

Conference to consider harnessing groundwater as an alternative water supply in SA

Hosted by the Ground Water Division of the Geological Society of South Africa, the 15th Biennial Groundwater Conference is set to take place 14-18 October in Stellenbosch. One of the critical topics on the agenda is the possibility that drought-stricken areas in South Africa will only survive the current dry spell if the country's groundwater is effectively harnessed as an alternative water supply.



Chairman of the Ground Water Division Dr Matthys Dippenaar

More than 300 local and international delegates are expected to attend the conference, at which several international groundwater scientists will deliver keynote talks. They include Professor John Cherry, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada and winner of the 2016 Lee Kuan Yew Water Prize, and Professor Bruce Misstear, an associate professor and fellow of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

Cherry will address state of the art groundwater monitoring techniques while Misstear, a specialist in groundwater resources development, will discuss sustainable development goals and global change. The conference will be opened by Helen Zille, premier of the Western Cape Government.

Sustainable, emergency water supplies

Groundwater is a prominent topic in the drought-stricken areas of South Africa, particularly the City of Cape Town, where it has been identified as an important alternative water supply.

“In times of water scarcity, we are reminded about the need for alternative, sustainable and emergency water supplies,” said chairman of the Ground Water Division Dr Matthys Dippenaar.

“There is no better time for a conference of the groundwater specialists of our water scarce country than now, while we are dealing with the repercussions of one of the worst droughts in recorded history.

“We trust that the conference will highlight our ability as a profession to contribute to solutions regarding water supply in our country.”

Advancing science, technology of groundwater

The Ground Water Division was established in 1978 as part of the Geological Society of South Africa with the objective of advancing the science and technology of groundwater. The division’s biennial conference is an opportunity for transferring knowledge and increasing awareness about the sustainable development of South Africa’s groundwater resources within and outside of the groundwater community.

There will be more than 120 presentations, covering topics from groundwater sustainability to environmental forensic geochemistry and isotopes, and there is expected to be a strong focus on water supply in times of water scarcity.

For more information, go to www.gwd2017.co.za.

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