



Leaders in Environmental Management

Courtesy of www.environment.blogs.com

Page 1 of 1

'Taps set to close on illegal water use'

By Philda Essop, This article was originally published on page 4 of Cape Argus on April 12, 2006



Serious measures are being considered against illegal water users, Water Affairs and Forestry Minister Buyelwa Sonjica warned on Tuesday.

Speaking at the Western Cape Water Summit in Rawsonville, she described illegal water use as a "concern" to her department.

"We intend taking serious action against people who use water illegally, who extract and store water without the necessary permits," she said. "Illegal water use is a criminal offence and perpetrators can be prosecuted."

The department was on a nationwide campaign to root out illegal water use.

"We are now as a department able to obtain a good understanding of who our water users are, and what quantities of water are being utilised and where. We have also completed a comprehensive registration of water users and our water database can inform us on what water is being used legally and illegally."

Meanwhile, provincial Environmental Affairs, Development Planning and Economic Development MEC Tasneem Essop has said she will not approve development plans in municipalities that have not convinced her their underground water infrastructure is well maintained.

"In most municipalities, we are concerned about the top structures when it comes to developments, while the subterranean infrastructures are forgotten," Essop said.

"I would like to see municipalities, especially those with serious water constraints, develop a plan to address those underground systems. A town like Stilbaai, for example, cannot cope with the pressure and demand during the holiday season."

In reference to the maggots found in Cape Town's tap water, Sonjica gave the assurance that tap water in the Western Cape was "clean and of good quality".

"The water that is polluted is in the rivers. Capetonians can be assured that their tap water is clean."

She said she was worried about river pollution and appealed to municipalities to maintain infrastructure.

"We don't want another Delmas. One Delmas was enough and took a number of lives."

Delmas in Mpumalanga was hit by a typhoid outbreak last year which infected hundreds of people.

The water summit is the last of the regional water summits in each province before the national water summit, to be held in Johannesburg in May.

"We want to develop a blueprint that will guide us on how we should use our water in the province. The reality is that we may be a desert region in the next 20 years. Some of our boreholes are drying up, our weather patterns are changing, the ice is melting. We have to take responsibility."