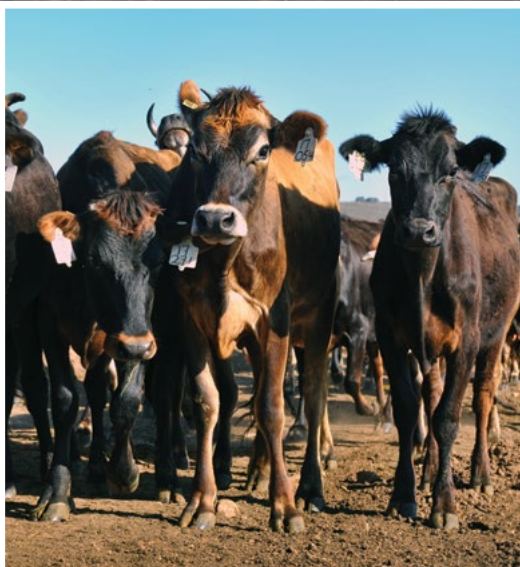




Gamtoos-Besproeiingsraad  
Gamtoos Irrigation Board



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020





# REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Tertius Meyer



2020 will certainly be a year to remember – and quite possibly for all the wrong reasons.

It is the year that brought COVID-19 with all its challenges, the year our dam levels dropped to just above 6%, and the year our water allocation was once again limited to only 20% of the full quota as the ongoing drought refused to relinquish its hold.

It is also the year in which the concept of “normal” shifted, sometimes for the better; a time when human movement and travel were curtailed; and a time when the importance of agriculture once more came to the fore.

Agriculture could function almost normally with minimal restrictions, providing work and producing food at a time

when many other industries were suffering greatly.

At the Gamtoos Irrigation Board (GIB), operations largely continued smoothly during this period and large sections of the canal system were professionally repaired.

Our toughest task was to manage the 80% restriction, but indications are that our strategy is working as the dam level is slowly edging upwards after recent rains in the catchment area.

I want to thank Rienette and her management team for their hard work, and particularly for their involvement and visibility on the scheme.

My prayer is that we will soon receive good rains that will allow our dam level to rise sufficiently so restrictions may be lifted.

# REPORT FROM THE CEO

Rienette Colesky



*“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”*  
— Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein knew how many limitations a world shaped by rigid thinking would face.

Over the past year, our thinking has been challenged continuously and today our management team at the Gamtoos Irrigation Board is making a conscious effort to re-assess our way of thinking daily. The three main factors forcing us to think differently are our political environment, our economic environment and our regulatory environment.

Politically, it is important to build relationships and remain visible, as these relationships unlock opportunities as well as funding. Economically, it is important to think creatively, precisely because the

economy is under tremendous pressure. Then there are also significant developments in terms of National Water Act regulations which have a direct impact on the GIB and the use of water.

I am grateful for a passionate team for whom no request is too much trouble. Though it can sometimes be a challenge to think outside the box, a great camaraderie is created precisely because of the creative solutions that follow.

The GIB management team is led by a board with diverse skills and, as a result, sound and objective decisions are collectively taken.

Mr Tertius Meyer is chairman of the board and the other members are Mr Marthinus Colesky (vice-chairman), Mr Khaya Katoo, Mr SG Ferreira, Mr Jacques du Preez, as well as Mr Manus Meyer, who joined the board in the past year.





# COVID-19

The situation around the COVID-19 pandemic forced our irrigation board, as in the case of many organisations and industries, to rethink operational implementation.

Being an essential service, the Board was able to continue its core functions. However, all implementation regarding natural resources ceased from the 28th of March and only resumed on the 1st of June.

It had appeared as if the peak of the pandemic would occur during the normal dry period of the main canal. Risk was minimised in that it was decided that no syphons would be cleaned during this maintenance period. The serious state of the dam level was also taken into account and it was decided to waste as little water as possible during this essential maintenance process.

Strategically, only the open canal system was cleaned and repaired from Hankey up to Loerie.

Strict protocols and extensive communication were adhered to within our organisational structure during the national lockdown. The direct impact on the Board was therefore minimal.

# TRANSFORMATION

The Gamtoos Irrigation Board was proclaimed an irrigation board in 1991, and is a statutory body under the National Water Act of 1956.

The intention of the National Water Act of 1998 was, among others, for irrigation boards to be transformed into water users' associations. The main purpose of a water users' association is to manage water in a specific area. It has the legal format of a co-operative association of individual water users who undertake water-related activities to everyone's benefit.

The Department of Water and Sanitation recently resumed the process of transforming irrigation boards into such water users' associations. The Gamtoos Irrigation Board is the only irrigation board in the Eastern Cape identified for this transition.

The expectation also exists that the hydrological boundaries of the new statutory body will be more encompassing in order to execute more effective water management by involving everybody with an interest in a specific water source in its management.



# WATER RESTRICTIONS

Agricultural water users receive 60.188 million cubic metres of water from the Kouga dam during a normal, 100% allocation year. The Hankey and Patensie municipalities also receive an allocation, as does the Nelson Mandela Bay municipality. During a full-quota year NMBM's allocation is 23 million cubic metres of water for the year.

Agricultural users were limited by 15% during the 2019/2020 water year. This limit also applied to the Kouga and Nelson Mandela Bay municipalities.

The availability of 85% of the total quota gave users an opportunity to recover, to an extent, from two water years (2017/2018 and 2018/2019) in which only 40% of the water quota was available to agricultural users.

By the end of June 2020, water users had utilised 84.2% of the 85% quota. For the current water year, 20% of the total quota was allocated to agricultural users. The Kouga dam level stood at 7.11% on the 30th of June 2020.

The allocation of 20% for agricultural use resulted in unprecedented media interest. On the face of it,

this allocation portends a very challenging year in terms of agriculture in the Gamtoos Valley.

The Nelson Mandela Bay municipality was restricted by 70% from the Loerie dam. The two western sources that supply the Metro with water, the Mpofu and Churchill dams, are currently also at critically low levels.

The Kouga municipality received 70% of its total quota. Both the Metro and the Kouga municipality abstracted within their quota during the 2019/2020 year.

It is extremely difficult to manage such low water allocations. The strategy is being followed whereby, for four days of the week, water is supplied to users and during the remaining three days of the week the sluice from the Kouga dam is closed. During the four days, a quarter of the average historical percentage for a particular month is released into the system.

The Kouga dam has reached a turning point at 6.71% and the level is slowly increasing in response to the management strategy.

Dam level as at 30 June	Year	% restriction on full quota	% use of quota
7.11%	2020	20%	--
44.98%	2019	85%	84.2%
7.89%	2018	40%	113%
18.65%	2017	40%	98.8%
68.03%	2016	100%	93.8%
100.27%	2015	100%	82.4%
88.97%	2014	100%	73.2%
87.18%	2013	100%	80.9%
87.96%	2012	100%	78.7%
100.93%	2011	100%	70.2%
34.42%	2010	40%	89.3%



# OPERATIONAL HEALTH

One of the Board’s aims is to ensure that the scheme remains in the best possible condition. It is very expensive to replace pipelines and structures, and that is why it is extremely important to prolong the lifespan of the scheme.

During the past year, good systems were put in place to better understand and monitor the state of our system, and then also to do proper planning around the necessary risk areas.

Several important works were completed during 2020/2021. Cathodic protection of the steel syphons on the main canal, which encompasses Hankey, Chigwell and Milton, was completed. Cathodic protection involves the application of an electric current to the outside of the steel syphon to protect it against rust, thereby extending the lifespan of the pipes.

The Buffelshoek syphon is part of the Department of Water and Sanitation’s capital budget in the coming years. A design for the new syphon has already been accepted by the Department. Buffelshoek has for some time been a cause of great concern for the Board.

The syphon is geographically located in a difficult position, and its failure could have serious implications for the entire Gamtoos Valley and the Metro. The Board has already had the syphon lined with steel cans in several places in a bid to reduce the risk of a catastrophic breach.

During the year several air valves were replaced as well as inserted in new areas where this was considered necessary. The approach is that pipelines should be equipped with valves throughout to improve an entire pipeline. This will become a regular procedure to reduce breaches and manage the scheme more effectively.

The restrictions placed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the operational work of the Board provided an opportunity to conduct thorough and much-needed maintenance on canal 108 and 109. This is the last section of our scheme just before the water flows into the Loerie dam. New methods were tested and, once cracks were filled in, the entire canal was painted with a rubber layer.



# FINANCIAL HEALTH

## Financial Statements 2019/2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on all aspects of our society, as well as on the Board’s financial statements. Necessary spending on maintenance of the canal system could not take place during the 2019/2020 financial year. This under-spending was strategically applied and pipes were purchased for the replacement of identified pipelines. Materials were also purchased in order to do the necessary maintenance work on the last three kilometres of our canal system.

### In terms of the financial statements, the following is noteworthy:

- The GIB’s total reserves amounted to R26.1 million. R25.8 million (June 2019)
- Water taxes raised amounted to R23 million. R18.4 million (June 2019)
- Revenue from water taxes made up 70.2% of income (2018/2019 = 62%).
- Working for Water income subsidised the budget by 13.5% (2018/2019 = 13.5%).
- Piping to the value of R1.4 million was purchased to replace identified pipelines.
- Maintenance materials to the value of R800 000 were purchased for the last section of the scheme.

## Budget 2020/2021

- There was no increase in the water rates for the current water year, mainly as a result of the level of restrictions.
- Total budget amounts to R33 724 800.
- Water taxes made up 63% of the total budget and Working for Water income subsidised the budget by 13.7%.

Description	Previous tariff	New tariff	% Increase
Water Resource Management charge (DWS)	R188.80	R200.80	6.35%
Consumptive charge (DWS)	R304.80	R322.40	5.77%
Gamtoos Irrigation Board water taxes	R2706.40	R2676.80	-1.09%
Total (basic of 80% or less of full quota)	R3200.00	R3200.00	0.0%
Grand total (full quota)	R3576.92	R3576.92	0.0%

Amounts do not include VAT.

The Board strives for proper maintenance of the scheme at all times, and in this regard there is a notable difference in comparison to other schemes.







# WORKING FOR WATER PROGRAMME

Working for Water, a Natural Resource Management (NRM) project of the Department of Environmental Affairs, forms a large part of the Board's activities. Though only a few of the Board's full-time personnel are involved in the life of this project, the scope of the work cannot be underestimated.

The Board implemented 34 projects with a total budget of R82 million for 2020/2021. The state of our national coffers, and the reallocation of funds in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have had an extremely serious impact on budgets available for the implementation of these 34 projects.

Fewer individuals could be taken into service and during the past year there were long periods during which no implementation could take place. The commission earned from the spending of these budgets was therefore also affected.

Several Working for Water offices operating under the banner of the Gamtoos Irrigation Board exist in the province. The area stretches from Matatiele near the Lesotho border to the Tsitsikamma region.

The 30 personnel taken into service exclusively for this work are overseen by three area managers. The areas are GIB East, under Mr Andrew Knipe, GIB West, under Edwill Moore, and GIB North-East, under Mr Justice Ngcengane.

It has also given us the opportunity to become involved in communities we may not have got to know otherwise, and in that way we have been able to make a real difference in many people's lives in terms of job creation. This work has also had a direct impact on our environment and water security.





# THE ROAD AHEAD

The Gamtoos Irrigation Board is passionate about the effective provision of water to all users at an affordable price. We are working with single-minded purpose, under our board's direction, to achieve this goal.

Every day brings fresh challenges, but also a more systematic way of working. In the coming year the following will be of importance:

- The transition towards becoming a water users' association.
- Guidance, involvement and empowerment of our commercial water users with a firm focus on service delivery.
- Involvement and empowerment of our developing agricultural water users.
- The unlocking of local potential through agricultural learnerships.
- A continued striving towards more effective water provision.

The Gamtoos Irrigation Board does not merely want to be reactive in the face of a continuously changing environment. Though change is seldom comfortable, it almost always brings opportunity. These opportunities must be embraced, and this can only be done if the environment is properly understood and the Board correctly positioned. ■



**“Asimi, siyaqhuba.”**

**“We are not standing still, we are moving forward.”**

[www.gamtooswater.co.za](http://www.gamtooswater.co.za)

