

A Gap Analysis of Water Quality Testing Laboratories in South Africa

Irregularities and occasional health risks currently experienced in water quality throughout South Africa highlight the urgent need for an accepted and practical water quality testing standard to be employed by all laboratories in South Africa. In order to produce such a standard, an investigation is being carried out into existing conditions, problems and capacities of all water testing laboratories in South Africa. The Water Research Commission (WRC) has solicited a research team from Jeffares & Green,



Umgeni Water and the National Laboratory Association (www.nla.org.za) to undertake such an investigation.

The first step is to gather information through a survey of laboratories. The survey has been developed in order to solicit information on expertise, accreditation status, geographic location, procedures and infrastructure. Various issues have been reported as stumbling blocks with regard to having the quality of laboratory results improved, therefore a comprehensive picture of the current situation is vital. The results of the survey will provide insight into the value of SANS 17025 accreditation and perhaps aid in formulating practical alternatives to validation and control through self-regulation within the laboratory fraternity.

It is anticipated that, following the analysis of the survey results, the research team will be better positioned to present information on the status of water quality testing challenges and basic training needs.

This research study will also involve the spatial representation (geographic information system [GIS]) of all participating laboratories. Once this process is complete, information will be made available to the public via the WRC website. The GIS will provide basic information such as laboratory name,

location, contact details and the type of testing services provided. This will allow potential customers to view/query laboratories across the country to locate a relevant laboratory in their area. The study will therefore potentially benefit all the laboratories that participate in the survey.

One of the greatest challenges for the project team is building a comprehensive database of all laboratories that undertake water quality testing. The project team would like to encourage any laboratory that tests for water quality to contact them and be a part of this valuable exercise.

For more information about the project contact the Water Research Unit at Jeffares & Green Consulting Engineers, Tel: 033-347-1841, Fax: 033-347-1845, email: jgipmb@jgi.co.za.