% respectively this week.

Parts of Free State are drenched in water following torrential rains in the past week while other regions of the province are experiencing severe a drought. Farmers in the drought-stricken regions of the province are pinning their hopes on the heavy rains that been predicted by SAWS.

At 74,5, Mpumalanga's dams are increasing steadily though they are far from reaching last year's level of 82,1%. Areas in the Lowveld, including Mbombela and White River, have received persistent rains in the past four weeks, bringing relief to farmers and to animals in the Kruger National Park.

Since the drop of temperatures, Northern Cape dams are also increasing drastically from 68,1% last week to 72,1%.

Most dams in KwaZulu-Natal are also on the rise, thanks to the heavy downpours that have fallen in major regions of the province, including the North and South coasts. However, some





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towns in the northern Zululand such as Nongoma, Mahlabathini and Ulundi remain dry as they have not had sufficient rainfalls.

The water situation in Eastern Cape remains fluid, with some dams having reached their capacity levels while the drought stricken regions such as Makana continue to experience acute water shortages. Laing Dam outside East London is bursting at the seams with a 100.1% level while Makana retains a single digit. The pollution of rivers in parts of the province has exacerbated the water crisis. Residents who live on the Nahoon catchment this week rolled their sleeves and cleaned the river which was teeming with sewage flows. Swartkops River in Nelson Mandela Bay has been polluted for many years and the municipality is battling to clean the effluent that has deprived local of clean drinking water.

At 1008.9 cubic metres and the average dam level of 66.3%, Limpopo has sufficient water in storage to sustain it through the dry winter season. However, this will depend on the water consumption by consumers who use the precious resources for domestic and agricultural purposes. Vhembe and Mopani and known citrus areas whose fruits depend largely on the availability of water.

Water users are reminded to conserve water we are fast approaching the dry season.

End

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For more information contact Sputnik Ratau, Spokesperson for the Department of Water and Sanitation on 082 874 2942

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