



DEPARTMENT: WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Strategic Environmental Assessment

## **1. Introduction**

This Communications Strategy is a tool that will be used to reach the various Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) stakeholders. It will guide and/or assist the Team to develop activities and messages appropriate to these stakeholders. The strategy will extensively cover KwaZulu Natal, as the project focus is within a Water Management Area (WMA) in the province, but will be flexible enough to be adapted for use in the other provinces and government departments. The main aim of the strategy is to increase the level of awareness and the importance of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in the WMAs. This strategy will help with communications with stakeholders in gathering information needed for development and management of the Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs). It is important that the public does not see SEA as a provider for water or just a planning exercise but as a provider of vital information for decision-makers in the planning, allocation and use of water.

## **2. Defining the situation**

The SEA is a process that has been introduced into the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) to support the implementation of the National Water Act (No. 36 of 1998). It does this through the analysis and assessment of impacts of development on the environment. The Act and the development of the National Water Resource Strategy have led to the establishment of the 19 WMAs and their boundaries. Each of these WMAs will be managed by Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs), which will require information on the social, economic and biophysical status of each WMA. The SEA will be able to offer that information as its approach ensures sustainable development and co-operative governance.

A SEA is now being conducted in the Usutu-Mhlathuze WMA in the KwaZulu Natal Province for a period of 18 months, where issues around water will be reviewed. Full participation by the stakeholders is required. The social scoping exercise and the aerial overview that the SEA Team has recently undertaken for the project shows that in the WMA:

- There is a lack of clarity on the division of powers between the traditional and municipal structures
- There is a need to address the question of equity of existing water allocations
- The problems of water quality resulting from coal mining in highveld districts
- The high levels of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy.

### **2.1 SEA objectives**

- To ensure best use of water in an integrated way to best benefit the society and economy without degrading the environment.
- To encourage people's contribution in the affairs of the catchment and link users with decision-makers.
- To assess and analyse data from the catchment
- To provide decision-makers with reliable data from the catchments for more informed decisions.

## 2.2 Communications strategy objectives

- To educate and raise awareness concerning the SEA amongst all stakeholders using relevant languages.
- To offer support to the public participation process and facilitation of buy-in by the stakeholders.
- To create appropriate communication tools.
- To continuously communicate adequate and useful information about SEA and its outputs to the stakeholders.

## 3. The stakeholders

	<b>Primary target audience</b>	<b>Secondary target audience</b>
<i>Internal (DWAF directorates)</i>	<b>Head Office:</b> Water Utilisation Hydrology Geohydrology Water Quality Management Water Conservation Catchment Management Social and Ecological Services Strategic Planning Water Resources Planning Forestry Policy Project Planning	Working for Water Geomatics Institute for Water Quality Studies Project Development and Support Community Forestry Forestry Regulations Conservation Forestry
<i>External</i>	<b>Regional Offices:</b> Catchment Management/CMA champions and Water Services in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape <b>Private Sector :</b> Forestry, Sugar, Mining <b>Government/public sector :</b> District Councils, Municipalities, Traditional Authorities, Provincial Departments- Agriculture, Land Affairs and Health <b>Civic Organisations:</b> NGOs rural and urban community <b>Parastatals:</b> Irrigation Boards, Water Users Associations	Catchment Management/CMA champions and Water Services in Gauteng, Western Cape, Northern Cape, North West, Northern Province and Free State Provinces Agriculture, Industry  Metro, National and other Provincial government departments, Educational and Research Institutions

## 4. The general message

One of the elements of DWAF's mission is to conserve, manage and develop the country's water resources and forests in a scientific and environmentally sustainable manner. The SEA is a key-supporting tool that assists with the implementation of this mission, as it provides background information for water allocation plans and water use licenses.

The flexibility of the SEA process ensures stakeholder participation through the identification of key issues and information sharing at WMA level, but at the same time also allows room for intervention at CMA level.

The concept of sustainable development, which underpins the SEA principles, further supports the department's mission of meeting the country's social and economic needs. This is done through the SEA's proactive approach by incorporating the biophysical, hydro-economic and social issues during strategic decision-making processes.

## **5. The Usutu-Mhlathuze communications environment**

Since the democratic government came into power in 1994, DWAF has been perceived by the public as one of the departments that focuses on service delivery as one of its key priorities. This perception is mainly due to employment creation by the Working for Water Programme and recently by the delivery of free basic water to 51% of South Africans as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2001. One of the main concerns with the department is that some of its projects are not sustainable enough.

The SEA pilot project that is currently being undertaken in the KwaZulu Natal province, indicated that most people in both the rural and urban areas do not have a clear understanding of the SEA concept and its principles. Traditional leaders still play a major role in decision-making processes and welfare of people in their respective areas of authority. This means that communication channels between the SEA Team and Traditional Leaders are vital to ensure participation from local communities. Government departments and other sectors are also being targeted to ensure that the SEA concept and its principles are properly dealt with in decision-making processes. This approach will enhance current and future initiatives with respect to the concept of co-operative governance.

## **6. Communication Tools**

6.1 Media Production: brochures, pamphlets, posters

6.2 Media Liaison: interviews, placement of articles, response to media queries

6.3 Advertising: a) Print media- Newspapers (National, Regional, Community)  
- Publications

b) Electronic media- Radio, Television, Billboards, Website