



MEDIA STATEMENT

Water conservation bearing fruit in South Africa

28 August 2019

The Department of Water and Sanitation commends South Africa's water users for heeding the government's call to save water, amid a winter dry winter spell that has deprived the country a drop of rain in the past six months. However, Western Cape having a bumper season with heavy winter rains that have filled the province's dams beyond the 80% mark.

The department's latest weekly report estimates a combined water storage across the country's reservoirs at 22 026,1 cubic metres. The figure represents a three-quarter capacity of the country's total storage.

Behavioural change in water conservation is at the heart of the improved water situation in South Africa.

The figure further reflects a positive response among consumers that they are taking the government's call to save water in their stride. This comes after a warning 15 years ago by the World Bank that South Africa was in the category of 30 countries across the world that risked becoming arid in 50 years unless the government embraced vigorous water-saving campaign to avert a total disaster.

Jolted by the warning, the Department of Water and Sanitation embarked on a concerted campaign to urge water users to double their efforts of saving. It invented among others, the National Water Reform Infrastructure, a framework that is reviewed every five years to assess its impact

The department's weekly report suggests that although some parts of the country are facing dry conditions, the average dam levels are nearly 70% full. However, they are 10% lesser compared to the same period in 2018 when they were 77% full.

Mpumalanga occupies the middle of the table on water storage. Having stored 1 679,7% cubic metres of water in its reservoir, the province rates among the three provinces in the country that have succeeded in emphasizing the concept of water conservation.

Gauteng and Northern Cape have fewer dams and smallest than other provinces and they recorded 90,4% and 84% dam levels respectively. Gauteng, the hub of South Africa's economy, relies almost exclusively on the Vaal Dam to service its industries. Northern Cape's high dam level notwithstanding, parts of the province are experiencing severe dry conditions that are posing a serious threat to the livestock and crops. At 123,7 cubic metres, Northern Cape has virtually stored half the amount of water in its reservoirs.

The water situation in Eastern Cape continues its downward spiral, with the province's dam level dropping week-on-week. The current levels are reported to have dropped from 56,1% last week to 55,5% this week.

Limpopo is also on a downward slide after the report recorded its average dam levels at 55,7%. Tzaneen Dam in Limpopo was recorded at a mere 10,8%. The Department of Water and Sanitation will spend millions of rands to raise the dam wall in order to increase storage





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capacity of the facility. The dam supplies local citrus farmers, industries and local consumers with water. The Middel-Letaba Dam has almost dried up completely with its level recorded at 4,6%

The department calls on residents in provinces whose dam levels have dropped drastically to double their water conservation efforts to sustain them until the summer rains.

End

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