

The South African water management framework: Lethabo power station as a case study

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Abstract

South Africa is considered to be a water scarce country and it is estimated that by 2030 the water demand would have surpassed the water supply. There are therefore serious implications if all sectors of South Africa do not utilise natural water resources efficiently. The power generation sector is one of the more dominant water users, utilising more than 2 % of the available water resources. Since Eskom is guaranteed a 99.5 % water supply from the Department of Water Affairs, and they are planning to double their power generating capacity by 2030, accountability from Eskom's side is required to ensure water is managed according to South African standards.

Water management strategies in South Africa are subject to location due to the variation of water availability and water quality in the different regions. This requires some areas to have more strict regulations than other areas, but the basic framework within which water is managed are based on the same policies and strategies. For example, dry cooling technologies were initially only designed for water scarce areas, but Eskom has committed to implement dry cooling technology at all new build power stations even though it is more expensive in terms of capital cost and maintenance.

For the purposes of this study water management is investigated by means of a top down approach starting on national legislative level, then on departmental executive level, then on power generation corporate level and finally on power generation business unit level. A case study on business unit level is conducted at Lethabo power station to determine what the contributory factors to high water consumption are and what actions are required to rectify these problems. The aim of this research is therefore to discover how and how well water management is performed at older Eskom Power Stations within the greater water management framework existing at corporate and national level in South Africa.

The strategic objectives of the power generation sector should include minimisation of the footprint of power generation on natural water resources by reducing water usage and implementing conservation strategies in order to make the power generation sector of South Africa a world leader in water management. With appropriate management, South African water resources can be utilised in such a way that it supports a healthy power generation industry as well as a growing population.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	i
Abstract	ii
Table of contents	iii
List of abbreviations	v
List of figures	vi
List of tables	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Problem statement	1
1.2 Aim.....	2
1.3 Objectives	2
1.4 Structure of the dissertation.....	3
Chapter 2: Literature Study	4
2.1 Water availability in South Africa	4
2.2 Power generation water usage	6
2.2.1 Fossil fuel power generation	8
2.3 Water quality	10
2.3.1 Water quality accounting	10
2.3.2 Power generation impact on water quality	10
2.4 Water management in South Africa.....	11
2.4.1 Eskom and water.....	11
2.4.2 Water Institute of Southern Africa	13
2.5 Other water management frameworks.....	15
2.5.1 An Australian water management framework	15
2.5.2 Urban water management	17
2.6 Comparison to the South African water management framework	18
Chapter 3: Water management in power generation within the South African water management framework	19
3.1 Requirements of a water management framework	20
3.1.1 Documentation	20
3.1.2 Governance.....	22
3.1.3 Information systems	23
3.1.4 Checklist for water management framework development.....	24
3.2 Overview of water management in power generation sector	25
3.2.1 Water management framework defined.....	25
3.2.2 Key considerations	26
3.2.3 Technical solutions to be integrated into framework	28
3.3 Water management framework for power generation	29
3.3.1 Water management on legislative level	30
3.3.2 Water management on executive level.....	31
3.3.3 Power generation water management on corporate level	33
3.3.4 Power generation water management on business unit level	36

3.3.5 Implementation.....	38
Chapter 4: Case study – Lethabo power station.....	40
4.1 Background information.....	40
4.1.1 Lethabo power station water usage.....	40
4.1.2 Environmental management.....	42
4.2 Lethabo water management.....	43
4.2.1 Lethabo water management structure.....	43
4.2.2 Lethabo water management policies and procedures.....	44
4.2.3 ZLED policy.....	44
4.2.4 Roles and responsibilities.....	45
4.2.5 Reporting on water consumption.....	46
4.2.6 Enforcing policies and procedures.....	46
4.2.7 Compliance with water licence.....	47
4.3 Lethabo water balance.....	48
4.3.1 Reduction in water to ash dump.....	49
4.3.2 Increasing the amount of mine water utilised.....	50
4.3.3 Potential reduction in specific water consumption.....	51
Chapter 5: Results and discussion.....	52
5.1 Operational perspective.....	52
5.1.1 Factors contributing to high water consumption.....	52
5.1.2 Corrective action to reduce water consumption.....	53
5.2 Managerial perspective.....	53
5.2.1 Factors contributing to ineffective water management.....	53
5.2.2 Corrective actions required.....	54
Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations.....	55
6.1 Conclusion.....	55
6.2 Recommendations.....	56
Bibliography.....	57

List of abbreviations

AGNWC	Australian Government National Water Commission
CMA	Catchment management agency
CME	Compliance, Monitoring & Enforcement
CMS	Catchment Management Strategies
CW	Cooling water
DWA	Department of Water Affairs
EFP	Electric Feed Pump
EMS	Environmental Management System
GPE	Generation Primary Energy department
HOD	Head of Department
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LTPH	Long term plant health
MAR	Mean Annual Runoff
MCMPR	Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources
NEMA	National Environmental Act
NETL	National Energy Technology Laboratory
NWQMS	National Water Quality Management Strategy
NWRS	National Water Resource Strategy
PF	Pulverised fuel
PSM	Power Station Manager
RO	Reverse Osmosis
SE	System Engineer
SO	Sent Out
UAW	Unaccounted-for water
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WMTT	Water Management Task Team
WRG	Water Research Group
WISA	Water Institute of Southern Africa
WMF	Water Management Framework
WTP	Water treatment plant
ZLED	Zero Liquid Effluent Discharge

List of figures

Chapter 2:

Figure 2.1: Mean Annual Rainfall distribution in South Africa (RandWater, 2012).....	4
Figure 2.2: The gap between existing supply and projected demand for water in 2030 (Eskom ² , 2012).....	5
Figure 2.3: Water usage in South Africa (Eskom ² , 2012).....	6
Figure 2.4: Eskom's specific water use indicators for 1994 to 2006 (Eskom ¹ , 2011).....	7
Figure 2.5: Eskom historic and projected futuristic water usage (Eskom ¹ , 2011).....	7
Figure 2.6: Eskom water use compared to energy produced (WBCSD, 2007).	8
Figure 2.7: Coal fired power stations water performance 2012/13 (Eskom ² , 2012).....	9
Figure 2.8: A framework for the guidance of CMS (Pollard et al., 2007).	14
Figure 2.9: A framework that integrates all the main elements of water management (AGNWC, 2012).	16
Figure 2.10: Water management framework for urban areas in Australia (WAPC, 2008). ...	17

Chapter 3:

Figure 3.1: Water management approach.	19
Figure 3.2: Main elements of water management.....	27
Figure 3.3: Water management authority for power generation in South Africa.	30
Figure 3.4: Basic power station water balance.	38

Chapter 4:

Figure 4.1: Total water consumption between 28 October and 12 November 2012.....	41
Figure 4.2: Eskom power station water usage for 2011/2012 compared to water usage targets (Eskom ¹ , 2012).....	41
Figure 4.3: Water management structure at Lethabo power station.	43
Figure 4.4: Lethabo power station water balance illustration.	48

List of tables

Chapter 3:

Table 3.1: Recommended Eskom water management documentation structure.	20
Table 3.2: Checklist for water management requirements.....	24
Table 3.3: Water consumption for different power generating technologies (Azevedo <i>et al.</i> , 2011).....	35

Chapter 4:

Table 4.1: Lethabo data for period between 1 January 2010 and 31 December 2010 (Cramer, 2011).....	49
Table 4.2: Calculation of consumption rate and cost saving for reduced water usage at ash plant based on 2010 water usage data.....	50
Table 4.3: Calculation of cost saving for increased mine water recovery based on 2010 water usage.	51
Table 4.4: Summary of calculations.	51