WATER STEWARDSHIP IN THE UMHLATHUZE CATCHMENT

SUSTAINING ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

Mondi is supporting WWF's freshwater work in key catchments within Strategic Water Source Areas (SWSAs) through catalysing and supporting the growth of Water Stewardship Partnerships and projects with multiple stakeholders in these catchments to do this work.

ABOUT MONDI'S WATER STEWARDSHIP WORK

There are 22 SWSAs in South Africa, that generate over 50% of South Africa's water resources, but amazingly only cover 10% of the land. Importantly, the 22 SWSAs sustain 50% of the population, 64% of the national economy and 70% of irrigated agriculture. The economic areas of Gauteng **(70%)**, eThekwini **(98%)** and Cape Town **(98%)** rely heavily on these Water Source Areas for their water supply. WWF and Mondi recognise that improving water resource management and governance in these areas requires enabling policy instruments, better strategic planning and better implementation of action on the ground.

An important part of the work of the Mondi-WWF partnership focuses on strengthening water stewardship in the uMhlathuze river catchment as a priority for supplying the Mondi Richards Bay Mill and surrounding industrial businesses, as well as the people within in the City of uMhlathuze. The lower part of the uMhlathuze catchment falls into the important groundwater SWSA – the Zululand Coastal Plains Aquifer. With plantation forestry landholdings in the upper catchment, and mill at Richards Bay in the lower catchment, Mondi is one of the largest water users in the uMhlatuze.

Mondi works beyond its own fence lines in protecting and ensuring greater reliability and availability of good quality water for its own mill and operations, other businesses in the catchment as well as the broader community who rely on water from this catchment. In collaboration with other key organisations such as the National Business Initiative (NBI) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Mondi-WWF partnership has harnessed its convening power to bring together multiple stakeholders within the catchment, through establishment in 2016 of the uMhlathuze Water Stewardship Partnership (uWASP), to address water security for all.

PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS

WWF and Mondi together with uWASP core partners NBI and GIZ, have contributed to many successful projects, including initiatives focusing on:

Developing FlowTracker and Inwards Lite, real time water use monitoring use tools to assist stakeholders and authorities in making informed strategic decisions on water management.

Organising and coordinating the government mandated stakeholder-based **uMhlathuze Catchment Management Forum** into a platform for all stakeholders to participate, in preparations for drought, floods and everyday water management.

Coordinating the development and implementation of a **multi-stakeholder Alien Invasive Plant (AIP) Strategy** to tackle the clearing of AIPs collectively at a catchment scale.

Working with mandated water institutions to strengthen water resource governance, and more sustainable dam releases from the Goedetrouw dam;

Working with individual farmers to improve water management through

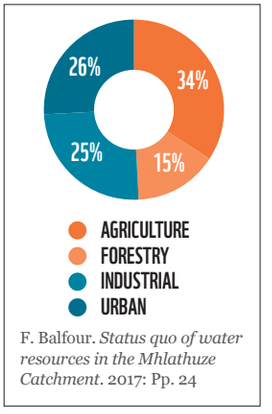
- recycling waste for the Mondi mill to be used as mulch for farmers crops in the catchment, reducing the need to irrigate,
- working with sugarcane farmers on wetland rehabilitation,
- hosting irrigation management workshops with farmers.

Strengthening irrigation governance through an improved management structure by developing a business plan to combine 5 existing irrigation systems into one large one, which the Department of Water and Sanitation are now making a reality through the current development of the uMhlathuze Water Association covering the whole catchment and all water users.

1.1 MILLION M³ LITRES
THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL RATE OF STORAGE CAPACITY DECREASE – DUE TO SILTATION

WATER USE

The water use by sector, based on the 2017 DWS breakdown of the total allocation to Mhlathuze Water (using contracted volumes), shows the four major users as agriculture (34%), forestry (15%), industrial (25%) and urban (26%).



F. Balfour. *Status quo of water resources in the Mhlathuze Catchment*. 2017: Pp. 24

WATER DEMAND PROJECTIONS

Water demand is expected to rise with projected population increase in the uMhlathuze catchment as towns expand and more rural villages have equitable access to water. At high level projections, Richards Bay alone is expected to require 20 mcm/a (million cubic metres per annum) by 2025, and this is already above the licensed water requirement (DWS, 2021). Water demand for industrial development and agriculture is also projected to increase, and this will be exacerbated by climate change.

321 MILLION M³ LITRES
GOEDERTROUW DAM STORAGE CAPACITY

UWASP FORMED IN 2016, WITH 10 MEMBERS, ACROSS 6 SECTORS AND FOCUSES ON 5 PROJECT WORK AREAS

IN 2022, UWASP LAUNCHED TWO PUBLICLY AVAILABLE TOOLS FOR MONITORING REAL TIME UMHLATHUZE RIVER FLOWS