

Drought is far from over

While KwaZulu-Natal farmers have welcomed three days of rain, the drought is far from over.



landagent via [Wikimedia Commons](#) - Mdmar Dam

Torrential rains pounded mainly the northern parts, resulting in two deaths in Nquthu, where two children died when the wall of their home collapsed.

Umgeni Water said yesterday that the rains in the province had not made a significant impact and that the drought was likely to persist as most of the water did not make its way to the key catchment areas.

Dams remain dangerously low

KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union chief executive Sandy la Marque said while the rain was welcome, in many areas dam and water tables remained "dangerously low". "The agricultural sector will take a long time to recover from the lingering drought," she said. "We can only hope that more rain will fall and bring further relief."

Shami Harichunder, spokesman for Umgeni Water, said the largest system, which supplies water to four million consumers in the uMgungundlovu district and much of eThekweni, remained under stress as the drought continues.

He said the recent rains had not made any impact on dam levels. "It rained at the wrong places and outside our water

catchments. For something to happen, the water has to flow to our catchment not straight to the sea," he said.

Harichunder said the system in question, Mgeni, comprised in its upper part Spring Grove and Midmar dams and Mearns Weir, while the lower part comprised Albert Falls, Nagle, and Inanda dams. "The levels of four of these dams are lower than they had been a year ago, while the remaining two are marginally higher than they were a year ago to the day," he said.

Midmar is currently standing at 57%, up from 48% a year ago. Another improvement was at Mearns Weir which is at 108%, up from 71% a year ago. He said Mearns Weir is currently overflowing as a result of good rains in its catchment - Mooi River and Drakensberg.

However, one of the newest dams, the Spring Grove in Mooi River, is down to 51% from 74% a year ago. Nagle Dam near Cato Ridge is down to 60% from 86% a year ago while water levels at Albert Falls near New Hanover are down to 27% from 38% a year ago.

Another troubled dam is Inanda in Durban, which has dropped to 62% from 81% a year ago.

Harichunder said Spring Grove and Mearns Weir were smaller dams that usually emptied out as quickly as they filled up.

Water restrictions

"Umgeni Water has issued a reminder to all consumers that water restrictions still remain in place in all of uMgungundlovu, Pietermaritzburg and in about 80% of Durban. An appeal has also been made to consumers to use water sparingly.

"Areas of Durban not affected by water restrictions are in the far north of the city," he said.

Forecasts by the SA Weather Service and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research suggest that if above-average rainfall is received, this is only likely to occur in the first quarter of 2017.

Source: The Times