



Media Statement For Immediate Release

Date: 09 December 2024

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF RESTRICTION ON THE ABSTRACTION OF IRRIGATION WATER IN THE CROCODILE RIVER CATCHMENT (MAIN CROCODILE RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES) IN TERMS OF SECTION 6(1) OF SCHEDULE 3 OF THE NATIONAL WATER Act 36 of 1998

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to inform all water users to commence with immediate water use abstraction restrictions for all agricultural-related irrigation activities out of the Crocodile River and all of its tributaries.

The tributaries include but are not limited to the following river systems: Alexanderspruit, Blinkwater, Buffelskloof, Elands, Gladdespruit, Gutshwa, Houtbosloop, Lunsklip, Nels, Nsikazi, Stads, Sand River, Sterkspruit, Valyspruit, Vissipruit, Kaap River, White River and Zongagskraal Rivers and their catchments.

This includes abstraction from any dam or surface water resource within these catchments.

The Responsibilities of the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency (IUCMA)

The IUCMA is a water management institution established by the Minister of Water and Sanitation in terms of section 78 of the National Water Act, Act 36 of 1998, to perform water resource management at a local level within the Inkomati-Usuthu Water Management Area (WMA). This entails the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of water resources as contemplated in the National Water Act.

The function relevant to this letter, and delegated by the Minister of Water and Sanitation to the IUCMA, is Schedule 3 of the National Water Act, which includes the power to, among other things, **temporarily control, limit, or prohibit use of water during periods of water shortage [Section (6) 1 of Schedule 3 of NWA]**.

Low Dam Levels and Extremely low river flow levels in the Crocodile River, as well as its tributaries

Due to significantly below-normal rainfall and the extremely high temperatures we are currently experiencing in the Mpumalanga Lowveld region, river flow levels in the Crocodile River and its tributaries are extremely low. The environmental flow requirements and the needs of the water users are thus not being met in the lower portions of the rivers, and further intervention is required. The IUCMA is attempting to rectify the situation through increased releases from Kwena Dam under its management and imposing water use restrictions 7.5 m³/s is being released from Kwena Dam from 27 November 2024, hence the rapid dropping of Kwena Dam.

Restrictions Required

Regarding the operating rules in place for the Crocodile River (Figure 1), and in accordance with IUCMA’s duly delegated mandate, the IUCMA hereby imposes restrictions of **at least 35.0% on lawful water use allocation immediately.**

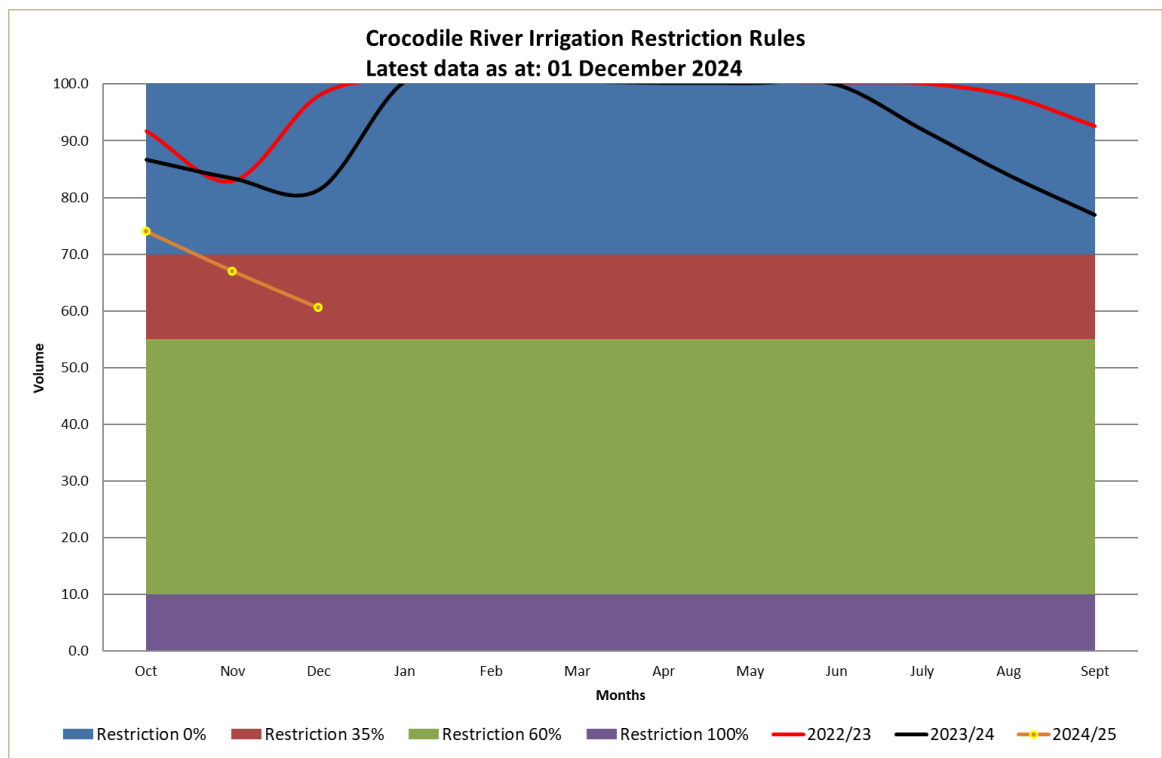


Figure 1: Operating rule curve for Kwena Dam: Restriction levels for irrigators.

Any higher restrictions enforced by any Irrigation Boards within these river catchments may override the gazetted restrictions to ensure the system balance is controlled.

Any unlawful water uses are not permitted (to abstract or store any water) and may be subject to a legal process for their permanent removal. Any water use greater than the user’s lawful water use allocation must be immediately reduced to an amount equivalent to 35% less than the allocation portion.

Furthermore, over and above the general restriction required above, no water user is permitted to completely stop the flow of water in a watercourse due to exercising their restricted abstraction or storage. A requisite flow sufficient for the ecological sustainability of the watercourse and the equitable use of all lawful water users downstream must be allowed to pass any abstraction point or storage dam at all times. This is assessed on a case-by-case basis. However, as a general guideline, at least 30% of the flow should be allowed to pass downstream, though this percentage can be significantly higher depending on specific circumstances.

Lastly, all persons with lawful access to the storage in lawful dams must be allowed equitable use of the water in the dam by the owners of said dams after any water for reasonable domestic requirements, stock watering and the ecology is kept in reserve (hereinafter collectively referred to as the Reserve). If the storage in any dam or watercourse can no longer supply water beyond the Reserve, then all other water uses out of that resource must stop until it recovers.

The restrictions will remain in place until further notice but will be increased to 60% if the volume of Kwena Dam drops below 55.0%.

These restrictions will be reviewed and may be amended at a later date.

End.

Issued by the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency (IUCMA).

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