GEORGE MUNICIPALITY WATER CONSERVATION – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

February 2026

1. CURRENT WATER SITUATION STATUS

1.1 Is there currently a threat to George's water supply?

Yes. George Municipality is experiencing **below-normal rainfall**, with forecasts indicating that dry conditions may persist. This poses a real threat to the Municipality's raw water resources and has necessitated stricter water demand management measures and emergency tariffs in line with the approved Drought Management Policy.

1.2 Which dams are currently of concern?

Both **Garden Route Dam** (the main water source for George) and **Haarlem Dam** (supplying Haarlem and Uniondale) are considered to be at risk due to reduced inflows and declining storage levels.

1.3 How is reduced rainfall affecting dam inflows?

With the below-average rainfall received over the past few months, our dams are losing approximately one to two percent of their storage per week, primarily due to usage and evaporation.

1.4 Is George close to "Day Zero"?

Predicting a "Day Zero" is complex and depends on multiple variables, including rainfall events, river inflows, and public water use behaviour (including evaporation and losses). Even small rainfall events can improve river flows and allow limited pumping.

Public cooperation is critical. Reduced consumption can significantly extend available water resources. Without sustained savings, a Day Zero scenario could become a reality in the future.

2. WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT MEASURES (LEVEL 2D)

2.1 What water restriction level is currently in place?

Level 2D Water Demand Management Measures are currently in effect as of January 2026

2.2 What does Level 2D mean for households?

- Residents are strongly encouraged to limit consumption to **below 10 kilolitres (kl) per household per month**
- Outdoor use of potable water is severely restricted
- Irrigation using municipal water is prohibited
- Washing of vehicles, driveways, and hard surfaces with potable water is not allowed
- Swimming pools may not be filled or topped up with municipal water

2.3 Do households still receive 6kl of free water under Level 2D?

Yes. The first **6kl per household per month remains free**, in line with Council-approved policies.

2.4 Are businesses and industries affected?

Yes. Businesses and industries are required to reduce consumption by:

- **25%** for large water users
- **15%** for other business users

Compliance is monitored and enforced where necessary.

2.5 How are Water Demand Management Measures enforced? The Municipality may implement:

- Flow restrictors
- Fines and penalties
- Increased monitoring of high-water users
- Persistent non-compliance may result in further enforcement action.

3. EMERGENCY WATER TARIFFS (LEVEL 3)

3.1 What are Level 3 Emergency Water Tariffs?

Level 3 Emergency Water Tariffs apply **higher tariff rates** to discourage excessive water use and to help recover additional operational costs related to drought management.

3.2 How does billing work under emergency tariffs?

Water tariffs follow a **rising block tariff structure**:

- First **6kl**: Free
- Usage above 6kl is billed according to the applicable emergency tariff block

3.3 Is there a separate tariff for 6–10kl and 10–15kl?

No. Under the approved tariff schedule:

- Consumption from **6kl up to 15kl** is billed at the **same emergency tariff rate**
- There is no additional tariff increase at the 10kl mark

The 10kl reference is a **conservation target**, not a billing threshold.

3.4 Why are residents encouraged to stay below 10kl?

Limiting household consumption to below 10kl per month helps:

- Preserve scarce water resources
- Delays the need for harsher water demand management measures
- Reduces the risk of a future Day Zero scenario

4. BOREHOLES, GROUNDWATER & ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCES

4.1 Can boreholes drilled during the 2009–2010 drought be used?

Yes. As part of the **Bulk Raw Water Resources Study (2024)**, existing boreholes are being tested as part of short- to medium-term interventions.

4.2 How much water will boreholes supply?

The yield will be confirmed by a professional geo-hydrologist as development and testing progress. Long-term groundwater development will depend on geophysical assessments and environmental considerations as per above.

4.3 What are the rules for private boreholes?

According to the Water and Sanitation By-laws:

- Property owners must **notify the Municipality** before drilling
- Boreholes may require an **environmental impact assessment**
- Borehole water may **not be connected** to the municipal system
- Water for human consumption must meet **SANS 0241 standards**
- Boreholes are subject to the **National Water Act**

4.4 Where can non-potable water be obtained for construction purposes?

Non-potable water for construction use is available at the Gwaing Wastewater Treatment Works, situated along the R102 at Erf 464, Airport Road.

Contractors must arrange collection in advance for large quantities and provide their own transport for collection.

Please note:

- Supply is subject to water quality compliance standards
- Availability may be interrupted from time to time, depending on operational and treatment conditions
- There is currently no fixed quantity limit; however, supply is dependent on availability

For arrangements and enquiries, please contact: Johan Scheepers at 044 801 9324

5. INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITATIONS & LONG-TERM WATER SUPPLY

5.1 Can the Garden Route Dam be dug deeper or the wall raised?

No. The dam includes a “dead storage” volume that cannot be treated or abstracted. The wall has already been raised to its maximum safe design level.
Excavating the dam basin is not feasible due to:

- Extremely high excavation and dewatering costs
- Heavy machinery and operational requirements
- Potential structural and safety risks

Over and above the financial feasibility of the proposal, the disposal of the excavated material from the dam basin will have a negative environmental impact somewhere.

5.2 Is a new dam being planned?

The possibility of constructing a new dam forms part of the 2024 Bulk Raw Water Resources Study, which evaluates various long-term augmentation options.

At this stage, specific locations remain under technical assessment.
Should a new dam be pursued, planning, environmental authorisation, funding, and construction would take approximately 8–10 years.

New dam infrastructure is therefore considered a long-term solution, not an immediate intervention.

5.3 Is there an updated Water Services Audit for 2024/25?

Yes. The 2024/25 Water Services Audit is available on the George Municipality website and provides detailed information on:

- Water supply systems
- Infrastructure performance
- Compliance reporting
- Operational capacity

The document can be downloaded here:
https://www.george.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/George-Water-Services-Audit-2024-2025_compressed.pdf

6. DEVELOPMENT, WATER SECURITY & RAINWATER TANK COMPLIANCE

6.1 How does the Municipality ensure that development does not exceed available water resources?

George Municipality operates strictly within its legally authorised raw water abstraction licence and does not exceed permitted extraction limits.

In 2024, the Municipality completed a comprehensive Bulk Raw Water Resources Study to assess current capacity and identify future supply options. All planning decisions are guided by this study, long-term water security considerations, and applicable national legislation.

Development approvals are aligned with responsible infrastructure planning and regulated water use.

6.2 Does development increase pressure on water resources?

All growing towns experience increased demand as populations expand. However, formal development allows the Municipality to regulate infrastructure provision, enforce water demand management measures, and plan upgrades accordingly.

Managed growth enables better monitoring and control of water use, whereas unregulated expansion would pose greater risks to sustainability.

6.3 Are new developments required to implement water-saving measures?
Yes. Council approved a Water Demand Management (WDM) Policy in August 2009, which remains in force.

All new land use applications and building plans — including new buildings, additions, amendments, and revisions — are subject to mandatory water-saving conditions of approval.

No occupation certificate, transfer of an erf, or final sign-off will be granted unless the required water demand management measures have been implemented. Developers are responsible for the cost of compliance.

6.4 What water-saving measures are compulsory for new developments?
All new developments must submit a Water Demand Management Plan as part of their application. Minimum required measures include:

- Pressure management systems
- Metering
- Water-efficient fittings
- Leakage control mechanisms
- User education initiatives
- Indigenous or low-water landscaping

For private residential properties, the installation of a rainwater harvesting tank is compulsory as part of the approved house layout. Where necessary, a small automatic pressure pump must also be installed. The tank must primarily be used for irrigation and other non-potable purposes.
Originally, a 5 000ℓ tank was required. In June 2011, the Council approved an amendment allowing a minimum of 2 500ℓ where property size or slope cannot accommodate a 5 000ℓ tank.

These requirements have been consistently applied in building plan approvals since their adoption.

6.5 How does the Municipal Spatial Development Framework (MSDF) guide growth in water-stressed areas?
The Municipal Spatial Development Framework (MSDF) aligns with the National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF), which emphasises:

- Curbing water demand
- Augmenting water sources
- Protecting ecological infrastructure
- Managing settlement growth in water-stressed catchments

The Municipality continues to prioritise ecological infrastructure protection and greening initiatives within the built environment.

Growth management remains a complex responsibility, particularly given that more than 20 000 individuals are registered on the municipal housing waiting list. Balancing settlement needs with environmental sustainability requires careful planning, infrastructure investment, and responsible resource use by all stakeholders.

6.6 Do property owners need approval to install a rainwater tank?

Rainwater harvesting tanks are classified as Minor Building Works and require approval in terms of:

- Section 5 of the George Municipality Building Control By-law
- Section 13 of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act

No separate planning permission is required unless:

- The tank is located within building lines; and
- The tank exceeds the height of the boundary wall.

Municipal tariffs currently exempt rainwater tank applications from application fees.

6.7 What is the application process for installing a rainwater tank?

The Directorate of Planning and Development has established a Rainwater Tanks Application process to regulate and facilitate installations.

The Building Control Office provides:

- Application guidelines
- Location and positioning requirements
- Compliance standards

Property owners are encouraged to install rainwater tanks for non-potable uses such as irrigation, toilet flushing, and general cleaning to reduce reliance on municipal supply.

6.8 Is there an amnesty for rainwater tanks installed without approval?

No exemption from compliance with the National Building Regulations can be granted. However, the Municipality may waive penalties where rainwater tanks were installed prior to approval, provided the owner submits the required application, and the installation complies with safety standards. Property owners who install tanks without approval do so at their own risk.

7. WHAT RESIDENTS CAN DO

7.1 How can residents help prevent a water crisis?

- Comply fully with Level 2D restrictions
- Fix leaks on your own premises immediately
- Report leaks (on municipal properties), pipebursts, and water misuse
- Reduce household consumption wherever possible

7.2 Why is public cooperation so important?

Every litre saved helps:

- Extend available water supplies
- Reduce pressure on infrastructure
- Delay stricter restrictions
- Protect essential services

Every drop really does count.