water & sanitation
Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

WATER AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT AND MINERALS COUNCIL CONCLUDE MAJOR WATER CONSERVATION AND WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Johannesburg, 15 June 2018: The Department of Water and Sanitation and the Minerals Council South Africa have successfully reached a significant milestone in a collaborative exercise on water conservation and water demand management aimed at driving water saving and usage improvements in the mining industry.

The collaboration between Minerals Council and the Department of Water and Sanitation has evolved over years with the recent project being the development of commodity-based national water use efficiency benchmarks to guide the acceptable levels of water usage and thereby to drive improvements in water use efficiency. This work is done in line with the objectives set out in the National Water Conservation/Water Demand Management Strategy (NWC/WDMS), together with the Industry, Power and Mining Sector Strategy as well as the National Water Resource Strategy.

The project's output is found in two recently published documents. The first is "Guidelines for the development and implementation of water conservation and water demand management plans for the mining sector".

The guidelines are based on comprehensive research findings found in the second document: "Benchmarks for water conservation and water demand management in the mining sector".

The documents can be found at www.dwa.gov.za/Projects/WUE/Documents.aspx on the DWS website (items 3.2 and 3.3) and at www.mineralscouncil.org.za/work/environment/environmental-resources on the Minerals Council site.

The research was carried out at 39 different mining operations that have been shown, through evaluation of production and water use data, to be representative of the national mining industry. It provides a set of national water use efficiency benchmarks.

The 39 operations included in the study included coal, gold, platinum, diamonds, chrome, iron ore, manganese, copper, phosphate, heavy mineral sands, dolomite quarries and others.

One aspect of the value of the study and guidelines is it becomes possible to develop optimal water conservation and water demand management plans and targets based on the mineral being mined and on a wide range of other relevant factors. There are many climatic, surface and groundwater, mining methods and operational variables that could influence the most optimal water conservation and water demand management opportunities.

Mines will develop water saving plans based on the guidelines and will report annually according to specified templates set in the guidelines.

Methodologies used in the study and in the guidelines have drawn extensively on work done by the Minerals Council of Australia. Australia is known to have among the world's most advanced water conservation and water demand management systems, including for its mining industry.

Says Minerals Council CEO Roger Baxter: "This project has firmly reinforced the notion that a great deal of public good can flow from co-operative work between business and government. We hope to hear more in the years ahead about the water savings that will be achieved thanks to these efforts".

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