GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION

NO. 7295 **25 March 2026**

INVITATION TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS IN TERMS OF SECTION 110 OF THE NATIONAL WATER ACT 1998 (ACT 36 OF 1998) ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED STEPHEN DLAMINI DAM AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT RELATING THERETO

The Minister of Water and Sanitation intends to construct the proposed Stephen Dlamini Dam as a government waterworks as contained in Part A of the Schedule hereto.

In terms of Section 110(1)(b)(iii) of the National Water Act, 1998 (Act 36 of 1998), interested parties are invited to submit written comments on the waterworks (Part A of Schedule) and the environmental impact assessment (Part B of Schedule) within 60 days after the date of publication. Comments must be submitted to the Director-General, Department of Water and Sanitation, Private Bag X313, Pretoria, and marked for the attention of Mr Mxolisi Hlophe, Chief Engineer: External Works.

SCHEDULE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED STEPHEN DLAMINI DAM AND A SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A. PROPOSED STEPHEN DLAMINI DAM GOVERNMENT WATERWORKS

1) INTRODUCTION

The Harry Gwala District Municipality (HGDM), formerly the Sisonke District Municipality, is the Water Service Authority that is mandated to supply water to Bulwer, Creighton, Donnybrook, Ixopo and the surrounding areas. HGDM identified the need for the regional bulk water supply scheme as a sustainable long-term solution for improving water supply in the district.

The HGDM in its quest to resolve the water supply challenges within its area of supply commissioned a bulk distribution infrastructure reconnaissance study which was undertaken by Umgeni Water in 2007. One of the recommendations of the study was that there should be a feasibility study undertaken on the prospects of constructing a dam on the Luhane River.

The construction of the Stephen Dlamini Dam (formerly Bulwer Dam) was conceptualised as a catalyst that will address the water challenges in the region. The current water supply relies on rivers, boreholes, and springs, which are unreliable and susceptible to waterborne diseases. The Stephen Dlamini Dam is proposed as a primary water source for the HGDM Regional Bulk Water Supply Scheme. Furthermore, the dam aims to secure a sustainable long-term water supply for communities in the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma Local Municipality and Ubuhlebezwe Local Municipality.

HGDM undertook the feasibility study and detailed design stages of the project, prior to the project's transfer to the Department of Water and Sanitation for implementation as a government waterworks. Upon transfer, the Department of Water and Sanitation conducted a full due diligence assessment that indicated that the project was ready for implementation.

2) LOCATION

The proposed dam is located on the Luhane River, a tributary of the Umkhomazi River, approximately 7km south-west of the town of Bulwer in KwaZulu-Natal. The site is situated on portions of the farms Mountain View 16689, Edwardsvale 5315, and Addenda 156357.

The coordinates of the dam wall are:

Latitude: 29º 50' 25.52" S
Longitude: 29º 44' 23.74" E

3) DETAILS OF THE DAM STRUCTURE

Stephen Dlamini Dam is designed to store 9.8 million m³ at full supply level, with an estimated yield of 3.07 million m³ at 98% assurance of supply. The dam is designed as a Category III multi-zoned earth embankment. The technical specifications are summarised below:

Parameter	Value
Non-overspill crest level (NOC)	1,505.0 masl
Full supply level (FSL)	1,500.5 masl
Riverbed level	1,474.0 masl
Maximum height	31.0 m
Crest length	600 m
Spillway crest length	68.0 m
1 in 200-year design flood	400 m^3/s
Safety evaluation flood (SEF)	1,080 m^3/s
Gross storage at full supply level	9.8 million m^3
Surface area of lake behind dam	70 ha

4) DETAILS OF THE ASSOCIATED WORKS

The project scope includes the construction of the following associated infrastructure:

Intake Tower: A 29-metre high reinforced concrete tower with a steel access bridge, featuring multiple intake levels to manage water quality.

Outlet Works: A 1,067mm diameter steel conduit encased in concrete for emergency drawdown and a 500mm diameter pipe for domestic raw water supply.

Roads: Relocation of affected access roads and construction of a vehicular bridge spanning the spillway channel.

5) FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

The total estimated capital cost for the construction of the dam and associated works as determined in 2023 is approximately R 800 million.

6) SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The construction and operation of the Stephen Dlamini Dam are expected to yield significant socio-economic benefits for the region, including:

Job Creation: The project is projected to create direct job opportunities during the construction phase, as well as indirect and induced jobs supported in the wider regional economy. Opportunities will be available for the participation of Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs) from the communities surrounding the project area.

Skills Development: Provision has been made specifically for training and skills development for local labour with the aim of enhancing the skills of people from the local communities.

Economic Contribution: The project is expected to contribute positively to the regional economy.

B. SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs granted the Environmental Authorisation for the construction of the Stephen Dlamini Dam on 02 November 2009 in accordance with the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998).

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs subsequently granted an extension to the validity period of the Environmental Authorisation by twelve (12) months on 02 November 2012. The Environmental Authorisation was activated on the construction of the concrete gauging weir, access road and excavation for the spillway. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs confirmed on 15 October 2025 that the Environmental Authorisation remains valid.

The findings of the specialist studies conducted during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are summarised as follows:

7) ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The construction will result in the loss of approximately 39.76ha of floodplain wetland habitat and 22.39ha of valley bottom wetland habitat. A Wetland Offset Plan has been developed to compensate for this loss, and its implementation must proceed in parallel with the construction activities.

8) SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The project will necessitate the expropriation of land from commercial forestry operations and private farmland. Specific agreements regarding compensation for loss of land and infrastructure, as well as access rights to the dam for irrigation and stock watering, were mandated as part of the appeal resolution process.

9) AQUATIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Present Ecological Status (PES) of the Luhane River was assessed as Class A/B32. In order to maintain ecological integrity, a Recommended Ecological Category (REC) of Class B has been determined for the river downstream of the dam. The dam design includes specific outlet works (a 168 mm pipe with a 150 mm sleeve valve) to ensure a continuous ecological release to support downstream ecosystems.

10) HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Heritage Impact Assessment recommended that the project proceed with no further heritage resource mitigation required. The project footprint will not have an impact on the heritage sites and there were no graves identified during the initial assessment. Further assessments are to be conducted prior to commencement of the works.

11) PALEONTOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Not applicable based on the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment.

12) VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Visual impacts will be mitigated by minimizing the cut-to-fill ratio when designing new access roads to ensure minimal visual impact for the local tourism industry.

13) SOURCING OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Construction materials for the embankment will be sourced primarily from within the dam basin and from the spillway excavation to minimise environmental impacts and haulage costs. A borrow pit for impervious core material is located within the basin below the Full Supply Level (FSL).

14) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A comprehensive public participation process was undertaken during the Feasibility and Detailed Design phases. This included extensive consultation with affected landowners. An appeal lodged against the initial Environmental Authorisation was adjudicated, and the authorisation was upheld subject to specific conditions which have been incorporated into the project planning and implementation.

15) ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

An updated Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) which is inclusive of all the conditions of the Environmental Authorisation shall be prepared and submitted to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs before construction commences. An Environmental

Control Officer (ECO) shall be appointed to conduct bi-weekly audits during the construction phase to ensure compliance with the Environmental Authorisation.

MISS PEMMY C.P. MAJODINA, MP
MINISTER OF WATER AND SANITATION
DATE:

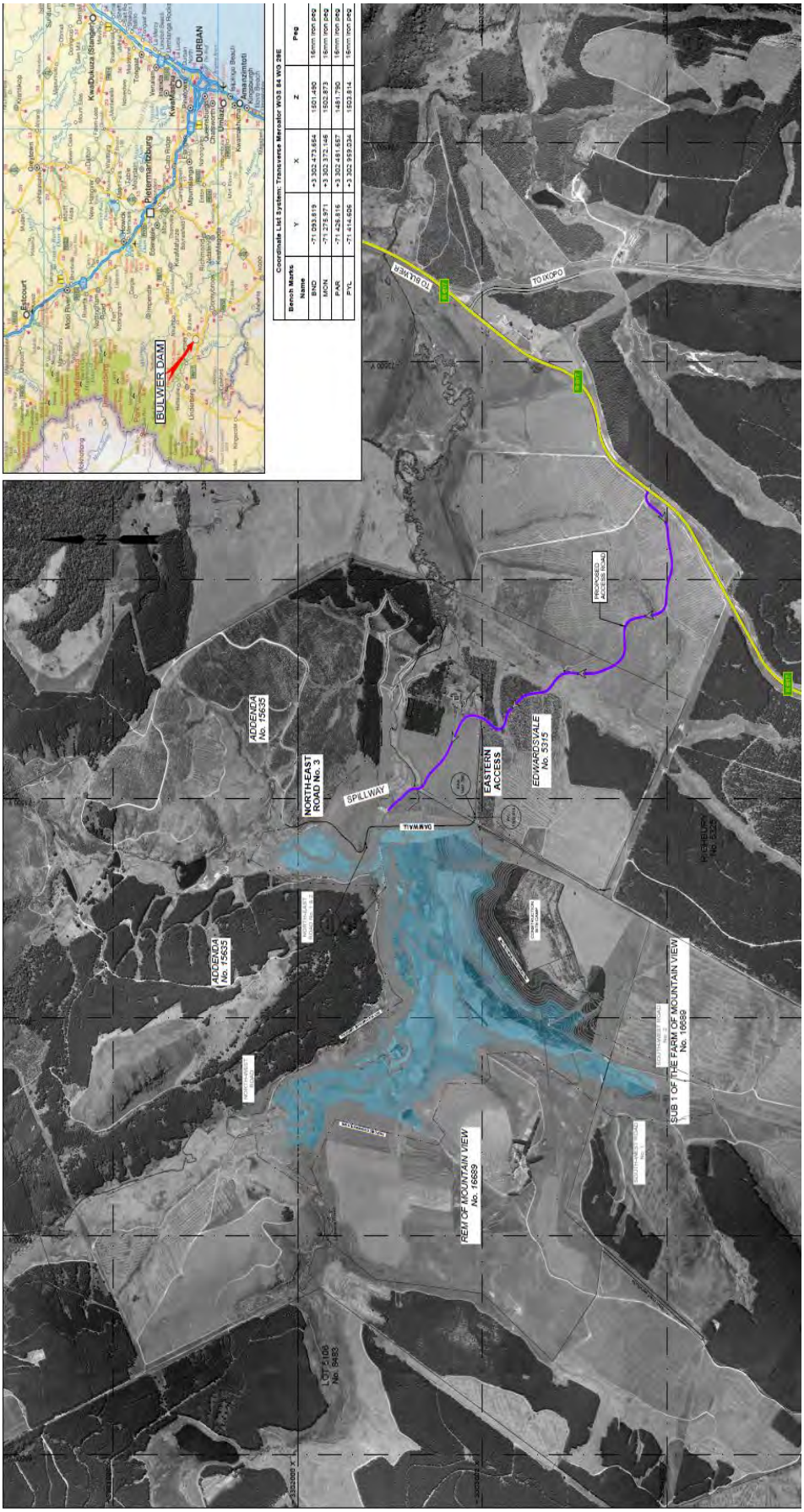

FIGURE 1: LOCALITY MAP