



## forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Ref: O2/1/5/2

### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 112 {NW116E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 1 of 2022

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 10 February 2022

**Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:**

- (1) What is the volume of groundwater used by Zululand Anthracite Colliery on a monthly basis;
- (2) whether there is an immediate danger to the health of surrounding communities and animal life due to the approximately 1,5 million litres of liquid coal that were spilled into the Umfolozi River system following the collapse of a slurry dam at the Zululand Anthracite Colliery; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) what are the dangers and (b) what steps is her department taking to address the dangers;
- (3) whether the spillage will initiate a review of the current water licence granted to the Zululand Anthracite Colliery; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details?

### 112. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) issued a water use licence (WUL) with reference number: 11/W22J/IACIABCGIJ/7820 on 4 May 2018, which allows for the abstraction of 730 m<sup>3</sup> of groundwater per annum, which averages 60,83 m<sup>3</sup> per month.

The DWS is the mandated authority that monitors and enforces compliance to the WUL and is appropriately placed to confirm the actual volume of groundwater abstracted by the Zululand Anthracite Colliery (ZAC).

- (2) (a) The slurry at ZAC was analysed and it was confirmed that it contains high levels of contaminants, such as petroleum hydrocarbons, dissolved calcium and magnesium, sodium, sulphate, aluminium and manganese. These elements, in sufficient concentrations, have the ability to impact surrounding communities and animal life negatively.
- (b) The involvement of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in this matter was triggered by the MEC, Mr Ravi Pillay, who is responsible for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), requesting assistance. As such, an initial reaction team of Environmental Management Inspectors were deployed when this request was received, followed by a comprehensive sampling of sediment and water over an area covering 160 km of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers during the week of 24-28 January 2022. The sampling was focussed on establishing the concentrations of heavy metals, sulphide metalloids and organic contaminants, which are likely to include anthropogenic chemicals used in process water (potentially occurring within the slurry), which may still be present in the system following the spill which occurred in December 2021.

However, based on observations that a specialist from the DFFE had made, the immediate risk in relation to the water quality of the Black and White Umfolozi rivers reduced substantially due to good rainfall, which may have flushed the system since the incident occurred. The analysis of the samples that were collected will, however, provide conclusive evidence of the real risk which remains in the sediments, as well as the degree of impact, if any remains. The report in this regard is imminent.

- (3) The DWS is mandated to perform the regulatory oversight and any review of the WUL that was granted.

**Regards**



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

**DATE:** 24/2/2022