

WATER USE

Back to Basics

New solution simplifies water-use licence application, renewal processes

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SRK Consulting, a global firm of consulting engineers and scientists, has prepared a manageable system and training programme designed to simplify the process of aligning personnel responsible for implementing and renewing a mining water use licence (WUL).

According to SRK Africa principal scientist **Jacky Burke**, obtaining and implementing a WUL is an “onerous task”, which many mining operations find overwhelming.

“Our approach is to go back to basics, and to help clients implement a sustainable process with a clear designation of roles, backed up by the necessary data collection and supporting technology,” she says.

Burke explains that requesting a WUL requires that role-players understand the purpose of the WUL and the regular deliverables demanded by the WUL. Once the role-players have familiarised themselves with these requirements, the WUL requirements must be incorporated into the day-to-day operations so that both management and engineering functions can feed the necessary data into the process on a regular basis.

Going beyond compliance, she highlights that the WUL is not just a compliance issue, but needs to be embraced by mines as a valuable tool to help manage water resources and make their operations more cost efficient.

“While the WUL focuses on

protecting all water resources – by limiting the quantity of water abstracted from surface and groundwater sources and ensuring the quality of water returned to the resource – there is also increasing attention paid to preventing pollution from diffuse sources and conserving water through reuse,” says Burke.

“One of the main challenges with implementing the WUL is that the water-related data collected by mines often does not correlate directly with what the WUL requires,” she says, adding that, in some instances, the data itself is not being collected.

“She suggests that the person responsible for collecting the data needs to provide motivations for the mine’s management to allocate

a budget for the necessary resources to collect reliable data.

“In either situation, our Licence Implementation Plan (LIP) helps mines to remain compliant.”

The LIP, which includes Microsoft Excel-based templates, addresses a range of tasks, systems and procedures for mines to adopt, she says, adding that among the standard monitoring and reporting requirements, for instance, are the need to install and maintain an appropriate flow metering system and to put in place monitoring programmes and reports for all quantity and quality limits.

The collected data must then be assessed against WUL limits, and corrective action may need to be taken where limits are exceeded. ■

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