

# Analysing Water Resources for Good of All

*Brendan Hohls has been a principal aquatic scientist at the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAF) for four years. The Water Wheel asked him about his career in water.*

## **Why did you choose to be in the water sector?**

From a young age I had an interest in aquarium fish and fiddling around in the local streams looking at the aquatic life forms and plants growing around them. But I don't really feel that I directly chose to be in the water sector. Approaching the end of high school I started applying for bursaries and the possibility of getting a bursary to study hydrology was raised. I didn't really have an idea what hydrology was, but I did some reading and decided it had potential.

## **Where did you study?**

I received all of my tertiary education at the University of Natal, in Pietermaritzburg. I did a B.Sc degree with majors in Hydrology and Botany. I then went on in the Hydrology field, completing an Honours degree.

## **What was your first job in the water sector?**

In 1994 I started working for DWAF, based at what was then the Hydrological Research Institute at the Roodeplaat Dam. It is now called Resource Quality Services (RQS). I began working as an entry level hydrologist (not working in the field of

hydrology, but rather various aspects of water quality).

## **What does your current job entail?**

I work in the Resource Quality Monitoring subdirectorates of RQS. I am part of a team that is involved with the management and operation of the various national scale water quality monitoring programmes. I am responsible for the National (Inorganic) Chemical Monitoring Programme with the support and assistance of various experts in the field.

I am also involved in fish kill investigations for which RQS offers a support service to the DWAF regional offices. This takes various forms, including conducting the actual field investigations to providing logistic support and assisting in getting the appropriate samples to the correct laboratories to be analysed and then interpreting the water quality results to try and pinpoint the possible causes of a fish kill.

## **What is the most satisfying part of your job?**


It is really a good feeling to be able to help people. My main contact with the public is when I am asked to help

## **WHAT IS AN AQUATIC SCIENTIST?**

An aquatic scientist is someone who studies various aspects of inland and marine water environments, including physical (temperatures, water currents and water clarity); biological (plants, animals and microbes that live in water); chemical (organic and inorganic composition of water, water cleansing, water quality); and ecological (the ways in which organisms interact with their environments, how all these are affected by pollution, and their distribution patterns, conservation).

with the provision of water quality data for some or other interest or project. All historical water quality data as well as new data that results from the analysis of water samples conducted at the laboratories of RQS is housed on the water management system. The database is then accessed to download the data that the user is interested in. It is satisfying to be able to be of assistance to people in this way.

I have also been fortunate to represent the department at an international conference. It was very illuminating to be exposed to the research being conducted internationally, and to visit a foreign country at the same time.

The cherry on top though is when I am called upon to take photographs as part of my work. I am a completely obsessed amateur photographer and love the creative aspects that this involves while still needing to be technically proficient at the art and craft of photography. 



*For more on this and other careers in water, see Water@Work available from the Water Research Commission.*

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