



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
Our Future - make it work

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Reference: 21/22/10/2/2
Diep River 2

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Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse
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Dear Ms Andrea Korff

POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION OF THE DIEP RIVER CATCHMENT AND THE MILNERTON LAGOON

The above matter and the response received by OUTA on 12 October 2021 refers.

The Department of Water and Sanitation, (hereafter “the Department”) wishes to reiterate that the management, treatment and operations at Potsdam wastewater treatment works (WWTW) is being continuously monitored, and jointly so with the Western Cape Provincial Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) as well as the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) through the joint task team that has been established and referred to in our correspondence dated 2 September 2021.

Through this task team the City of Cape Town provides weekly reports on all discharges from the WWTWs, which includes the official discharge points and temporary discharge points that the Department has authorised while essential maintenance work, detailed in the action plan submitted by the City, in terms of the cleaning of long pond is concluded. Updates on operational challenges experienced at the plant from time to time are also duly reported by the plant management.

One of these reported challenges, relating to the end of the term contract for heavy machinery, has resulted in delaying the completion of cleaning the long pond which was scheduled to be completed by the end of September 2021. An official response with an updated action plan is awaited. Upon the most recent site inspection, it was noted that the bulk of the work had been completed and thus discharges from the long pond has ceased since 10 September 2021. Work done also included the separation of the irrigation pond from the long pond which has allowed a portion of the final effluent to be pumped for irrigation and thus has reduced the discharge volumes into the Diep River as of mid-September 2021. The treatment process optimisation has also led to overall improved final effluent compliance.

In relation to OUTA's complaint dated 3 October 2021, the Department noted the use of chlorine tablets at the outlet of the stormwater reedbed as an emergency disinfection means. This was consequent to a spillage from one of the unit processes after a containment wall collapsed during an intensive rainfall event, resulting in an overflow into the stormwater channel and associated stormwater reedbed and into the Theo Marais stormwater canal. The Department is in the process of executing administrative enforcement against the City of Cape Town (City), due to the afore-mentioned incident. The aim of which would be to ensure that any processes related to spillages are contained and dealt with appropriately on-site. This Department will endeavour to keep OUTA / Ms Caroline Marx informed of the Pre-Directive to be issued.

We request OUTA / Ms Caroline Marx, to forward any complaint/s in future to officials appearing above - Ms L Mgxwati and Advocate Mowzer.

The Department has not conducted the Water Use License compliance audits as mentioned in our correspondence dated 2 September 2021. The Department was still considering the amendment request from the City. A decision was taken on the 19 October 2021 to meet with the City to communicate the decision of the Department that the licence will not be amended due to the ongoing upgrades. It is anticipated the upgrades will bring about several changes relating to the additional inflows and treatment processes to improve final effluent. Therefore, the City will be required to apply for a new water use licence and this meeting will be followed by a formal notification and the current licence will remain with its conditions. It is anticipated that the Department will meet with the City by Mid November 2021 to inform the City about the abovementioned decision and the meeting will be followed by a formal letter. Please note that this does not imply that the Potsdam WWTW is not monitored. The annual audits are undertaken according to the Green Drop prescripts and the City submit the final effluent reports on a monthly basis through the Departmental Integrated Regulatory Information System (IRIS) as well as adhoc inspections responding to received complaints. The Department will be in a position to undertake the licence compliance audit in February 2022.

The Department has been in discussions with the City regarding the operational challenges associated with the ongoing upgrades impacting negatively on the final effluent produced. Steady improvement has been noted in the final effluent quality, particularly since discharges from the long pond has ceased. The previous administrative enforcement measures involved the issuance of a pre-directive dated 20 December 2019 that requested a comprehensive action plan. Monitoring of the implementation of the action plan and the collaborative amendment thereof in the interests of risk management and minimizing impacts on the resource has been on-going. As long as the City remains co-operative and adheres to agreed actions to be taken, the Department will continue to work collaboratively in prioritising the upgrading of the WWTW infrastructure and optimizing operations as far as possible.

Yours sincerely



MS BD HENE
PROVINCIAL HEAD: WESTERN CAPE (ACTING)
DATE: 12 NOVEMBER 2021