



forestry, fisheries & the environment

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

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2462 {NW2803E}
INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 24 of 2023

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 15 June 2023

Ms A M M Weber (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

- (1) What are the reasons that Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd has not yet started to rehabilitate the badly degraded wetlands (details furnished) in the Victor Khanye Local Municipality in Mpumalanga;
- (2) (a) what is the current state of the specified wetlands and (b) by what date will Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd commence with the rehabilitation of the wetlands;
- (3) what are the details of the (a) vegetation and (b) biodiversity that has been destroyed to date?

2462. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- (1) As per the application for amendment submitted to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), Eskom indicated that they are still waiting for a Water Use License / General Authorisation from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) and that the application for such a license was underway. The DFFE as a decision maker is not privy to any other reasons, other than those advanced by the Holder of the environmental authorisation (Eskom).

- (2)(a) According to the information contained in the final BAR dated April 2018, the status of vegetation and biodiversity of the areas was as follows:

The area was characterised by Eastern Highveld Grassland and Rand Highveld Grassland (which are both endangered vegetation units) and both of which are categorised as Mesic Highveld Grassland Group 4. On a provincial and municipal scale, the ecosystems around Kusile are considered to be endangered and some areas were at that point of submission of the report for review and decision-making, classified as critical biodiversity areas, including most wetlands. Almost all the wetlands in the area (along the Wilge River, Klipfonteinspruit, and Holspruit) were said to be denoted as Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Areas or recognised as important wetland clusters. These wetlands were said to be considered important contributors to base flow maintenance of the perennial Wilge River, as well as flood attenuation which protects the integrity of banks along the downstream Wilge environment.

It must be noted that it has been almost four years since a decision was issued by DFFE on the above-mentioned project. As such, the department cannot provide any informed opinion on what the current state of the environment is at present.

- 2(b) It must be noted that the DFFE is not in a position to advise as to by which date will Eskom Holdings SOC Ltd commence with the rehabilitation of the wetlands. Though the department granted the Environmental Authorisation (EA) for the rehabilitation of wetlands and also the EA to extend the validity period thereof, because Eskom was still waiting for the water use license application (WULA), the said EA, is valid until 27 July 2025. Therefore, the question as to when will Eskom commence with the rehabilitation of the wetlands should be directed to Eskom as the Holder of the valid EA in question.

- 3(a) In 2015, the Kusile Wetland Offset Strategy was developed in support of the WULA for the proposed 60-year Ash Disposal Facility (ADF) for Kusile Power Station in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The purpose of the strategy was to quantify the size of the wetland offset required as a result of the loss of 227 ha of wetlands directly related to the construction of the 60 Year ADF. Furthermore, the Strategy identified possible wetland areas on both Eskom and privately-owned

land which could be utilised as a possible receiving area to achieve offset targets. The Strategy was per the Wetland Offset Guidelines and calculator developed by SANBI and DWS in 2014.

Below is a quantification of the Wetland Offset Areas as approved by the department in the EA dated 27 July 2018:

1.3.2. Size of Site

Project Name	Wetland Reference	Site	Size of Site (Ha)	Size of Wetland on Site (Ha)
Kusile Offset Rehabilitation	A		586	177
	B		1 111	294
	F		656	126
	G		977	85
TOTAL	-		3 330	682

3(b) At this moment there's no information or data available regarding the biodiversity that has been destroyed because as it stands currently, Eskom has not commenced with construction activities as they were still waiting for a WULA/GA to be issued by the Department of Water and Sanitation.



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

DATE: 28/6/2023