

# Hyacinth in Hartebeespoort Dam

## Comment from Anthony Duigan, ARMOUR Chairman, on 50/50 Programme

Thank you for the programme last night highlighting the growing crisis in Hartbeespoort Dam from the impact of the water hyacinth stimulated by the ingress of nitrates and phosphates from upstream waste water treatment works. As noted by the presenter, what we see in the dam is the result of what is not being properly managed in Johannesburg, Mogale, Ekurhuleni and Pretoria. That, of course, is the dozen or so sewerage works that decant into the various rivers that ultimately flow into the Crocodile River upstream of the Dam. Unfortunately, the spokesman for the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) simply underlined their inability to do anything constructive to deal with the situation.

I am from ARMOUR (Action for Responsible Management of Our Rivers), a lobby group/NGO that emerged from a petition campaign started in August 2015 against the ongoing untreated sewerage that was being decanted into the Jukskei River, and thus into the Crocodile River, from the Northern Waste Water Treatment Works (NW). This campaign, which lobbied over 60 Government departments, media, Green Scorpions, the Public Protector, etc, resulted in an immediate meeting with top officials from Joburg Water and DWS and the release of funds to Joburg Water to begin emergency maintenance work on Northern Works. A full-scale maintenance programme at NW kicked in from the beginning of 2016 and continues currently. We now meet monthly with the senior officials from Joburg Water and the City's Environment and Infrastructure Services Dept and we have been given a commitment by the Chief Operating Officer that NW will be operating to design capacity and efficiency by the end of this year.

### Columns: 1

That is a huge step from where it was two years ago when the maintenance was virtually non-existent, the two sludge dams which are supposed to take the overflow of sewerage in the case of any problems had not been cleaned since construction more than 50 years ago and were simply overflowing into the Jukskei.

We take two positions in our meeting with JW - to support where concerted efforts are being made to deal with problems; to challenge where we feel commitments are slipping and responses are too slow.

As ARMOUR, we have also realized the sheer scope of the problem that faces Joburg Water in its efforts to manage the systems of waste water - from the 80-odd hijacked buildings in the CBD that often have raw sewerage pouring into the stormwater drains because services have broken down and the buildings are no-go zones, to the litter entering the river systems and the abuse of the sewer system by the public and specifically construction companies that sometimes don't make proper connections.

Our aim is to work for clean rivers and wetlands by using our leverage as a civic organization to begin addressing the problems at source - in the cities and along the rivers where the problems that land up in Hartbeespoort begin.

Congratulations with 50/50. May you go from strength to strength.