



water affairs

Department:
Water Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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CROCODILE (WEST) MARICO WMA**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Harties metsi a me programme's positive impact on Hartbeespoort Dam

The Department of Water Affairs (DWA) has announced today that progress is being made with the remediation of Hartbeespoort Dam and that signs of these efforts are visible on the dam. The improved conditions on the dam can to a great extent be ascribed to the interventions undertaken over the last two years by the Harties metsi a me Integrated Biological Remediation Programme.

Mr Petrus Venter, DWA Programme Leader for Harties metsi a me said today that significant results have been obtained by the continuous removal of algae and hyacinth, re-establishment of the shoreline vegetation, manufacturing of floating wetlands as well as progress with restructuring the food web in the dam. Mr Venter said that the dam is currently in a visually pristine condition and that "the monitoring team has reported water clarity of up to a depth of 5m below the water surface in certain areas".

The removal and control of algae and hyacinth in and around the dam is ongoing. Between January and August 2009 4460 m³ of algae, 7277 m³ of hyacinth and 169 tons of debris were removed from the dam. These actions have reduced the deposition of organic material to the bottom of the dam. Organic material acts as the "fuel" to mobilise more nutrients from the sediments.

The fishing project is making progress despite continued damage to the fish contractors' nets and equipment. The purpose of the project is to alleviate the negative impact associated with the eutrophication (nutrient enrichment) of the dam and is aimed at restructuring the presently unhealthy aquatic food web. Certain fish species are targeted, namely the catfish, karp (bottom feeders that re-introduce



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nutrients to the water column) and canary kurper (zooplankton feeders that reduce the uptake of algal to the foodweb). Fishing efforts are being renewed and there has been a remarkable increase in the fish catches between 4 and 14 August 2009 with 3.956 tons of fish netted. Fish have mainly been caught in the areas of Meerhof, Oberon, De Rust and Kommando Nek. From February 2008 to date a total of 45 530.95 kg's of fish have been removed. Long lines will also be used over the next few months for targeting catfish as this species will soon start feeding with increased intensity in preparation for the spawning season.

With regards to the shoreline rehabilitation, teams are busy removing exotic plants in order to start planting in spring. The manufacturing of floating wetlands is progressing well and they produce on average about 50 x 20m² units per month. A number of estates have indicated their desire to participate in the floating wetlands project by purchasing, installing and maintaining them on their own immediate shorelines. This is especially relevant where the shoreline has been irreparably damaged due to various factors.

The vermiculture (earthworm) project is making progress with about 800 m³ of compost which is currently in process and 25 m³ of pure vermicast at the damwall. The Vermi-compost produced is of a high quality and algae and hyacinth are used in this process. Three other composting sites were established at Schoemansville, Oewer Club, Ifafi Conservation area and the inlet of Saartjiespruit. The total stock of earthworms now stands at 2 300kg. The information centre is open during the week for school groups on arrangement and staffed on Saturdays between 9:00 and 14:00. The public and especially schools are encouraged to visit the centre. Schools are welcome to contact the Harties metsi a me offices to arrange for visits to the centre as well as visiting other aspects of the programme.

The Resource Management Plan for Hartbeespoort Dam has been developed and made public for comment. Although the review period ended on 30 April 2009 various requests have been received for a further meeting to discuss the draft RMP. This will be done as soon as the comments received have been incorporated into the document (planned for the end of November 2009).

For further information contact the Harties metsi a me office at telephone (012) 207 9911/2, fax (012) 207 9914, e-mail at harties@dwaf.gov.za or visit the website at www.dwa.gov.za/harties.

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