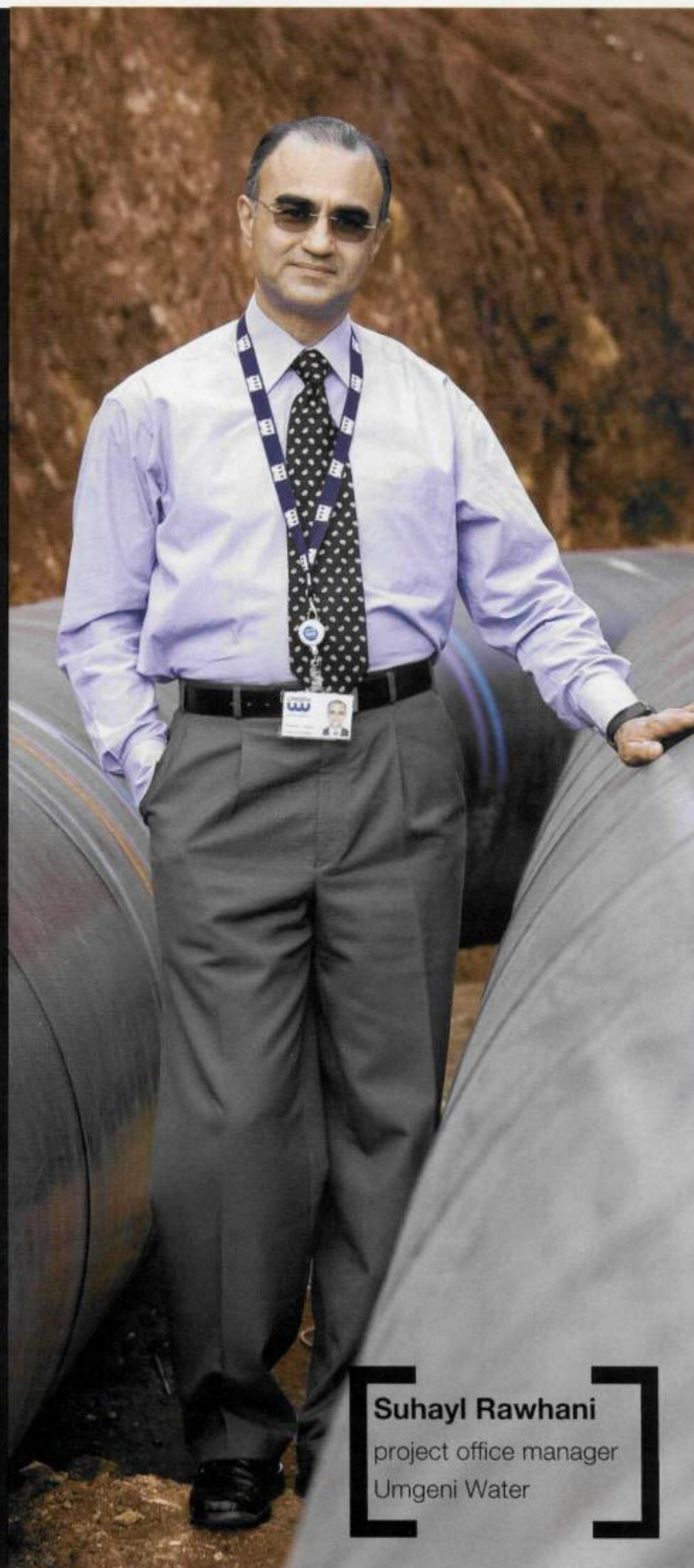


# Bulk supplier

Suhayl Rawhani, project office manager for Umgeni Water, tells Edith Webster that his greatest success has been implementing the South Coast Pipeline Project – 40 km of pipeline, three reservoirs, two pump stations and six river crossings from Amanzimtoti to Park Rynie in KwaZulu-Natal. “In the winter of 2005, most of the dams in the Middle South Coast were dry due to a combination of relatively limited local resources and erratic rainfall. The high risk of overexploiting these dams and waterworks to supply the required demands was mitigated by the project. Where feasible, it was advantageous to treat water in bulk; making it cheaper per unit and easier to maintain high quality.”

The rationale is to improve water service-delivery levels to many areas in the Upper and Middle South Coast supply zones, which only had access to basic levels of service. More importantly, it will help to eliminate a large number of backlogs in areas that were not served. Of the 250 000 people that the pipeline infrastructure will serve, almost 20% will, finally, have a more reliable and formal supply of water.

“The pipeline also proved invaluable by providing potable water to Scottburgh and surrounds in the aftermath of the June 2008 storm that damaged the water system. In June 2009, when supply to Umkomaas was suddenly cut off, the pipeline again supplied the town.” Close to R7-million was spent and more than 1 500 local labourers were employed temporarily on the project, Rawhani points out proudly. “As the need for water increases against a backdrop of limited surface-water resources, the cost of supplying bulk water will increase. Simultaneously, with the decreasing cost of membrane technology, it is likely that our bulk potable water will be supplemented by water that is reclaimed through reverse osmosis and similar technologies.” Another aspect of bulk-water supply is the extremely high cost of infrastructure, adds Rawhani. “The rural areas are often sparsely populated when compared with urban centres and it is often challenging, financially, to provide the bulk-supply infrastructure. Initiatives such as the Bulk Infrastructure Grant are very helpful but we need more funds in the medium term to eliminate the backlogs.”



**Suhayl Rawhani**  
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