



uMkhomazi Water Project Phase 1 (uMWP-1)

Newsletter 1 | February 2026

1. PURPOSE OF THIS NEWSLETTER

The implementation of the uMkhomazi Water Project Phase 1 (uMWP-1) has experienced a period of limited visible activity. We understand that this may have caused frustration for those affected by the project. This period has largely been driven by the need to complete specialist studies, secure and maintain the required regulatory approvals for specific components, and progress design work to a stage where contractors can be responsibly procured for the construction. This Newsletter aims to provide background information on the project, share an update on current activities and outline the planned next steps. It also includes contact details for the relevant individuals responsible for the project.

2. BACKGROUND

The uMWP-1 project aims to address the water deficit in the uMngeni System, which serves as the primary water source for about five million residents and industries in the economic hubs of Durban and Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This system's deficit, identified since 2016, has confirmed the urgent need for additional water resources to support the region's economic activity and the domestic needs of its population. The project is intended to address the system's deficit by improving the long-term security of supply in the uMngeni System by bringing additional water from the uMkhomazi River into the system, subject to completion of the required approvals and implementation processes.

The Minister of Water and Sanitation issued a directive to the Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), a para-statal, and uMngeni-uThukela Water (UUW) to fund and implement the uMWP-1. The TCTA has funded and implemented several bulk water infrastructure projects, including the Mooi Mgeni Water Transfer System Phase 2 (MMTS-2) in the KZN Midlands and the Berg River Dam in Franschhoek, Western Cape.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The uMngeni System serves the municipalities of eThekweni, uMgungundlovu, Msunduzi, Ugu, Harry Gwala and iLembe municipalities in KZN. The system consists of four major dams (Nagle, Midmar, Albert Falls and Inanda), the Mooi Mgeni Transfer Scheme Phase 1, which transfers water from the Mearns Weir to the Midmar Dam, and the MMTS-2, consisting of the Spring Grove Dam and associated infrastructure.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) completed a technical feasibility study to determine long-term future water requirements in KZN. This study affirmed the scheme's feasibility to increase the system's yield from 480 to 608 million m³ per year.

3.1 RAW WATER INFRASTRUCTURE COMPONENTS

The project infrastructure comprises the following:

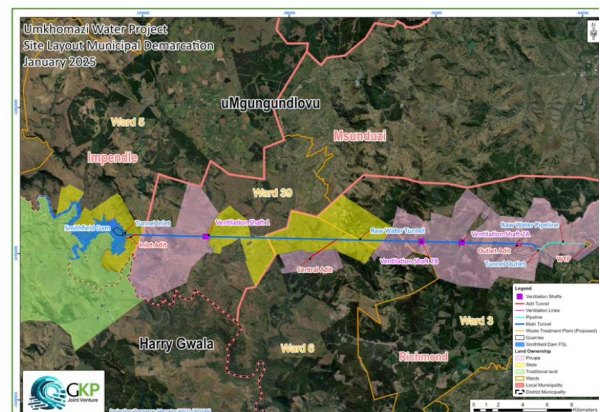
- The 81 m-high dam at Smithfield, which will have a storage capacity of 251 million m³, and the associated infrastructure on the uMkhomazi River near Bulwer, including three weirs.
- Water conveyance infrastructure, comprising a 33.7 km long, 3.5 m diameter raw water tunnel from the Smithfield Dam reservoir to the uMlaza River Valley.
- A 4.8 km long, 2.6 m diameter raw water pipeline from the outlet portal of the transfer tunnel to Baynesfield Water Treatment Works in the uMlazi River Valley.

- Operator facilities, including permanent houses, offices/control room, roads, guard house, storage and workshop.
- Realignment or diversion of public roads and Eskom transmission lines.

In addition to the above, as part of the project, UUW will implement the potable water component, i.e., water treatment works, reservoirs, and pipelines, treating the raw water and feeding it into the uMngeni System.

3.2 PROJECT LOCATION

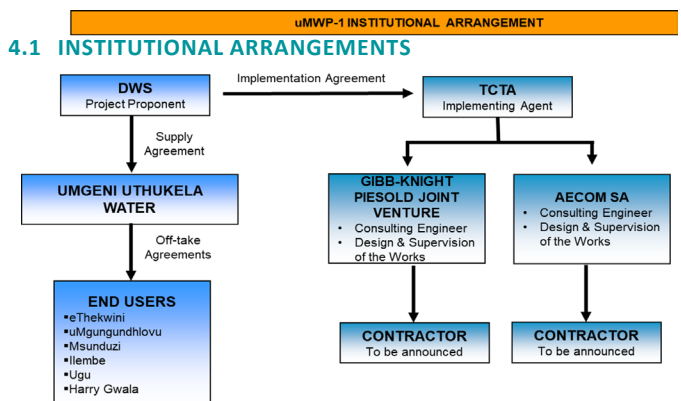
The eastern portion of the project is located mainly on privately owned land, while the western portion, where the dam site is situated, falls within tribal authority land. The project affects areas within the uMgungundlovu District Municipality, including the Msunduzi and Richmond Local Municipalities, as well as the Harry Gwala District Municipality, which includes the Impendle and Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma Local Municipalities.



4. ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

TCTA is the implementing agent for the project's raw component and has entered into an Implementation Agreement with DWS, as depicted below. TCTA is also required to raise funding for the project's implementation and will therefore enter into agreements with financial institutions.

DWS entered into a Supply Agreement with UUW for water from the uMWP-1 (i.e., raw water infrastructure) to UUW, and UUW entered into Off-take Agreements with the six municipalities (i.e., End Users) for potable bulk water supplies to the municipalities, as depicted below.



TCTA has appointed two consulting engineers or Professional Service Providers (PSPs) for design and construction supervision:

- Gibb-Knight Piesold Joint Venture was appointed in April 2024 for the water conveyance infrastructure (tunnel and pipeline), and
- AECOM SA was appointed in July 2024 for the Smithfield Dam and associated works.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MATTERS

This section highlights the activities and progress on key environmental and social matters related to the project. Key processes completed or underway include:

- The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was concluded in 2020, and two positive Environmental Authorisations (EAs) were issued for the project, with subsequent amendments issued in 2021.
- Pre-construction Environmental Management Programmes (EMPRs) were approved by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in 2022 to allow for geotechnical and other baseline studies to be undertaken.
- Some components (for example, weirs and minor roads) still require authorisation, and the environmental studies associated with these applications are ongoing.
- Social studies, including socio-economic studies, will be conducted to assess potential impacts and opportunities of the project.

No construction will proceed on components that require new environmental authorisations until the necessary approvals have been obtained. Preliminary assessments and baseline studies will however, be undertaken as this information will be required to finalise the layout and design of the new components.

6. CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

We are currently undertaking studies and site work to collect the information needed for the project's design phase. This work has included land surveys and underground investigations, such as drilling, to understand the area better. Some of this work has already been completed, and additional drilling is continuing.

Over the rest of 2026, we will be carrying out several important activities to move the project forward, including:

- Additional ground investigations to better understand soil, rock and groundwater conditions before any construction begins.
- Preparation of site layout plans showing where different project infrastructure may be located. These layouts will be shared with interested and affected parties for review and comment.
- Tender design studies to help finalise technical requirements and prepare drawings needed before construction can start.
- Submission of applications for Water Use Licences, which are legal approvals needed when our work could affect rivers, streams or other water sources.
- Preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Programme (EMPr) and other environmental and social plans to identify and manage potential risks related to the project.
- Environmental assessments and studies required to obtain new authorisations for proposed weirs and minor access roads.
- Collection and verification of landowner information to support ongoing engagement and planning.

To help stakeholders anticipate how this work fits together, the current sequence is expected to progress from investigations and surveys to development of draft layouts, to design refinement and licensing and authorisation submissions, before procurement and construction readiness activities are finalised.

The project team will engage all relevant persons during the above studies, investigations, and assessments to ensure that your views are heard, your concerns are addressed, and the project is planned in a way that benefits both people and the environment.

7. YOUR VOICE MATTERS

In this section, we take a closer look at key issues and concerns currently affecting our stakeholders. These are topics we have received questions about during consultations, seen firsthand or know are important to address as we move forward together.

Issue/Concern	TCTAs response
What is the number of homesteads that will be affected by relocation?	Only homesteads affected by the Dam and its associated infrastructure will be impacted by relocation. During the Environmental Impact Assessment phase, it was estimated that 11 dwellings may be affected. Additional dwellings may be identified after investigations are completed. Following this, we will consult the affected families and Tribal Authorities to develop a Relocation Action Plan- a guiding document to ensure that relocation is performed fairly and transparently. Affected households will be engaged directly before any relocation-related decisions are finalised.
What socio-economic benefits will the ordinary community members experience from the Project?	Typically, 100% of the unskilled labour force will be from the local communities. A semi-skilled and skilled workforce will be employed through local prioritisation. There will also be opportunities for skills development (un- and semi-skilled workers). The types of skills development (training) will be determined in consultation with the workers. Recruitment processes and expectations will be communicated during stakeholder engagements to support transparency and fairness.
Will existing graves be relocated? If so, how will these graves be identified and how will their new location be selected?	A Heritage Impact Assessment conducted during the EIA phase revealed that the dam's construction will impact graves. The exact number and locations of these graves will be completed during a second Heritage Impact Assessment. Grave identification is carried out by a highly skilled specialist (an archaeologist) in consultation with the affected families, using other reliable methods. Exhumation and relocation of graves will be a consultative process, with cultural norms/practices (including any special requirements) complied with – as determined in consultation with the families and the Traditional Council, as required. No grave relocation will occur without engagement with affected families and compliance with the required heritage processes. In addition, any stakeholder concerns raised during engagements will be recorded and responded to through the project's stakeholder engagement process..

8. CONTACT US

For matters relating to the project please contact us on:

Umw-1@tcta.co.za

Your continued involvement plays an important role in shaping our direction, and we appreciate your ongoing support. TCTA will keep you informed of project developments through periodic newsletters.

