

ARMOUR's focus

Written by Anthony Duigan Category: News Articles

ARMOUR began as a reaction to the ongoing sewerage discharges into the lower Jukskei, and hence the Crocodile River and Hartbeespoort Dam in July/August last year. The first step was to put pressure on the authorities to act immediately. A petition was organized, over 400 people signed and it was sent to over 80 local, provincial and national authorities, NGOs and media. The response came from several directions, including the Green Scorpions who visited Northern Works within a couple of days of the petition landing. Within about a month, Joburg Water had secured budget and was planning rehabilitation work at the Northern Works. This was many years overdue. The next step was to maintain the pressure. ARMOUR (Action for Responsible Management of Our Rivers) emerged as a commitment to hold water resources' managements accountable for their mandate to maintain clean and safe ground water, wetlands and rivers.

To date, four of us have carried ARMOUR - Mark Mc Clue, Willem Hazewindus, Helen (Duigan) and I. The intent is to keep the campaign lean and to focus on the greater vision of achieving clean rivers and water resources by being a strong "voice for water". Once a month we meet with senior officials from Joburg Water and Dept of Water and Sanitation to review where there are problems, who is accountable and what action is being taken, and then monitor for satisfactory implementation. The focus of activity has been largely on the Jukskei River and the problems experienced upstream and in Northern Works. We have had two public meetings where concerned people had opportunity for direct interaction with officials.

What we want

1. Promote integration

ARMOUR is a catalyst - to bring interested parties together, to build coalitions for integrated water stewardship

2. Establish collaboration

Build networks and partnerships with the academic community, civil society and communities

3. Engage processes

- Take a consistent message re water to the authorities, to business, to communities.
- Build credible membership of the CoJ Business Forum (Sustainability Sub-Committee)
- Maintain active involvement in the IDP processes wherever possible to represent "a consistent voice for water"
- Lobby for long-term Water Services Development Plans to be part of integrated water management in municipalities

4. Ensure compliance

- Support whistleblowing and calling authorities and business to account
- Build a corps of river-watchers
- Stick to a simple three-step method for tackling issues

5. Build resources

- Develop a Knowledge Centre (a Circle of Experts - the head of the octopus) with a toolkit that can be transferred to areas wanting to be “a voice for water”
- Ensure the ethos remains the defining culture - a consistent voice for water; support/challenge; three-step approach to dealing with issues