



PO Box 14629  
Zuurfontein  
1912  
email: [save@mweb.co.za](mailto:save@mweb.co.za)  
web: [www.save.org.za](http://www.save.org.za)

## **NOVEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Application to the Public Protector to investigate Emfuleni Council.**
- **Draft papers being prepared to take Department of Water and Sanitation to the High Court.**
- **Funding a key to our success.**
- **SAVE appeals to all river property owners to sign the attached debit order for a minimum of R250,00 per month to help SAVE to rid the Vaal River of pollution. Debit Order form attached.**

#### **Interaction with Department of Water and Sanitation**

Correspondence is ongoing with the Department of Water and Sanitation to highlight the problems. However, there seems to be very little action on the part of this authority that holds ultimate responsibility for water quality in the Vaal River.

We are currently awaiting a first draft of papers from our environmental lawyer to take the Department of Water and Sanitation to the High Court.

#### **Extraordinary high E-Coli Counts in the Rietspruit**

According to the [www.reservoir.co.za](http://www.reservoir.co.za) site hosted by Department of Water and Sanitation, E-Coli counts in the Rietspruit reached over 920 000 counts per 100 ml in October. This reduced to 105 000 counts per 100 ml on 31 October. Emfuleni Department of Water and Sanitation responded to our enquiry as follows:

“It is indeed true that we have a serious problem at Sebokeng works and therefore the Rietspruit with regards to high e-coli counts.

For a number of months now community unrest is hampering and preventing construction taking place at the said works. Up to now almost 35 working days were lost at a cost of R200 000 per day.

The unrest flowed over to the existing plant whereby the Plant personnel is locked out and prevented from operating the plant. Sampling is also not taking place on a regular basis. Operations only takes place late in the afternoon and during the night. Plant personnel are threatened and intimidated when they enter in the mornings.

Also it is our understanding that the community cause major blockages by dumping rocks in the outfall sewers and causing major blockages with the resultant spillages and therefore high e-coli counts being measured in the Rietspruit, Lochvaal and ultimately polluting the Vaal river. The cost of unblocking blocked man-holes runs into thousands of rands, something Emfuleni can ill afford.

As the gist of the problem is employment, numerous meetings between Senior politicians of Sedibeng District Municipality, Emfuleni and community pressure groups regarding employment at the Sebokeng construction site is taking place almost on a daily basis.

This matter was also escalated to the provincial government and DWS.

Currently there is a stalemate with the construction company not on site due to lock-out, unrest and intimidation

### **Action against Emfuleni Council**

We have also raised the alarm about some of the worst ever pipe bursts in the sewer reticulation system which have resulted in

spillages into the river causing unacceptably high levels of E-Coli in the Vaal River, primarily through the Rietspruit.

#### *- Application to the Public Protector*

Our application to the Public Protector was submitted and acknowledged. This application requests the Public Protector to investigate the Emfuleni Council for its lack of accountability and responsibility in the planning, budgeting and management of the the sewage works and reticulation system. This has caused major health risks, especially in Sebokeng and Evaton as well as other high density areas. The high levels of pollution from sewage in the Vaal River is contrary to several pieces of important environmental legislation and, in addition, is impacting on the tourism industry and job creation in the economically embattled Vaal Triangle.

SAVE has corresponded with DA Councillors at Emfuleni Municipality in an effort to get them to increase awareness of the importance of budgeting and planning to cope with the major developments orchestrated by the Department of Human Settlements.

#### *- Media*

In our efforts to increase awareness, we have been successful in gaining TV coverage on SABC, two feature articles in the Saturday Star and several articles in Beeld and the local Vaal media. We very much appreciate the support of the media.

#### *- Court Orders*

SAVE holds several Court Orders

against the Emfuleni Council and in particular its Municipal Manager who, according to press reports, is the highest paid Municipal Manager in the country. The Council has been informed of SAVE's intention to bring Contempt of Court charges and has notified both the Mayor and Municipal Manager accordingly.

### **Acid Mine Drainage**

AMD (Acid Mine Drainage) is a further threat, particularly in terms of the impact of the salinity on the ecology of the river and worse, proposals to build a plant to manage toxic sludge from the partly treated AMD. The Scoping Report highlights several risks, not least spillages of this toxic sludge into the Blesbokspruit which is a tributary of the Vaal River.

Mariette Liefferink and the Federation for a Sustainable Environment are doing a superb job in taking the authorities to task on this issue. Mariette and the Foundation have the full support of SAVE. We have registered as an interested and affected party in terms of the proposed sludge management project and will be providing input into the final scoping report recently published. Again, SAVE's efforts are limited by funding and people resources. **We need your financial support.**

### **Mining**

There is also a lot of mining activity which could further endanger water quality in the Vaal River, for example, the Panfontein Mine in Vereeniging and several other projects which are in the pipeline. Johan Smit, SAVE's Parys representative, has agreed to follow up on mining activities while Tom du Toit is playing an active

role in the fight against the Panfontein Mine.

The SAVE committee comprises of a small number of volunteers. We cannot achieve our mandate without the support of the community interested in cleaning up the Vaal River and especially river property owners who have a real and vested interest in the river, not only for environmental reasons but also in terms of preserving property values.

### **Finances**

**SAVE needs financial support and is asking river property owners to sign debit orders for a minimum of R250,00 per month to help fight pollution in the river through the courts. Please act on the debit order form attached and return the completed form to [save@mweb.co.za](mailto:save@mweb.co.za).**

SAVE organised a fund-raising cruise earlier in the year which raised R55 000. We benefited from a donation of R90 000 from the owners of Luciana, for which we are most grateful. **Will other developments take the challenge and meet or better this donation?**

Our call for further contributions, especially from river property owners, has largely fallen on deaf ears. Unless we receive both the moral and financial support from our members and supporters, we cannot be successful in our quest to clean up the Vaal River.

We are asking all river property owners to contribute a minimum amount of R250,00 per month by way of a debit order to SAVE or R3 000 per annum. If every property owner makes this regular contribution, we will be financially able to proceed with our action against the Department of Water and Sanitation in the knowledge that we will have sufficient funds to take this to the highest Court in the land if necessary.

We are therefore appealing to you all to complete the attached debit order form and forward this to

[save@mweb.co.za](mailto:save@mweb.co.za).

We believe that R250 per month is little enough to ask of all property owners, including all units in complexes and members of boating clubs. However, it would be most helpful to us if body corporates and clubs would orchestrate these donations by making a monthly payment on behalf of their owners and members. We are also making efforts to gain SARS approval to ensure that these donations are tax deductible.

**Websites worth a visit:**

*Remember to visit [www.reservoir.co.za](http://www.reservoir.co.za) . This website provides weekly updates on water quality in the Vaal River. Keep your family safe and avoid the high pollution hot spots, especially when wakeboarding or skiing.*

Visit [www.save.org.za](http://www.save.org.za) for updates on our activities.

*Patron:  
The Hon. Justice W.L. Wepener*

*SAVE Committee:  
T. Stubbs (Chairman); P. Boucher; T. du Toit; A. Henegan; S Mokoena; M. Plant; S. Sellschop; M. Stewart*



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**DEBIT ORDER MANDATE Given by:**

(name of account holder).....  
...

Address:.....  
...

e-mail address:  
.....

Bank.....Branch and Code: .....

Account Number:.....\

To SAVE (Save the Vaal) – beneficiary

Banking details: Account Name: Save the Vaal Environment.

Standard Bank – account number 281 049 521. Sandton City Branch Code: 018105.

Confirm payment to [save@mweb.co.za](mailto:save@mweb.co.za) or fax to :086-672-9361

This signed authority and mandate relates to a donation to SAVE the VAAL

I/We hereby authorise you to draw against my/our above account, a monthly payment of R..... (Rands.....on or after the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month, commencing ..... by Electronic Funds Transfer. This request may be cancelled by me/us at any time, based on 30 days' written notice.

SIGNED:.....

