

# Operational policy for disposal of land-derived wastewater to the marine environment of South Africa

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## Abstract

In 1998, South Africa's National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) was promulgated to give legal status to the White Paper on a National Water Policy (April 1997) and the Department of Water Affairs' (DWAF) water quality management policies and strategies, amongst others. To fulfil its legal obligation in terms of the management and control of land-derived wastewater discharges (classified as a water use under the National Water Act), DWAF adopted the operational policy for disposal of land-derived water containing waste to the marine environment of South Africa in July 2004 (the marine environment including estuaries, the surf zone and offshore waters) in July 2004; this policy incorporates relevant international and national principles, policies and legislation.

The operational policy outlines the Department's new thinking in relation to discharges to sea and consists of:

- A **goal**
- **Basic Principles**, providing the broad reference framework or direction of the policy
- **Ground Rules**, providing more specific rules, derived within the broader context of the Basic Principles
- **Management Framework**, providing a generic, structured approach within which to implement the policy.

This paper is to provide an overview on the *Basic Principles* and *Ground Rules* that were adopted under the operational policy.

**Keywords:** land-derived wastewater, marine, South Africa, disposal, operational policy

## Introduction

In 1998, the National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) (NWA) was promulgated in South Africa to give legal status to the White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa (April 1997) and the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry's (DWAF) water quality management policies and strategies, amongst others. To fulfil its legal obligation in terms of the management and control of land-derived wastewater discharges (classified as a water use under the NWA), DWAF adopted the *Operational Policy for Disposal of Land-Derived Water Containing Waste to the Marine Environment of South Africa* in July 2004 (the marine environment including estuaries, the surf zone and offshore marine waters) in July 2004 (RSA DWAF, 2004a-c). The policy incorporates relevant international and national principles, policies and legislation.

Oelofse et al. (2005) discussed the approach and methodology followed in the development of the operational policy, in alignment with DWAF's strategic view on the disposal of land-derived wastewater. Their paper also discussed the major components of the operational policy (Fig. 1), namely:

- A **Goal** that is *to achieve water quality that is 'fit for use' and that can maintain aquatic ecosystem health on a sustainable basis by protecting the country's water resources (including marine waters), in a manner allowing justifiable social and economic development. This will be achieved in accordance with the hierarchy of decision-making for water*

*quality management, namely Prevent waste; Minimise waste and Dispose responsibly'.*

- **Basic Principles**, providing the broad reference framework or direction of the policy
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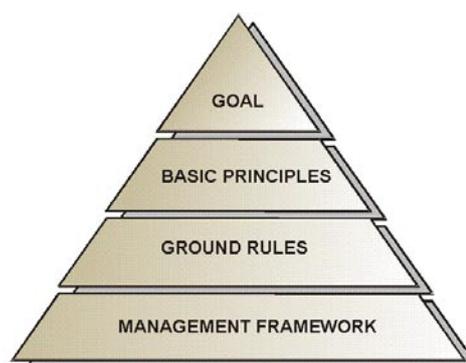


Figure 1

The structure of the operational policy for treatment and disposal of land-derived wastewater to the marine environment of South Africa (Oelofse et al., 2005)

This paper provides an overview of the *Basic Principles* and *Ground Rules* adopted as part of the operational policy. Note that this paper provides an overview only and it is strongly recommended that the original policy documentation be consulted for management purposes (DWAF, 2004a-c). An eco-

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Received 24 November 2005; accepted in revised form 7 August 2006.