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Author: Sandi kwon Hoo

R40 million to divert water from R31

SANDI KWON HOO

AN AMOUNT of R40 million has been earmarked by provincial government to "divert water from (the R31) road".

This was announced in the Northern Cape's adjusted appropriation 2022 budget earlier this week and includes the construction of a divergent wall and other related work. This follows in light of above average rainfall forecasts and to "prevent water from flowing towards the road".

The MEC for Roads and Public Works, Fufe Makatong, during a visit of Acting Public Protector Kholeka Gcaleka to Kimberley last week, indicated that they planned to drain overflowing water next to the R31 into the Vaal River over a period of six months.

She stated that there was "no contamination" of the water that had accumulated as a result of unattended sewage leaks from the Gogga Pump Station and fresh water leaks from the Riverton mainline.

Makatong added that she would engage the South African National Roads Agency to take over the R31 after it was raised by 1.5 metres to prevent it from being submerged by water.

The department did not respond to media enquiries as to how the water would be drained, the cost and scale of the project nor why the leaking pipes could not be repaired instead.

DA member of parliament Del-



Acting Public Protector Kholeka Gcaleka is pictured during an inspection of the R31 road last week. Picture: Soraya Crowie

maine Christians did not believe that the water of the R31 "lake" was not contaminated.

"We have been awaiting water

quality reports from the Green Scorpions and have also asked the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) to urgently conduct

further testing. It is common knowledge that the lake originated from a sewage overflow from the Gogga Pump Station combined

with fresh water leaks from the Riverton mainline."

She stated that sewage was still flowing from the pump station into the R31 "lake".

"It therefore seems highly unlikely that the water is not contaminated. The DA will submit our concerns to the public protector and request that she insists on a detailed water quality report, directly from DWS and not from politicians."

Christians pointed out that R32 million had already been spent to elevate the road.

"While this was touted as a grand solution, it has not solved anything."

"A second lake, further up along the R31, is now threatening the road. The Sol Plaatje Municipality has also failed to adhere to a directive issued by the DWS to stop the discharge of water into the lake and to ensure that the wastewater is pumped from the Gogga Pump Station to the Homevale Wastewater Treatment Works."

Christians believed that the intended diversion of the water into the Vaal River was a "ploy to save face".

She added that it would be more beneficial to take steps to prevent the spillage of sewage and fresh water and to secure river health.

"Water is a scarce commodity and politics must not be allowed to contaminate an entire river system."