

PRESS RELEASE

Uranium in underground water: Why are safety risks sidelined?

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Most of rural Namibia depends on underground water for drinking and farming. Even towns like Tsumeb, Kombat, Outjo, Otjiwarongo and those in the Stampriet Artesian Basin (SAB) like Leonardville, Aranos, Aminuis, Stampriet, Gochas and Koës only exist because of the underground water. Vast quantities of underground water in the SAB are used for irrigation to help feed our nation.

Government has recognised how critical groundwater is and has made the SAB a legislated Water Protection Area.

Yet, at the recent Namibia Regional Water Symposium held in Keetmanshoop (04-06 February) the agenda was hijacked and the item discussing the planned in situ leach mining of uranium in the main aquifer for the SAB was removed. People attending the conference repeatedly expressed their disapproval, but the subject was not allowed for discussion. **Why was the topic removed?**

The responsibility for the safety of the drinking water does not lie just with concerned individuals, farmers and organisations. Primarily it lies with those who make and administer legislation, i.e. the Government, specifically the Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Mines and Energy, Health and Social Services and senior government decision makers.

For more than three years, SAUMA has regularly warned the public and government of the massive pollution that the proposed in situ leach mining of uranium poses to the drinking water aquifers in the SAB. **Yet, written questions on this matter and appeals against already issued Environmental Clearance Certificates to the Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism remain unanswered.**

Following a high-level meeting on the proposed in situ leach mining of uranium in the SAB held on 17 June 2024 near Mariental, reports were compiled on the subject by international experts. Despite numerous requests, these reports have not been made available to SAUMA. According to the Environmental Commissioner, more studies should be undertaken to understand the implications of mining. **What studies have been undertaken? What are the results of these?**

An Interministerial Committee initiated by the Prime Minister Dr. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila was tasked to investigate the proposed mining and make a recommendation to Cabinet. **What are the recommendations of this Committee?**

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Natural Resources met with SAUMA and Headspring Investments on more than one occasion. **Has the Standing Committee submitted their findings? What are these?**

The SAB extends into Botswana and South Africa where the same aquifers provide drinking water. Both neighbouring countries have expressed high concerns if such mining were to proceed in Namibia.

We look forward to receiving feedback from government in the interest of transparency and public safety.

Team SAUMA

