

Disaster status and high water tariffs for Kouga

The new Kouga Council has declared that Kouga is in a state of disaster owing to the prolonged drought and its impact on the area's water sources.

And the municipality has declared higher emergency water tariffs. But many St Francis Bay residents are unhappy that in spite of the fact that the town has plenty of underground water, which can be used but is not, they now have to pay much more for water.

The declaration in terms of the Disaster Management Act (57 of 2002) was made at a meeting of the Council in Jeffreys Bay on 31 May. At this meeting the emergency water tariffs were also approved.

According to the Metro dam levels have been dropping between 3% and 4% per month and could reach dead storage in about four months. This is the lowest point below which water cannot be abstracted.

The Kouga 'state of disaster' will now be promulgated in the provincial Gazette. This will enable Kouga Municipality to apply for funding assistance from provincial and national governments to implement the emergency measures.

Plus it will assist with the identification of resources, personnel and funds to be allocated for water conservation and demand management initiatives. Kouga currently gets its water from the Port Elizabeth Metro which declared a similar disaster recently. The Metro manages the dams on behalf of the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Non emergency water tariffs have been in place in the Kouga municipal region since December 2016. If drought conditions persist and dam levels continue dropping, it will have disastrous and far-reaching negative implications for the region as a whole, Kouga's mayor, Etiza van Lingen said, adding

the administration is finalising an emergency action plan for implementation. This would include increasing consumer education and the sinking of additional boreholes.

Higher water tariffs mean punitive measures. Punitive measures mean for example, that a household that was using 35kl of water per month and paying R354, will have to pay R578 for the same amount of water once the punitive restrictions have been approved. And if the Kouga Council ups its punitive tariffs, the same household will pay R647 a month.

But many St Francis Bay residents are furious as the town is sitting on so much underground water that used to be available and was used by the town's residents and those in Cape St Francis before it was decided by the previous Kouga Council to use water from PE instead. St Francis Chronicle has received many ongoing complaints.

Residents say this underground water, which though not really suitable for drinking could be used for baths at homes, swimming pools and gardens. Some angry residents maintain the municipality is doing nothing to pump the water out into reservoirs like it did for decades - since founder Leighton Hulett's time - so that they can swim in their pools in summer and have lovely gardens again.

"We even have big dams above Santarene that have flooded before, the water of which can be used," one incensed lady said.

"Not only that," she added while pointing to an empty pool and a neglected garden at her lovely home, "is that PE Metro and other Kouga areas will have more water for use if St Francis uses its own?"

Many Kouga residents are already battling to pay their high electricity bills, so these tariffs could add to their woes, she added.



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See how many words you can make from the letters. No words to be less than four letters. Every word has to contain the middle, bold letter. The goal is to also find the five letter word(s). No plural nouns, capital letters, slang, or foreign language words (unless accepted in the Oxford English Dictionary). This event's goal: 68 words excellent; 40 words good; 20 words fair. Note: Words ending in 'y' like 'past' have been allowed.

The correct solution is on p10.

Word Puzzle compiled by Bev Mortimer

I	E	E
H	R	L
P	N	S

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