

Ugu Water confirms; "we have a problem"

Seton Thompson

LITTLE more than a month after water rationing was coyly and tentatively introduced to a number of areas primarily drawing their water from the Umzinto and E.J. Smith Dams, Ugu Municipality has come forward with a direct statement that there is a 'water predicament'.

This is defined as a water level only 18% in the Umzinto Dam with the level dropping rapidly. The statement adds that "Umzinto and its surrounds are in grave danger of running out of potable water. To alleviate the situation, Umgeni Water has agreed to assist the Ugu Municipality by installing a 250mm pipeline from the Ellingham Reservoir to the Umzinto Water Treatment Works. This will alleviate the potentially critical water shortage facing Umzinto but, an accompanying analysis warns, that "Umzinto and surrounding town under Umdoni Local Municipality will continue experiencing consistent water shortage for a longer period if the poor rainfall persists".

The Upper Coast Fever of 17 September reported that water rationing was being introduced at the joint behest of Ugu and Umgeni Water. The Fever received somewhat differing signals from the two organisations as to the veracity of this news and after no follow-up appeared, most locals went back to their normal usage. While the latest statement brings news of concern, it also endorses the previous hints of a serious situation developing.

Backgrounding that situation, it also states that 2010's rainfall to date has been the leanest year ever experienced in the past 25 years. "So far, approximately 226mm's out of a

normal annual average of 1025mm's or 22.1% of the normal annual average has been received. This has also been substantiated by local sugar cane farmers who report that this year has been their worst in 25 years as far as rainfall goes," said the Ugu District Municipality's Acting Senior Communications Manager, Mr Lindani Mzotho.

Our target is to get water to Umzinto by the 15 December," said Mr Bruce Boyers of Umgeni Water. He added that the average amount of rainfall normally expected for October is around 113mm's. This October to date, rainfall between 30 and 40mm's has been recorded.

According to Boyers, the average number of days of rainfall normally recorded for the months of October, November and December is around 12 days for each month. This gives hope of an opportunity of more rain and at least some relief before the pipeline is commissioned.

UGU therefore calls upon residents to save water as any failure by anyone to adhere to the restrictions will affect the normal supply. We are also appealing to the community to report the vandalism that is happening on UGU pipe bridges that supply water to these areas, namely Sezela, Bazely and Ifafa.

"This act of sabotage has made the efforts to provide relief very difficult and the police are out looking for these water pipeline criminals. The UGU water and sanitation portfolio meeting held in Park Rynie last week appealed to scrap metal dealers not to buy from such people and to report suspicions to the authorities.

