

R28bn Upper uMkhomazi Water Project to relieve KZN water challenges

The signing of offtake agreements this week has signified the start of phase one of the much-awaited R28bn Upper uMkhomazi Water Project.



Image source: Riccardo Lennart Nels Mayer – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The project is expected to be a catalyst to water security and vibrant economic activity in the eThekweni area and surrounding districts.

Water and Sanitation Minister Senzo Mchunu, joined by Deputy Minister David Mahlobo, lead the signing of joint offtake agreements with the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), uMngeni-uThukela Water Board and six KwaZulu-Natal municipalities during a ceremony at Deepsdale in Bulwer on Friday, 19 April.

The project consists of the construction of an 81m high dam at Smithfield on the uMkhomazi River with a gross storage capacity of 251 million m³, as well as a 33km and 3.5m diameter tunnel from Smithfield Dam to the uMlaza River Valley, and a 5.1km and 2.6m diameter gravity bulk pipeline connecting the tunnel to the Baynesfield Water Treatment Works.

Upon its completion, the project is set to increase the amount of raw water in the uMgeni Water System yield by 55%, from 394 to 608 million cubic metres (or kilolitres) per annum.

The TCTA will implement the raw water component of project and uMngeni-uThukela will implement the bulk water treatment component for distribution to the identified six water services authorities.

Speaking at the event attended by various Mayors in the area, Mchunu noted the project has seen delays but they are excited at the commencement of the project.



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The Minister said the department is hard at work with other projects within the province to address the water challenges.

“We are here to do a number of things, we visited the site where the Upper uMkhomazi Dam will be built [because] we wanted to see the actual site [and] we are delighted that we managed to view the site.

“The next thing is to allow TCTA to provide a road map about the actual construction of the dam and the timeframes regarding commencement and completion dates,” Mchunu said.

Mahlobo highlighted that the projects that are currently being implemented by the department, working together with entities and municipalities, are a response to an instruction from President Cyril Ramaphosa.

He said President Ramaphosa has put the Economic Reconstruction Recovery Plan at the centre of renewing the country.

“Water is one of the infrastructures that has become an impediment around the issue of economic growth, hence we are pushing major bulk water infrastructure projects to ensure that we do not run out of water,” Mahlobo said.

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