

SOUTH AFRICAN WATER & ENERGY FORUM 2012

PRESS RELEASE

CAMISSA, the ancient Khoi name for Cape Town - meaning 'the place of sweet waters'.

South Africa's first transition to modernity took place when the sweet waters flowing from Table Mountain were recognized for their capacity to support life and sustain livelihoods. This water allowed for global trade routes and was the very *raison d'être* for settlement at the Cape - of national importance as the frontier of our modern state.

This water is key to understanding and appreciating our natural, social, and cultural history and flows between two World Heritage sites - Table Mountain and Robben Island. It is a symbol of the many trials and tribulations that accompanied that transition - the displacement of first nation users, the disparity in society that arises when the privileged are given preferential access, and the subsequent abuse of a resource to the point of collapse - so it is fitting that it should also be the focus of our new democratic nation as we make the next transition into reflexive modernity. Camissa has the capacity to link the past with the present so we can develop a different model for the future.

Scrapped from the asset resource register in 1994, this water is a vital resource for the city. Prior to the forced removals decreed by Apartheid, it once sustained a population of 111000 and replenished passing trade. Today, only 55000 people live in the CBD and all of this resource is wasted through the sewer water system. As the environmental crisis deteriorates worldwide, urgent and thoughtful steps need to be taken to reduce loss, waste and pollution. Strengthened community awareness, collaborative approaches and an empowered citizenry are evermore essential.

CAMISSA describes an innovative approach to the reclamation of a unique a natural dual water system, encompassing a small 6.7km urban river with mountain run-off and artesian springs that currently flows beneath the city. It is a spatial development framework proposal, which through the use of water, focuses on the re-instatement of the socio-ecological link that reunites the mountain and the ocean in Cape Town. It restructures the city according to environmental principles and is aimed at a sustainable approach to water use, planning, design and management. The vision is one of a genuinely progressive dual water management strategy that offers opportunities for new models to transform the future wellbeing of the city into an equal society for all people; and allows for public integration and education through the recreational use of the system.

The approach brings real transformation highlights, challenging the narrow technological approach to addressing sustainability issues. CAMISSA reclaims the 'lost spaces' associated with the waterways that flowed through the urban landscape into a public landscape and a pedestrian structure for the central city.

Through creative urban spatial planning interventions, reinstating watercourses, rehabilitating and celebrating the remnants and elements of water utility infrastructure embedded within the urban fabric and linking these into a web of physically accessible public precincts, it becomes an interconnected series of 'places' where water is re-instated and functions within the public realm.

Expressive of civic ideal an a place where the public can gather, it becomes a progressive (living) system - an effective mechanism for building the city's civic life and a compelling sustainable dual water management strategy. Communities will be enabled to work with nature's design principles and enabled to value their own richness and that of their environment; through the experience of projects that demonstrate the wealth of opportunities; and that working with true diversity can generate livelihood for all. True diversity thus allows each one to appreciate his or her uniqueness, whilst celebrating the inter-connectedness of all. With the backing of scientific knowledge this paves the way for real development to take place within the community, eco-system and the broader living environment. This application of the concept of civic hydrology enables the reclamation of the public landscape and cultural identity of the city, giving meaning to the ancient name of the city - 'the place of sweet waters.'

By 2020, the people of Cape Town will gather around the common heritage of CAMISSA, the very waters that defined the location of the city, reflecting the public past and embracing a new civic infrastructure - this time inspired by a deliberate recognition and respect for the social; cultural and ecological significance of this water. A sustainable approach to water use, planning, design and management would be in place that is based on the intrinsic value of water as a significant public resource and not separate from the value of land and landscape. Society would have been made mindful of the role of water in the city landscape; and public and private institutions that manage water and associated public assets would realise that the business as usual approach to water and land management is unsustainable.

RECLAIM CAMISSA will have put in place the infrastructure to connect people to this vital resource, with beautiful parks; pedestrian walkways; and urban public places by celebrating the waters that link mountain to sea, past to future, and people to the environment.

RECLAIM CAMISSA (non-profit trust) - was registered to support a ten year programme to implement the framework. Please see the Facebook site for more information:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Reclaim-Camissa>