



Tackle dam problems now

Danny Walmsley correctly and accurately bemoans the lack of limnological specialization in a country hugely dependent on reservoirs for its very existence (Bring Back Reservoir Limnology, *Water Wheel* January/February 2007).

The immediate needs in this country are not to yet again examine what other people have done, but to roll up our sleeves and actually do something about the problems our dams face! To anyone not familiar with the past 20 years, during which reservoir limnology was downgraded to near non-existence in South Africa, the lack of attention to the functioning and health of our dams must

appear stunningly confusing!

While South Africa previously held a globally-recognised leadership position in reservoir and water resources management, now superceded by countries in Latin America and Asia, we currently have virtually no practicing professional limnologists and the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry (DWAFF) is totally under-resourced in this capacity – with obvious and negative implications for informed decision-making on issues pertaining to reservoir management.

'Turn-around' rehabilitation plans, such as that prepared for Hartbeespoort Dam in 2004, have yet to be implemented and remain bogged down in ill-informed man-

agement processes and wheel-reinvention tactics! All the while pipelines, costing hundreds of millions of rands, are being built to bypass dams simply to bring drinkable water to towns a few kilometers downstream thereof!

Offers to provide DWAFF with university-supported, regionally-specific reservoir training programs, formulated by leading international specialists, were declined due to a lack of funds for

capacity development.

However, amidst the darkness some isolated bright lights are shining! The Hartbeespoort Dam rehabilitation approach is being used as a text for student training; there are various initiatives setting threshold management limits for nutrient loading in key dams; and the foodweb management initiative is now being expanded to nine additional dams.

However, in the absence of an inter-departmental framework to take these forward to implementation, they will continue to remain mired in indecision and inaction!

Bill Harding and Jeff Thornton, professional limnologists and certified lake managers and Brian Allanson, professional limnologist

Sewage problem understated

The article in the Upfront section of *the Water Wheel* of January/February (Sewage Threatens World's Oceans) is completely understated as regards to South Africa.

In Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, raw untreated sewage sludge is trucked in to the southern wastewater treatment works on the Bluff from other overloaded plants in the area and pumped out to sea by the ton.

Cape Town has a nick name of s..ty city, they pump the whole wastewater flow to sea from the Green Point pump station and most of the wastewater treatment works have major odour problems.

The fact is that these municipalities and Port Elizabeth are trying to run their treatment plants with obsolete systems and just not spending enough money on technology that would enable them to keep up.

Len Palmer



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