

WATER ALLOCATION PLAN FOR INKOMATI-USUTHU WATER MANAGEMENT AREA



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1. Introduction

The Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency is embarking on a process to develop Water Allocation Plan for the Water Management Area (WMA). A water allocation plan is a legal document that sets out the rules for managing the take and use of **prescribed water resources** to ensure they are used sustainably. Water allocation plans are developed in consultation with community members.

A water allocation plan ensures the needs of the environment are taken into account when determining how much water is made available to be taken and used for other purposes. Water allocation plans set out the amount of water available for use, how that water may be allocated to water users, rules around transfer of water, and the types of activities permitted with that water.

Once a water allocation plan is in place, water users can apply for a water licence, transfer water between users and a range of other activities subject to the rules and limits of the water allocation plan. A water licence provides an ongoing **right to take water** from the resource.

2. Why is water allocation plan important?

Water is a precious resource. There is a limit to how much is available for use on an ongoing basis, so it is important to provide certainty to current and future users of water, particularly those whose livelihoods depend on it. A water allocation plan provides this certainty. Water

allocation plan consider the environment, social and economic needs, and help ensure long-term sustainability and security.

3. What is the water allocation plan process?

3.1. Prescription of a water resource

Important water resources in the Inkomati-Usuthu Water Management Area are protected and managed as per National Water Act of 1998. Prescription means the water resource must be sustainably managed to provide security for all water users, including the environment, now and into the future.

3.2. Development of a water allocation plan

For each prescribed water resource, a water allocation plan must be developed by IUCMA. A water allocation plan must meet the water needs of the environment and the stakeholders. To ensure this, scientific investigations of the water resource and extensive stakeholder engagement are undertaken in the development of a water allocation plan.

There are 6 stages in the development of a water allocation plan:

- A risk assessment is undertaken to identify risks to the water resource and water users, including the environment.
- The stakeholders are given opportunities to provide input into the content of the water allocation plan, based on the risks it is aiming to manage.

- Based on the decisions made about the risks to the water resource, the environment and water users, a draft water allocation plan is prepared.
- A consultation process is undertaken to seek stakeholder input and views about the draft water allocation plan.
- The IUCMA takes the stakeholders feedback into account when making decisions on any changes to the draft before submitting a final water allocation plan to the Minister for adoption.
- The adopted water allocation plan is reviewed within 10 years to ensure it is still effectively managing the risks to the water resource, the environment, and the stakeholders.

4. Implementation of a water allocation plan: licences and permits

Once the water allocation plan is adopted by the Minister, it is implemented by the Department of Water and Sanitation. The IUCMA/DWS will manage the allocation of the water resource to existing and new users in accordance with the rules set out in the water allocation plan. To be allocated water, water users apply for a water licence which sets out the allocation and conditions applying to taking water.

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