

**DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO.: 4012**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: 01 DECEMBER 2017**

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| **4012. Mr S C Motau (DA) to ask the Minister of Public Enterprises:**   1. (a) For what number of years has Alexkor Pooling and Sharing Joint Venture conducted cofferdam mining in the Richtersveld mining area and (b) under what licence is the allocation for prospecting mining done; 2. whether an environmental impact assessment was concluded in the specified area before a mining licence for cofferdam mining was allocated to the specified company; if not, why not; if so, (a) on what date was the assessment concluded and (b) what did the assessment determine the effects of cofferdam mining to be on the specified area;     (3) whether she will make a copy of the assessment available to Mr S C Motau? |

**REPLY:**

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| **(1)** | **(a)** | Alexkor have conducted coffer dam mining since the early 1950’s (approximately 67 years) and the mine has been operational for approximately 89 years. Approval of the Environmental Management Programme Report (EMPR) was granted on 11 October 1995. | |
|  | **(b)** | Alexkor SOC LTD has 4 (FOUR) marine mining rights and the Richtersveld Mining Company (RMC) 1 (ONE) land mining right; all under the management of the PSJV: | |
|  |  | **(i)** | Marine Rights (Alexkor SOC LTD)   * + - * MR 512\_4a       * MR 513\_4b       * MR 10025\_1c       * MR 554 |
|  |  | **(ii)** | Land Right (Richtersveld Mining Company)   * + - * MR550 |
| **(2)** | Yes; approval of the Environmental Management Programme Report (EMPR) was granted on 11 October 1995. | | |
|  | **(a)** | In terms of the Minerals Act of 1991. Alexkor was required to submit and obtain approval for an Environmental Management Programme Report (EMPR), Alexkor appointed CSIR to prepare the EMPR. The document was approved by department (1995-10-11). The approval included the construction of cofferdam mining. | |
|  | **(b)** | **Background:** A proposal entitled “Proposal for Alexkor 2004 EMPR update approach/structure/content” was compiled, dated 27 January 2004 and the approach set out therein was discussed with DME Kimberley at the time. Within such system the EMPR update was to be guided by the then pending Alexkor audit and performance assessments and the detail knowledge of the site acquired during their compilation given the complexity and extent of the mining operation. Such audits were completed in March/April 2004 and on the basis of those audits and understanding of the available literature and assessment of the existing 1994 EMPR, a set of rehabilitation specifications/methods to deal with existing disturbances entitled “Rehabilitation Liability Calculation; Specifications/Methods/Rates Used and notes on their calculation (Report #2446/SMR/Rev 1 [April 2005])” was formulated for submission to the DME to elicit their sanction/comment on the approach to the methods of dealing with existing disturbance as this posed the major undefined aspect of the new EMPR given that the 1994 EMPR paid relatively little attention to this element. Such specifications/methods were formally submitted to the DME during April 2005 and DME‟s initial comment was obtained in October 2005.Having achieved some level of co-ordination with DME on the historical rehabilitation, the process of EMPR update could be re-initiated.  **The approved EMPR states:**  “Historically coffer dam (sea wall) mining has been carried out at two sites, one in Block 60 in the north and the other at Geeldoring near the Rietfontein-North Plant.” | |
| **(i)** | Impacts resulting from coffer dam activities are as follows:   * + - Coffer dam mining requires a major relocation of sand from supratidal levels into the surf zone. This results in the removal of sand dunes and the destruction of their associated vegetation. Vegetation in the area not destroyed by dune excavation is damaged extensively by the heavy earth-moving equipment in use. The smothering of rocky shore and sandy beach destroys all biota, both intertidally and sub-tidally to the depth of the coffer dam wall.     - Coffer dam mining has been carried out using gravels, cobbles and boulders from tailings for the building of the wall. Although the dam wall has been breached by storm conditions, the redistribution of the material has resulted in a smothering of the original rock and the change from a rocky intertidal to a boulder beach environment. |
|  |  | **(ii)** | Impact of the construction of the coffer dams with sand:   * + - Due to the fact that sand is not readily available in the vicinity further disturbances will be done to the already disturbed dunes along the coast, more manoeuvring of heavy machinery occurs, which in turn leads to increased environmental and economic impacts. |
|  |  | Based on the above the PSJV has appointed a new independent environmental consultant to revise the approved EMPR. This document is currently out for public comment. | |
| **(3)** | All documents can be made available to Mr S C Motau | | |

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