



## environment, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Environment, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Ref: O2/1/5/2

### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2712 {NW3481E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 47 of 2020

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#### **Ms H S Winkler (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:**

- (1) Whether, considering that the Republic is a water-scarce country which has experienced severe drought in many regions and that access to clean water sources is necessary for the survival of the people, she has found that the rivers of the Republic are all facing ecocide; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details;
- (2) what plans does her department have to stop the (a) pollution and (b) destruction of the river systems in the Republic;
- (3) on what date will her department set up a meeting with the Department of Water and Sanitation to (a) discuss and (b) implement an urgent plan to save the rivers from regular toxic sewage spills;
- (4)(a) how will her department address the health issues experienced by communities arising from severe pollution of the rivers and (b) will her department meet with the Department of Health to (i) discuss and (ii) implement a way forward; if not, what is the position in this regard, if so, what are the relevant details;
- (5) what are the plans of her department to save the rivers of the Republic?

**2712. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:**

- 1) The question does not fall within the mandate of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and should be responded to by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).
  
- 2) (a) While the constitutional mandate for protection of water resources rests with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), DEFF has legislation and other tools that are aimed at protecting the environment and water resources. From a Waste perspective, the Department issues waste management licenses which include conditions pertaining to the protection of water resources, such as the requirement for the licence holder to ensure continuous maintenance of drainage and containment systems for collection and storage of contaminated runoff water, arising from the site of operation; prevention of littering and spillages; requirement for discharge of contaminated water generated from site activities to be done only in accordance with a written authorisation from the relevant Local Authority; the requirement for a geohydrological report, including groundwater and surface waste monitoring programme which has to be approved by the DWS. Waste licences for disposal facilities can only be issued with the concurrence of the DWS. This concurrence takes the form of conditions included in waste licences for such facilities, which are aimed primarily at protection of water resources.

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) is involved in a number of key enforcement interventions that contribute towards minimising the impact of pollution of water resources. As such, the following comprises these initiatives:

- From a strategic level, a Standard Operating Procedure which was entered into between the erstwhile Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), now the DEFF, and the South African Police Service (SAPS) that assigns the investigative competence, where pollution related matters are concerned, to the environmental authorities. To this extent, there are a number of criminal investigations that are being undertaken, primarily targeting sewage-related incidents caused by failing sewage infrastructure which have resulted in damage to watercourses.
  
- As part of strategic partnerships, which is a key performance area of the MINTECH Working Group 4 2020/2021 workplan, strengthening partnerships with the DWS is a key performance area. As such, an intervention plan is currently being developed, that will be implemented in the 2021/2022 financial year.

- From an implementation and/or operational level, concentrated enforcement campaigns are undertaken where pollution of a watercourse threatens the existence of areas of international importance which falls within the mandate of the DEFF, such as declared RAMSAR sites, and where failing sewage infrastructure triggers the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mandate of the environmental authorities.

An example of the latter is the proactive work undertaken through Working Group 4 which targeted priority RAMSAR sites situated in the Western Cape Province (Botriver and the Verlorenvlei) and the North West Province (Barberspan). During these operations, thirty (30) enforcement interventions were initiated, ranging from administrative enforcement notices to criminal investigations, targeting facilities which have and/or are causing damage to these areas.

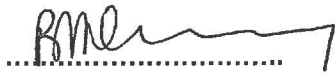
In addition to the above, reactive operations are initiated when the environmental impact assessment mandate of the environmental authorities is triggered. These initiatives are led by the DEFF, a case in point being Jane Furse, in the Limpopo Province. This campaign led to 20 (twenty) enforcement interventions initiated (administrative, criminal or both) which have led to an environmental improvement in 80% of the cases that were initiated.

- (b) The Department has embarked on a Source to Sea Programme that seeks to develop prevention and abatement measures to address marine litter (specifically plastic pollution) from the upstream sources and to reduce the extent of litter flows into estuaries and the marine environment. Under the Source to Sea pilot project, DEFF's role is to work with municipalities to deploy litter interception devices in Priority Rivers, to co-ordinate and oversee efforts by the municipalities to collect litter from the rivers systems and to recover recyclable material. As a starting point, 5 Priority River systems in KwaZulu-Natal were identified to implement the Source to Sea Programme as a pilot project. Ethekwini Municipality is DEFF's local partner and beneficiary of the Source to Sea pilot project. The Department plans to roll-out the project nationally on an incremental basis and is working towards expanding the project to the Western Cape in early 2021.
- 3) The Department has a Memorandum of Understanding with the DWS under which licensing of waste management facilities is done in concurrence to ensure that issues of water resource protection are considered as indicated in (2) above. The DWS also forms part of the MINMEC working group 9 on

waste management to ensure that any issues related to the protection of water resources are considered and addressed accordingly.

- 4) The question does not fall within the mandate of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and should be responded to by the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (DCoGTA).
- 5) The question does not fall within the mandate of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) and should be responded to by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS).

**Regards**



**MS B D CREECY, MP  
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**DATE:** 27/11/2020