

CONCEPT DOCUMENT FOR WATER MONTH AND NATIONAL WATER WEEK 2022



UN WATER
22 MARCH
WORLD
WATER
DAY

GROUND WATER
MAKING THE INVISIBLE, VISIBLE

SOUTH AFRICA IS A
WATER SCARCE COUNTRY

WATER IS LIFE - SANITATION IS DIGNITY



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





1 BACKGROUND

World Water Day is observed annually on 22 March and focuses attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.

The initiative is spearheaded by the United Nations (UN), using the day as a basis for longer-term action involving governments across the globe. The UN aims to ensure that everyone in the world has access to safe water by 2030, while not impacting negatively on the environment.

Each year, the United Nations Water sets a theme for World Water Day which responds to a current or future challenge. The theme for year 2022 is “**Groundwater – making the invisible, visible**”, and the theme seeks to remind policy and decision-makers, inside and outside the water community, that South Africa is a water scarce country.

Surface water, the traditional source for bulk supply, is becoming more limited and even unavailable in many catchments and the infrastructure and the costs of construction and maintenance are prohibitive.

The high rates of urbanisation have a major impact on the demand for water supply and sanitation services. South Africa has an estimated rate of 65% urbanised and the National Development Plan (NDP) estimates that urban populations will grow by 10% every two decades. Increasing urbanisation will place more pressure on cities to deliver affordable and reliable water and sanitation services to larger numbers of poor households.

Climate Change is also gradually affecting South Africa’s water resources negatively. In the face of climate change, groundwater, which will not experience the increased evaporation that will impact on surface water as temperatures increase, will become increasingly important. Artificial recharge of aquifers will be an important element of water management.

Given the expected population growth, coupled with the impacts of climate change on surface water, there is a need to optimise the water mix which is currently dominated by surface water. Groundwater is fairly cheap and fast to develop and is accessible by most households, while most of South Africa’s groundwater is of potable quality.

South Africa’s Master Plan on Water and Sanitation projects that by 2040, there should be less reliance on surface water. The Master Plan hopes to achieve a change in the water mix with increased groundwater use, an increase in the re-use of effluent from wastewater treatment plants, water reclamation, as well as the optimization of desalination and treated acid mine drainage.

2 RATIONALE

South Africa will celebrate National Water Week from 21 – 27 March 2022.

The awareness and advocacy activities take place against the backdrop of challenges that the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan (Master Plan) notes as insufficient water, infrastructure maintenance and investment, recurrent droughts driven by climatic variation, inequities in access to water and sanitation, as well as deteriorating water quality.

The Master Plan notes that achieving water security in South Africa requires a significant paradigm shift that:

- recognises the limitations of water availability;
- addresses the real value of water;
- ensures equitable access to limited water resources;
- focuses on demand management and alternative sources of water;
- considers the impacts of climate change; and
- addresses declining raw water quality.

The combined use of harvesting groundwater, surface and rainwater has become more critical than ever before.

The campaign will therefore share information on various topics, including:

- Resource protection
- Resource planning and development
- Sustainable water use
- Capital projects
- Regulations
- Water sector skills and capacity

National Water Week and Water Month will rally the country behind our water priorities so that we realise the Constitutional rights of all people in relation to water and the environment, as well as meeting *Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goal that seeks to ensure access to water and sanitation for all.*





3 LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE WATER SECTOR

The Constitution of South Africa

Section 27 (1) (b) of the Constitution of South Africa clearly articulates that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water.

National Water Act (NWA) of 1998 and the Water Services Act of 1997

The Acts are complementary and provide a framework for sustainable water resource management while enabling improved and broadened service delivery. The NWA is founded on the principle that all water forms part of a unitary, interdependent water cycle, and should thus be governed under consistent rules. It contains comprehensive provisions for the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of South African water resources.

National Water Resource Strategy 3

The National Water Resources Strategy, required under the National Water Act, is also currently under revision, with the third iteration of this strategy, due for gazette in 2022. The third edition of the National Water Resource Strategy (NWRS) will incorporate water supply and sanitation aspects in order to give effects to the National Water and Sanitation Master Plan which is the subsidiary to and operationalizes the third edition of NWRS.

National Water and Sanitation Master Plan

Sets out the critical priorities to be addressed by the water sector in the period from 2018 – 2030. It also sets out annual measurable outcomes inclusive of roles and responsibilities, time frames and associated estimated costs. The Master Plan also identifies how performance will be monitored. As a plan, rather than a strategy or policy, the prioritised actions with responsibilities are detailed against which Cabinet, Parliament and the public can hold relevant players in the sector accountable.

National Development Plan

The plan was launched in 2012 and provides a detailed blueprint for how the country can eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by the year 2030. The national blueprint articulates that all South Africans will have affordable, reliable access to sufficient safe water and hygienic sanitation by 2030.

National Groundwater Strategy

Chapter 2 of the National Water Act prescribes that strategies should be developed to facilitate the proper management of water resources. The National Groundwater Strategy accordingly aims to improve the recognition of the strategic value, use and protection of groundwater in South Africa. The National Groundwater Strategy is subdivided into chapters consisting of various groundwater challenges and recommended mitigation actions.

4 OBJECTIVES

National Water Week and Water Month will raise awareness on water conservation, sustainability, climate change, as well as various other matters. This will be achieved through a collaborative effort and active engagement of government departments, private companies, academia, community members and stakeholders in the sector.

The envisaged outcomes for national water week are as follows:

- Awareness on how an enabling environment will be created for effective water and sanitation management;
- Increased awareness on the use, management, conservation, development and protection of water resources,
- Awareness on groundwater management systems;
- Dialogue within the sector on how the different players can work together for sustainable solutions and outcomes.





5 KEY MESSAGES

The Master Plan notes that South Africa is facing increasing water demands in order to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and urbanising population, changing lifestyles, and economic growth.

For this reason, the Key messages for National Water Week 2022 include:

- *South Africa is a water scarce country;*
- *Let us protect, conserve and use water sources in a sustainable manner.*
- *Groundwater - making the invisible, visible*

6 APPROACH TO ACTIVITIES

National Water Week activities will be held across the country. The integrated water sector calendar of events will be available on the website of the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Activities will be hosted in-person, on virtual platforms including social media platforms as well as on broadcast platforms. In this way, different audiences will be included in various discussions on topics of interest.

Community members, experts, practitioners, diplomats, decision makers and business innovators will be invited to exchange ideas and network around the plans and strategies for the water sector.

River clean-up campaigns will also be organised throughout the month of Water Month 2022 and this will be organised with the participation of water user associations, water and sanitation community forums, community-based organisations and more.





7 APPROACH TO PROFILING IN THE MEDIA

Communication will be rolled out on various media platforms including virtual platforms, print, broadcast and social media. In addition to adverts and media engagements, media briefings and interviews will be a key focus area to ensure that information reaches the public.

Provinces will host relevant media briefings and media tours to highlight their plans, successes, state of infrastructure as well current water levels and usage patterns by water users.

The Department will work with partners in local government, private sector as well as community members in elevating the discussions and thematic areas.

All platforms will be exploited in a bid to ensure maximum profiling of the thematic areas including online, print and broadcast.

8 WAY FORWARD

The Master Plan notes that achieving water security requires balancing supply and demand, redistributing water for equitable access and use, managing water and sanitation services effectively, regulating the water sector with a focus on high impact use, improving raw water quality and protecting and restoring ecosystems. It also requires sound evidence to inform policy and dialogue, good governance, advances in research and technology, the mobilisation of finance and investment, management of climate risks, and cooperation in managing transboundary water resources. In South Africa's pursuit of water security, Water Month and National Water Week will:

- Encourage entities, partners and stakeholders to participate in a new orientation around the country's water resources;
- Make the WWD 2022 campaign messages, materials and approaches available on the DWS website for downloading;
- Register community activities and events on water saving online on the website of the Department of Water and Sanitation;
- Take and share photographs and other media from communities who are actively involved in saving water;
- Work with corporates on profiling their innovations towards becoming more efficient water users.



