

# Molewa outlines progress on acid mine drainage

Government will intensify its efforts to address the threat posed by acid mine drainage (AMD) in the Witwatersrand area, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa said on Thursday.



(Image: GCIS)

This comes after a panel of experts appointed to deal with the problem briefed her on the work that is being done to curb AMD.

"The issue of Acid Mine Drainage is one that government takes very seriously and is committed to resolving. Even though the current government inherited the problem of AMD, we are intensifying our efforts and making noteworthy progress," Molewa said.

The Department of Water Affairs last year released a report into the AMD situation, which was compiled by a team of water and geology experts and presented to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on AMD in December.

The experts recommended that AMD intervention and management measures be undertaken "as a matter of urgency" to avert a crisis and stabilise the situation.

## Risks

Among the risks posed by AMD is the contamination of shallow groundwater resources required for agricultural use and human consumption. Geographical impacts include the flooding of underground infrastructure in areas where water rises close to urban areas.

Cabinet approved the report and the National Treasury put aside R433 million from this year's budget to deal with AMD.

The team, headed by Marius Keet from the Department of Water Affairs, reported on Thursday that as part of a short and

long term solution, installation of new water pumps at Rand Uranium shaft 8 were under way. The water will be treated and transferred through pipelines to the rivers. It identified priority areas, namely the Western, Central and Eastern basins.

Work also began in December to upgrade the Rand Uranium plant that will treat up to 30 million litres of mine water a day. The commissioning of a fully upgraded plant is set for next month.

## **Responses**

Molewa said the responses were expected to deal with all aspects of AMD, including matters related to finance technology as well as the operation and maintenance of the pump stations and treatment plants.

She announced that the department had commissioned a feasibility study for long term solutions to address AMD associated with the three critical basins. A team of consultants will be responsible for conducting this study over the next 13 months.

"The study will focus on investigating possible management scenarios and analysis of technical options as well as recommends suitable institutional and financial models and a suggested implementation plan to provide a suitable long term solution," said Molewa.

She was awaiting a feedback from more stakeholders and once this was done government would give more clarity on the way forward to implement the long term solutions.

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