

Water Research Commission launches resource study website

The Water Research Commission (WRC) has launched a website which provides country-wide information on water resources in South Africa, Swaziland and Lesotho.



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The ground-breaking water resources study - WR2012 - is funded by the WRC with support from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) to provide a new and enhanced water resource analysis for the three countries.

Dr Bill Pitman and Allan Bailey of Royal HaskoningDHV, an international engineering, design and project management consultancy, together with other key water resources experts were tasked with developing the WR2012 study website. The firm has rendered over 90 years of continuous service to the South African water industry.

"The WR2012 study is expected to contribute to the quest of the DWS of improving the accuracy of information and overall information management such that decision making, especially towards the realisation of the ideals of the National Development Plan and policy making, is based on information in which there is high confidence. To this end the DWS has also embarked on a monitoring network review project and on developing the National Integrated Water Information System to integrate all information management systems," said Deborah Mochotlhi, deputy director at the DWS.

Data becomes knowledge

"Not only data is needed, not only information is needed. It is about turning information into knowledge. The WR2012 study is starting with data going all the way to knowledge," commented Dhesigen Naidoo, CEO of the WRC.

Dr Ronnie McKenzie, consultant at WRP Engineers, mentioned that South Africa has a complicated system of water transfers and an economy that is very sensitive to water restrictions. "In a severe drought, it is possible that water restrictions may have to be implemented after only two years and such a drought can last for many years. This can affect

coal power stations, irrigation schemes, mines. The WR2012 study provides an improved hydrological assessment, which feeds into water resources yield assessment models and water resources planning models. It is therefore of critical importance to our country."

Dr Pitman said the study is a culmination of several water resources appraisals that have been undertaken over the last 60 years. "The website provides access to all the data, maps, water resources models, spreadsheets and other tools to enable water professionals to investigate, analyse and plan our water resources."

Bailey said this is the sixth comprehensive water resources appraisal of South Africa and the third that Royal HaskoningDHV has had a central role in. It builds on the WR2005 project which was completed in 2010. Final deliverables are planned for 2016 and it is envisaged that these products will greatly facilitate analysis of integrated water resources across the country for a wide range of users.

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