



MEDIA RELEASE

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Stormwater Management Policy in the making

Knysna Municipality is working on a Stormwater Management Policy with the aim to reduce erosion and pollution, and look at options how groundwater can be recharged.

Cllr Levael Davis, Mayoral Committee Member for Technical Services, said illegal stormwater connections remain a serious concern. “When it rains up to seven times more water runs into the sewers than should. The calculations are done taking the amount of water released from the Water Treatment Works during these wet periods into account. Perfectly clean water is then treated along with the sewerage, causing overflows of the sewerage system. The stormwater system was also identified as one of the main sources of pollution into the estuary. The cause is mainly as a result of illegal sewer connections that feed into the stormwater systems, as well as other unlawful connections to stormwater, such as swimming pool backwash systems, etc.”

He said the new policy will address these illegal connections and set targets for different development types. “Public, private, new, existing; formal, informal and small and large developments will be considered. It will also set targets for runoff control in order to mitigate potential damage from storms.”

“A fundamental principle of the policy is that a development should be done responsibly, whether it is done by a person or body, privately, by a business or an organ of state. The developer should ensure that the development does not adversely impact on present and future communities, and on natural ecosystems. This is in line with our own by-laws and the principles of sustainable development.”

Sue Swain, Executive Director of BioWise, a local NGO that promotes the practice of biomimicry and looking after Greater Knysna’s natural resources, said that residents and developers alike should be persuaded to think differently about stormwater. “Stormwater is a resource, not a nuisance. Residents should take initiative and harvest at least the rain from the roof and storing this in tanks. If a person knows the average rainfall and knows/calculates their roof surface area, they can work out how much rainfall they could be harvesting during an average rainfall event, e.g. if we received 18mm rain, the calculation is 1m^2 of roof \times 1mm rain = 1 litre of water, so if a roof is $100\text{m}^2 \times 18\text{mm} = 1800$ litres. Tanks should also be a pre-requisite for all new developments.”

Swain said that stormwater from road and other hard surfaces should not be ignored. “This water is traditionally channelled into stormwater drains that discharge directly into the estuary. What we should be doing is learning to ‘plant’ the rain, to re-direct this run-off into

garden swales, into verge-side gardens or by creating wetlands that will help to keep the land hydrated and recharge groundwater. The trick is to slow, spread and sink the water. The very worst thing one can do is to connect rain from the roof to the sewer. The Municipal Water and Sanitation bylaw is clear that no rain or storm water may be discharged in a drainage solution - it is not only illegal, but potable rainwater is turned into filthy sludge and overloads the wastewater treatment works in the process.”

Cllr Davis concluded by saying that the Municipality is working alongside Swain to see how they can make better use of stormwater. “A recent article on the BusinessTech website quoted Dr Anthony Turton from the Centre of Environmental Management at the UOFS, saying that if one considers our population growth, we will need more than 1,6 times the water currently available in the country. Water is one of the world’s scarcest commodities – only 3% of all water on earth is fresh water. 2% of that is frozen in polar ice caps leaving 1% available fresh water, of which two-thirds are underground. Drought or no drought, we have to change the way we use it, store it and think about it.”

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