

Transnet Approves Desalination Studies for Cape Town Harbour

[Cape Town, South Africa, 31 March 2019] Transnet SOC Ltd has given approval for further studies to be conducted into a Sea Water Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) plant at the Port of Cape Town.

Reverse osmosis is the process of converting seawater into drinking water.

TNPA's Cape Town acting Port Manager, Captain Alex Miya, said the next steps would be to appoint consultants to conduct studies that could be concluded by September 2019. If the SWRO plant is found to be a viable option, it could be introduced by the end of 2020.

In the meantime, Alex Miya said the port would continue to coordinate its approach with the City of Cape Town's initiatives to supply extra water.

"The port is confident that the municipality will ensure a water resilient region through a mix of water sources. In the meantime, we have considered a few options to ensure economic sustainability. One of these options is a Sea Water Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) plant for port use. This is currently being explored in conjunction with various regulatory authorities and has received support from Transnet to proceed with further studies," he said.

The proposed location for the plant is the Quay 700 area in the port. It is expected to provide in the order of 1 million to 3 million litres a day/MLD.

The port has also been assisting the City with studies and potential site availability for a permanent desalination plant.

Cape Town remains a water scarce region and has just emerged from the worst drought since 1904. The good rainfall in 2018 and the substantial reduction in usage has allowed for municipal restrictions to be reduced from level 6 to level 3 in 2019. While this is positive, the region's dependence on dam water could result in similar shortfalls in future.

TNPA at the Port of Cape Town previously implemented measures to manage water usage at the port after the City imposed widespread restrictions on using municipal drinking quality water for non-essential purposes. These water conservation steps included suspending the sale and supply of potable fresh water to vessels calling at the Port of Cape Town, with exceptions considered on merit. Ship repairers were also informed to make use of mobile water supply.