



# Ephemeral River Basins

newsletter *Sharing temporary waters in southern Africa*

Special Bulletin, December 2009

Do you have news pertaining to resource management in your area? Send your contributions to: [carole.roberts@drfn.org.na](mailto:carole.roberts@drfn.org.na)

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## Orange-Fish River Basin: New developments

If you live in the Orange-Fish River Basin and your livelihood depends on access to a dependable water source, recent developments in this basin will be of interest to you.

The river basin covers much of southern Namibia and, together, the Orange and Fish rivers supply water to a number of economically important enterprises. Through the Orange-River Stakeholder Forum a number of challenges, needs and issues related to the management of water resources in this basin have been identified and discussed. Stakeholders' interests are as diverse as the challenges. However, one thing that they all have in common is the water source that they depend on.

More recently the stakeholder forum has

started exploring ways of addressing the challenges and issues they face – the forum wants to contribute to the management of their water resources. Furthermore, they realise the proposed Neckartal Dam and Irrigation Scheme are likely to affect all in the basin; they would like their concerns and advice to Government to be taken into account in order to maximise opportunities. To this end, they have established the **Interim Fish River Forum Committee** which is working towards a strengthened, representative and formalised basin management committee. Three working groups have also been formed to help the Committee to address challenges in the basin.

### Why a basin management committee?

The concept of integrated water resource management at a basin level has been identified as central to the reform process in Namibia's water sector. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry – the custodians of the country's water resources – encourages the formation of basin management committees to manage water resources in an integrated and participatory way. This approach is also supported by the Water Resources Management Act of 2004.

Stakeholders of the Orange-Fish River Basin have found that sharing ideas and experiences through their forum is helping them to address issues, increase their knowledge of the basin and its resources, and to understand the processes that make it function.

A formalised and recognised committee will help them to:

- gain support and funding to address issues, needs and challenges,
- enable basin stakeholders to take concerns to higher authorities,
- strengthen their voice,
- allow them to take advantage of potential opportunities and
- help them shape their development.

*continued on page 2*



Orange-Fish River Basin

## Get your interests represented...

The Interim Fish River Forum Committee is in the process of being strengthened. At the next meeting of stakeholders (16-17 February, 2010), they will identify who should be on the Committee to do this. To ensure that your interests are represented, you should attend this meeting so that you can nominate a representative, or put forward your own name.

While more information on the next stakeholder meeting will be sent closer to the time, **we would like to gauge your level and area of interest now.** Please complete the form below and return it to: Carole Roberts, DRFN, PO Box 20232, Windhoek or fax it to (061) 230172.

## What challenges have been identified in the basin?

Apart from limited water availability in this arid area, the challenges are wide-ranging and include, amongst others:

- poor quality and low-yielding ground-water sources;
- flooding;
- the delivery of water and sanitation services and recovering the costs thereof;
- compliance with the conditions associated with water permits;
- lack of information on grazing strategies for this arid area;
- pollution threats to water sources through return flows from irrigation schemes, poorly placed kraals, inadequate sanitation facilities and mining activities;

- invasive plants – often alien – choking river channels
- threat of reduced runoff and changed flow patterns in both the Orange and Fish rivers as a result of dams and the upstream diversion of water
- limited capacity, and poor communication and lack of information-sharing at various levels

## Major development – it might affect you

Many of these identified challenges will be compounded by the proposed Neckartal Dam and Irrigation Scheme, which, if it goes ahead, will result in a dam on the Fish River with three times the capacity of Hardap Dam and an irrigation scheme (5000 ha) that will almost double the land currently under irrigation in Namibia.

The feasibility study to develop this project has kicked off at a rapid pace and is expected to be completed by March 2010. The design phase will be completed by the end of 2010 and construction completed by October 2013. While clearly such a development could be a great boon for the South, and the country as a whole, the stakeholder forum feels it needs careful and strategic planning to consider all direct and indirect effects to make it a success... they'd like a say in this. *Wouldn't you?*



Source: NamWater

*Flooding of Mariental is a major concern to its residents.*



*Delivery of water and sanitation services to residents is a huge challenge in many settlements, towns and villages in the basin.*

## Your level and area of interest

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details:

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tick the boxes that apply to you

- Not interested
- Interested in receiving information or need more information to make a decision
- Interested in attending the next stakeholder forum meeting
- Interested in being a member of the basin management committee
- Interested in being on a working group.

My area(s) of interest is(are):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Important upcoming event**

≈ 16 - 17 February 2010 ≈

8th Orange-Fish River Basin Stakeholder Meeting

Your source for sharing knowledge and awareness on ephemeral river basin management



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