



The Berg River Improvement Plan

EVIDENCE USE

- The water monitoring aspect of the BRIP is one of the successes of the plan. The evaluation provided areas for further improvement in the area of water monitoring; as many of the other tasks are dependent on good water quality monitoring results.
- The evaluation provided recommendations around improved governance and communication for BRIP with particular reference to the broader stakeholder group; including the Department of Water and Sanitation and public stakeholders.

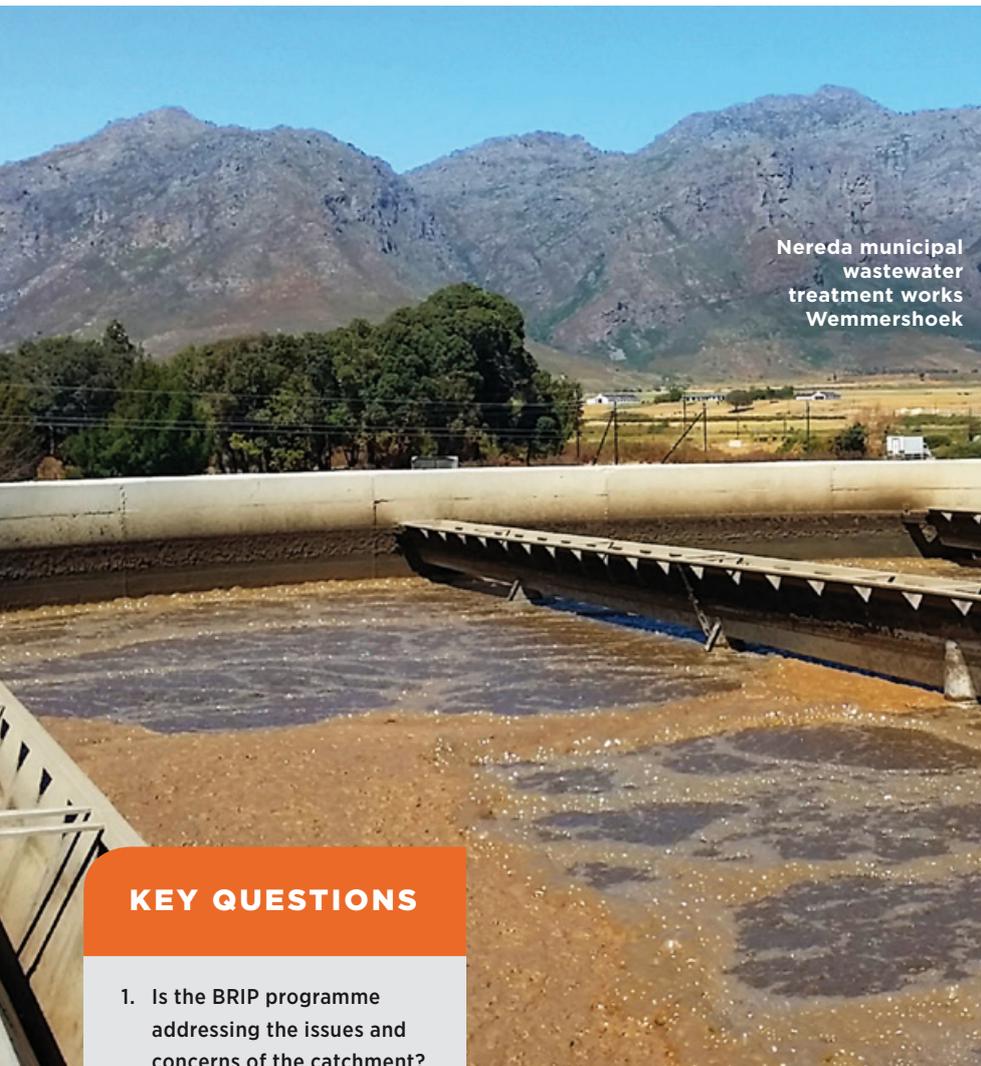
CONTEXT OF EVALUATION

The Berg River Improvement Plan (BRIP) was developed as a response to increasing concerns about the water quality of the Berg River. Factors influencing river water quality include pollution from urban settlements, wastewater effluent discharges and agricultural runoff. Implementation of the BRIP commenced in 2013, and after five years of promoting and supporting

the aspirations set out in the plan, an independent evaluation was undertaken, funded by Provincial Treasury.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation was to analyse the approach and processes (implementation and impact) of the Berg River Improvement Plan.



Nereda municipal wastewater treatment works Wemmershoek



Monitoring of the water quality of the Berg River



Ecological restoration efforts are made

KEY QUESTIONS

1. Is the BRIP programme addressing the issues and concerns of the catchment?
2. To what extent do the BRIP programme structures, governance and partnerships support the implementation activities and outputs of the BRIP programme?
3. How can transversality and governance within the BRIP, including the BRIP programmes structures and governance, be revised and strengthened?
4. What can be done to advance the overall implementation of the BRIP programme going forward?
5. How effective is the BRIP in achieving its goals in the six task areas, as well as in the communication, monitoring and evaluation functions; and how adequate are the human-resource aspects mobilised in support of the BRIP objectives?

THE PROGRESS OF THE BERG RIVER IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Regarding implementation, it is notable that the envisaged implementation structure with appointed task leads for each task area was not achieved due to insufficient resources, and this influenced the implementation of BRIP considerably. The evaluation highlights the difference in the level of activity and achievements between areas with appointed task managers and those without.

For the specific task areas, BRIP has made good progress in:

- Implementing an effective water quality monitoring programme. The evaluation found however that not all stakeholders were fully aware of these efforts.
- Contributing to improved operations and management of WWTWs (waste-water treatment works).
- Evaluating the costing of water quality.

- The upgrading of the informal settlements task area has enabled substantial learning, however, institutional hurdles to upscaling and maintenance, and the gravity of the challenges and threats facing informal settlements demand a large scale, coordinated governance effort, beyond BRIP.
- Efforts to advocate best practice in land-use for agriculture have provided limited outcomes when compared against the original task objectives.
- Riparian ecological restoration efforts were innovative and implemented efficiently.
- The ecological restoration efforts are an appropriate response, however, given the scale of activity, only moderate outcomes can be expected at this stage.
- Efforts to promote tourism and ecological resilience were designed after implementation and have yet to achieve meaningful outcomes.

The evaluation highlighted that

“Of the six tourism businesses engaged none had heard of there being a coordinated government plan to improve Berg River water quality, much of the growth of tourism is highly dependent on the state of water quality in the Berg river”.

FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation has identified the following areas of emerging impact related to BRIP.

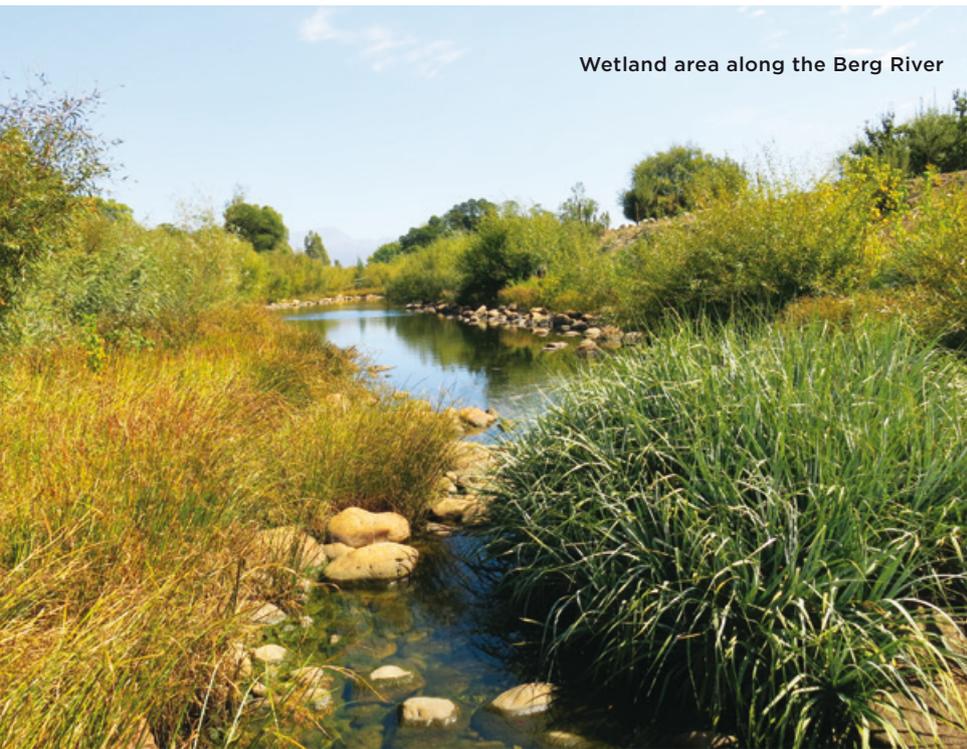
- Governance and co-ordination: It is clear from the assessment and literature that efforts to improve water quality at a catchment scale is a complex endeavour due to the number and diversity of factors. Particular concern was noted regarding the role of the Department of Water and Sanitation in providing a platform for broader stakeholder engagement. The potential for strained cooperation that could arise through the overlap of defined mandates needs to be addressed to create a clearer governance structure.

- Water quality monitoring: BRIP has set the foundation for continued monitoring and assessment of the water quality of the Berg River.
- Innovation and experimentation is identified as an area of potential emerging impact of BRIP. Interventions related to the upgrading of informal settlements, bioremediation and ecological restoration have a focus on developing new ways of approaching complex issues; whilst the economic-costing task area has developed documentation backing new ways of approaching challenges.

Below: Flamingos on the Berg River at Veldrift



Wetland area along the Berg River



A coordinated response is critical to the successful restoration of the Berg River, and effort needs to be made to resolve how this coordination function should be improved going forward.

CHALLENGES TO THE BRIP PROGRAMME

BRIP is an important and highly relevant programmatic response, and has regularly brought together key government stakeholders, improving information sharing and coordination. BRIP addresses central water resource challenges, some of which overlap with the national-level mandate held by the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). In the absence of a catchment management agency and the inactivity of the Berg River Partnership (BRP) (an initiative led by DWS to coordinate all catchment-level stakeholders), the BRIP has provided a task-oriented steering committee to facilitate monitoring, coordination and collaboration between the relevant government and municipal agencies, in relation to the Berg River. Key stakeholders beyond government, exerting considerable influence in the

catchment, such as the private sector, NGOs, researchers, civil society or organised agriculture are to be engaged in a coordinated response in efforts toward improving the quality of the Berg River. This is critical to the successful restoration of the Berg River, and effort needs to be made to resolve how this coordination function should be undertaken going forward.

BRIP GOING FORWARD

The Berg River is a socially and economically important water system; and with concerns about deteriorating water quality in the river, the evaluation finds that BRIP is important and highly relevant. The programme can be successfully replicated, and it has led to the development of the Breede River Environmental Resources Protection Plan.

In order for BRIP to have a more significant impact in the catchment, the challenges identified as part of the evaluation study need to be addressed. The evaluation highlights the difference in level of activity and achievements between areas with appointed task managers and those without. Furthermore, the evaluation recommended that it is imperative that a clear communication and stakeholder engagement strategy needs to be developed and implemented. To ensure improved balance and efficiency in the implementation model of BRIP, it is imperative that the provincial transversal project management mechanisms be revisited to ensure BRIP task managers in all departments can devote the required time and resources to BRIP activities.

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