



MEDIA STATEMENT

Free State carries South Africa's hope on water

31 July 2019

Despite a dry winter, Free State continues to store most volumes of water in its reservoirs compared to other provinces in the country. The latest weekly dam levels report by the Department of Water and Sanitation indicates that the province is nearing its full supply capacity of 13 235 cubic metres, 2 000 cubic metres short of reaching its full capacity.

Statistically, Free State currently accounts for half of South Africa's water in reservoirs. The province is home to some of the biggest dams in the country. Sterkfontein Dam is regarded as the reserve bank of water while Gariep Dam is the biggest In South Africa.

However, the good news is that Western Cape is currently drenched in heavy winter rains that started three months ago. Consequently, the province's dam levels have risen dramatically to just above 70% and are expected to increase higher with the consistency of the rainfall. In the past month alone levels in the province have gone up by 20%. The wet weather is a sharp contrast to last year's water situation when Western Cape was plunged in a devastating drought that destroyed livestock and crops and took the economy to its brink.

The combined total storage for the country currently stands at 22 572,5 cubic metres.

Although some parts of the country are experiencing dry conditions, the department's latest report suggests that South Africa's reservoirs are having two-third water in storage, allaying any fears of yet another drought spell. Four years ago vast parts of the country were gripped by severe drought conditions that forced municipalities to impose stringent water restrictions to cope with the situation.

The report reflects Mpumalanga as a consistent province with its water storage which was recorded at 2 038,9 cubic metres this week. Its dam levels remain stable at 69%, albeit this is a 10% drop compared to the same period last year. Inyaka Dam that supplies Bushbuckridge and outlying areas of Marite and Dwarsloop is also stable at 63,3%. However, the resource has also dropped its levels by 10% compared to the same period last year. Vygeboom that is fed by Komati river on the north-eastern side of the province, is also bursting at the seams with recorded levels of 98,5%.

However, water problems persist in parts of the former KwaNdebele region when the JS Moroka Local Municipality is supplying water with tankers. The Department of Water and Sanitation is working with the municipality to find ways of alleviating the problem. Ironically, Loskop Dam in Grobelaarsdal that supplies Siyabuswa and parts of KwaNdebele, is almost full at 99,1%. However, the department is working closely with the municipality to resolve the matter.

The water situation in parts of the Eastern Cape is a matter of concern as dam levels drop week-on-week. According to the department's report the province recorded 56,9% level, dropping from 57,1% last week. There is not a drop of water in Bonkolo Dam while residents of Butterworth are faced with challenges after Gcuwa Dam ran dry blast week. Dysfunctional sewages are exacerbating the problem in Cradock where raw sewage is reportedly flowing in





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the streets. Recently, the Department of Water and Sanitation took the Chris Hani District Municipality to court for failure to stop raw sewage from flowing into the Great Fish River.

The department has embarked on an intensive campaign to explain the water situation in Tzaneen, Limpopo, where water levels dropped dramatically following construction to raise the local dam wall. Recently, officials from the department met with various stakeholders, including communities, farmers and business people to explain progress made in the construction of the dam wall. Mopani is a citrus farming region whose economy is heavily reliant on agriculture.

Vast parts of Northern Cape are experiencing debilitating drought spells as a result of insufficient rainfall in the past four years. Apparently, farmers are losing livestock in large numbers because of extremely hot conditions in areas such as Carnavon and Vosburg. Conditions in the Brandvlei, Loeriesfontein, Pofadder and Granaatkolk regions are equally dismal. This is despite the fact that the province has stored 121,2% water for basic use. Should the situation persist in until the next two months, municipalities will be forced to impose stringent water restrictions to control the situation.

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