

Makhathini Lower Pongola water association to ensure fair water management

Water and Sanitation Minister Senzo Mchunu says the Makhathini Lower Pongola Water Users Association will ensure fair water management for those living in the uMkhanyakude and Zululand Districts, KwaZulu-Natal.



Image source: El Capra from [Pexels](#)

Mchunu made the remarks following the launch of Makhathini Lower Pongola Water Users Association, which will manage water resources, including the Jozini Dam, Pongola River and Makhathini Canal to benefit all water users in the two districts.

Accompanied by Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development Minister, Thoko Didiza, and her Deputy Nokuzola Capa, Mchunu and his Deputy Minister, David Mahlobo, recently held a community engagement activity in the two districts.

The ministerial visit to the districts formed part of Mchunu's continued efforts to intervene in the challenges faced by uMkhanyakude District to restore, augment and expand water supply to the communities that have been experiencing water challenges.

Mchunu assured the community of Jozini (in uMkhanyakude District) and the Pongola farming community (under the Zululand District Municipality) that there will be fair and equitable access to water for consumption and farming.

“The newly established Makhathini Lower Pongola Water User Association will facilitate and coordinate stakeholder consultation for ensuring equitable decision-making when water is being released from Jozini Dam for environment and socio-economic purposes. This will enable both domestic and agricultural users to have equitable access to water,” Mchunu said.

Intervention

The community of Kwa-Gumbi, near Pongola in Zululand District, who had water use licence issues, requested the Minister to intervene.

The community, which consists of small-scale farmers represented by Emvokweni Community Trust, are beneficiaries of the land restitution programme from the the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DARRLD).

Both Mchunu and Didiza have pledged their commitment to assist the farmers to restore farming operations. Mchunu also assured the farming community of water availability to ensure sustainable irrigation on their farms.

Makhathini Canal

The 32-kilometre Makhathini Canal was officially unveiled by Mchunu following its transfer to the Department of Water and Sanitation from the landowners, Silwane Trust.

The process of the canal transfer was facilitated by the Agribusiness Development Agency (ADA), a public entity under the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development in KwaZulu-Natal.

During the walkabout to assess the canal, Mchunu and Mahlobo noted that some parts of the canal have been vandalised, with some community members making illegal connections, which has led to infrastructure damage. Water pollution has also been identified as one of the major problems at the canal.

Mchunu said an estimated R122m will be required to refurbish the dilapidating canal to function optimally.

He said the water canal, with a capacity of 141,754 cubic metres, is meant to benefit both agriculture and domestic users.

“It abstracts raw water from Jozini Dam to six different pump stations and the pressurised water is distributed from the pump stations through an extensive network of underground pipelines to four different types of irrigation systems that are being used, which are sprinklers, centre pivots, floods and drip,” Mchunu said.