

'Dewatering of aquifer has no negative impact'

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Langebaan lagoon Picture: Supplied

The dewatering and recharge has no negative impact on the Elandsfontein aquifer or the Langebaan Lagoon, the Elandsfontein Water Monitoring Committee (WMC) says.

This comes as the West Coast Environmental Protection Association filed an urgent interdict application to stop the dewatering of a five to 10-million-year-old Elandsfontein aquifer for a phosphate mine, which is still in the process of being established.

Activists have slammed the development of the R1.5billion opencast mine for the production of fertiliser, saying that the impact on the aquifer has not been assessed sufficiently and may affect the Langebaan Lagoon, a wetland of international importance and a water body on which many small scale fishers depend.

The developer, Kropz Elandsfontein (Pty) Ltd (Kropz), is opposing the association's application. Kropz obtained a mining right in January 2015 and was granted a water use licence in April this year.

The association has also appealed to the Water Tribunal against Kropz's water licence. According to the firm, a bid by the association to have Elandsfontein's water use licence revoked has no grounds.

Groundwater monitoring results over a six month-period from April to last month have shown that all water being pumped by the borehole system designed to dewater the mining area of Kropz's Elandsfontein phosphate mine near Saldanha Bay is being well-accepted downstream of the mining area, where flow continues towards the Langebaan Lagoon, WMC chairperson Wessel Rabbets said.

The results were presented at the first meeting of the water committee this month, made up of 11 different organisations, including the Department of Water and Sanitation, the Saldanha Bay Municipality, the West Coast Environmental Protection Agency (WCEPA), Cape Nature, SANParks and Kropz.

Meanwhile, Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane and director-general Dan Mashitsho have indicated that neither would oppose WCEPA's High Court application.



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