

**WATER**

## Pegging of the Spring Grove Dam complete

THE BUILDING LINE FOR THE SPRING Grove Dam on the Mooi River close to Rosetta in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, has been pegged out and valuers will begin evaluating properties affected by the dam in mid-November.

The Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority (TCTA), which was appointed to implement the dam in November 2007, said landowners would be sent maps of the proposed land acquisition area and would be able to submit comments. Once replies had been considered, the land valuation and acquisition process would proceed.

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Construction is planned for mid-2010, which leaves little time to resolve two appeals already lodged against Spring Grove Dam, officially known as the Mooi-Mgeni Transfer Scheme Project 2. The first appeal was lodged by the Mooi River Farmers Association in respect of Spring Grove Dam, and a second by the Mziki Homeowners Association in respect of the pipeline route between Spring Grove Dam and the existing Mearns pipeline. The Mooi River Farmers Association is currently negotiating with the relevant authorities.

A member of the Mooi River Irrigation Board, Graham Armstrong, said farmers had objected to the dam for fear that their irrigation usage and afforestation might be reduced to make the Spring Grove Dam more viable.

Mziki Estates consists of a row of nine houses, a wetland and a small dam and attorney Jon White, who represents the Mziki Homeowners Association, said his clients objected to the proposed route for the new pipeline link from the dam wall to the existing pipeline. "We believe there hasn't been proper research into the feasibility of alternative routes that could skirt the dwellings and wetland and have far less impact," explained White.

However, water affairs' chief engineer options analysis, Johann Geringer, said all their studies indicated the dam would improve assurance of supply to farmers downstream. "If we don't build the dam, it'll have serious consequences for the whole Umgeni area," he said. "We may have serious [water shortage] problems in the near future. Last season, we were very lucky to have had above-average rainfall in the upper catchment areas. You don't impose water restrictions easily. It takes time and effort to get people to adapt."

With regard to the objection of the Mkhize homeowners, Geringer said the department would take their concerns seriously. "We won't just put pipelines through people's property without thinking. We're responsible and will be looking to accommodate them where we can."

Umgeni Water will be the bulk water supplier for treatment and distribution of water from the Spring Grove Dam to municipalities, which will be paying for the project through the water tariff. – *Robyn Joubert*