



MEDIA RELEASE

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Boreholes and well-points in Greater Knysna

Following the Knysna Municipality's implementation of Level 2 Water Restrictions during December 2016, many Greater Knysna residents have opted to use alternate water sources such as boreholes and well-points / spikes.

Although no legislation relates to water usage of a well point / spike, the National Government's National Water Act restricts the water use derived from boreholes.

Difference between well-points and boreholes

Well points / spikes are dug to extract shallow ground water from the water table just below the surface of the ground, usually reaching a maximum depth of 10 to 15 meters and distributed by means of a surface mounted centrifugal pump.

Boreholes however, are much deeper, exceeding 20 metres with a large diameter casing allowing for the installation of a submersible pump to allow for water distribution.

What the law says

"Although we are extremely grateful to those residents who have installed either boreholes or well-points to relieve the pressure on Greater Knysna's limited water source, we would like to encourage all to use this source sparingly. If too much ground water is extracted too quickly, this source may also become depleted," said Knysna Acting Municipal Manager, Johnny Douglas.

As with all water sources in South Africa, groundwater is also available in limited quantities. "Groundwater does not occur in underground rivers and streams as is often thought, but rather occurs in cracks and fissures within hard rock formations and between sand grains in coastal and wind-blow sands and the sand beds of rivers," explained Douglas.

Previously groundwater and surface water were treated differently, but the National Water Act now recognises that water is a scarce and unevenly distributed national resource, which occurs in many different forms and are all part of a unitary, inter-dependant hydrological cycle.

As such, the National Water Act states that there will be no ownership of water (surface and groundwater) only a right to use for basic human needs and the environment. The volume, quality and sustainability of water necessary to sustain human life, and ecological functions on

which human life depends, will be reserved in such a manner that the long-term sustainability is not jeopardised.

To effectively try to manage the water quantities utilized, the Act provides the directive for the registration of water use through municipalities, as in this case, the Knysna Municipality. The Act further allows a person to use water for reasonable domestic purposes directly from a water resource to which they have lawful access.

The National Water Act allows a person to take water for small gardening (not for commercial purposes) and the water of animals (excluding feedlots) on land owned or occupied by that person, for any water resource which is situated on or forms a boundary of that land. As part of the new allocation system incorporated into the National Water Act, a land owner, or legal occupier of the land, has a right to reasonable use of water taken from an aquifer (groundwater) on that property.

Treat groundwater with respect

Douglas added: “We urge our residents not to water their gardens with ground water for 48 hours after it rains, this will allow the underground water network to be replenished. Further we request that residents using ground water not water gardens between 09:00 and 18:00 to limit the evaporation of this valuable source.”

All well-points and boreholes within Greater Knysna must be registered with the Breede Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (BGCMA) Carlo Abrahams – cabrahams@gbcma.co.za. Currently there are 316 rainwater harvesting tanks, 67 boreholes and 332 well-points/spikes registered within Greater Knysna.

“Although there is no legislation restricting the water use of these boreholes / well-points, we implore that Greater Knysna residents use this groundwater mindfully and treat it with the same respect that they treat potable water,” concluded Douglas.

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