



Status of Water Resources in Umgeni Water’s Operational Area as at Monday, 25th May 2020

Issued by Shami Harichunder, Corporate Stakeholder Manager, Umgeni Water

Water resources in Umgeni Water’s vast service area are at this stage in a healthy state. This will come as good news at the start of the generally dry months (May – August) when rainfall is significantly below average or there is none. It will also come as relief to municipalities that are currently providing water and water tanks in a mass COVID-19 combat campaign at high-density residential areas, among them informal settlements.

As water tanks are installed in, and motorised water tankers are despatched to, more informal settlements in Durban and surrounding areas, demand for safe drinking water will inevitably increase. This expected increase will assist in initiatives of municipalities and the Department of Water and Sanitation to extend access to water for handwashing, general improvement of environmental hygiene and domestic use.

Umgeni Water is preparing for a sustained increase in demand over the next four to five months. As an essential service provider, Umgeni Water continues to operate its water works and wastewater treatment plants during the lockdown. Adequate precautions and mitigation measures have been implemented to try to protect staff against coronavirus infection. These measures include physical distancing in the workplace, tightening of measures to restrict visitors to water works and wastewater works and other sites, mandatory presence of only one-third of a plant’s or site’s staff complement during a shift and close monitoring and detection of known COVID-19 symptoms, if they occur.

Umgeni Water’s water works, wastewater treatment plants and ancillary functions, among them, laboratory services and potable and raw water sampling and testing, continue to function at optimum and the potable (drinking) water demands of its seven municipal customers are being met in full. These municipalities are: eThekwin Metro, Msunduzi Local Municipality and uMgungundlovu, iLembe, Harry Gwala, uThukela and Ugu District Municipalities.

On Friday, 22nd May 2020, a virtual meeting of the Mgeni System Joint Operations Committee (JOC) took place to assess the status of water resources in the entire supply area of Umgeni Water. Members of the JOC are: Umgeni Water, the Department of Water and Sanitation, eThekwin Metro, uMgungundlovu District Municipality, Msunduzi Local Municipality, the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Department of Public Works and Human Settlements and the agriculture fraternity.

Numerous reports were received and hydrological models presented that showed current water resources availability, current water demand, projections of water demand over the next 12 months, predictions of rainfall in the coming spring and summer months and projections of water resources availability over the next 12 months, May 2020 – April 2021. The outcome of the meeting was that current water resource availability is strong, meaning there is no risk of shortages or failures occurring in the short-term if no huge spikes or increases in demand occur.

A powerful message that emerged from this meeting was: water conservation, sparing use of water and demand management are imperative to avoid shortages occurring in future. Therefore, an appeal is being made to all consumers to accept that water is not an infinite resource. Responsible use and prevention of wastage today will assist in ensuring that there is sufficient water available tomorrow and in the months ahead, or until the next good rains. Practising of water conservation should become an ingrained part of our daily lives and the driver of behaviour change as it relates to this scarce resource.

The current total amount of water available in the major Mgeni System is at 75, 47%, which is about 3,5% better than the amount that was available in 2019. This improvement is as a result of good rains that were received in the Mgeni System’s catchments. Below are the levels of dams in the Mgeni System, which supplies an estimated 6 million consumers through the reticulation networks of eThekwin Metro, uMgungundlovu District Municipality and Msunduzi Local Municipality. Current levels, those of a week and a year ago are below:

Upper Mgeni System

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May 2020	26th May 2019
Mearns Weir	57%	57%	71%
Spring Grove Dam	74%	75%	71%
Midmar Dam	100%	100%	

Lower Mgeni System

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May 2020	26th May 2019
Albert Falls Dam	44%	44%	51%
Nagle Dam	84%	89%	77%
Inanda Dam	89%	89%	76%

The levels indicate that compared to a week ago, the volume of water in most dams is stable – with exception of Nagle – and remain virtually unchanged. However, some of these dams are in a stronger position than they were a year ago. Albert Falls – the largest dam in Umgeni Water’s service area - remains of concern, although there has been marginal improvement in its level since Midmar Dam began overflowing in March 2020.

Elsewhere in Umgeni Water’s operational area:

South Coast (Middle South Coast within Ugu District): One dam – Nungwane – is overflowing while two others, Umzinto and EJ Smith, are at levels in the nineties. Mhlabatshane, within the Phungashe area, is at 69%. This means there is sufficient water available to take the region into the winter months and beyond. It must, however, be remembered that these are small dams that empty out as quickly as they fill up. Therefore, conservative use of water is imperative. These dams supply the entire Middle South Coast region, among them Umzinto, Kelso, Pennington and Scottburgh.

South Coast System

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May 2020	26th May 2019
Nungwane Dam	101%	101%	102%
Umzinto Dam	95%	100%	100%
EJ Smith Dam	99%	99%	100%
Mhlabatshane Dam	69%	70%	100%

Hazelmere System: These dams serve the north of eThekweni to Ballito within iLembe and further north, the Maphumulo region. They are currently also in a healthy state, with no concerns about water shortages occurring in the winter months and beyond. The wall of Hazelmere Dam has been raised and this means that the holding capacity of this dam is now double its previous volume.

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May 2020	26th May 2019
Hazelmere Dam	58%	59%	54%
iMvutshane Dam	93%	92%	90%

Ixopo System: Similarly, there is sufficient water to meet the needs of Ixopo town and surrounding areas. This is also a small dam and any stress on it through higher-than-normal demand could also result in its resources being quickly depleted.

Ixopo System

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May 2020	26th May 2019
Home Farm Dam	74%	74%	103%

North West System: The uThukela District Municipality in North West Region is Umgeni Water’s new and seventh customer. Umgeni Water is the bulk water services provider to this municipality and is working extensively at rehabilitating bulk infrastructure in order to enhance service provision. Two dams in this region – Spioenkop and Wagendrift - are in a strong state. Woodstock is at 42%. Collectively, there is sufficient water available to meet the region’s needs.

North West Region

Dam	25th May 2020	19th May Ba2020	26th May 2019
Spioenkop Dam	99%		
Wagendrift Dam	100%		
Woodstock Dam	42%		

