

70,000,000 litres of rain water – should they be wasted?

Most of Malta's rainwater runs straight to the sea and goes to waste. The European Union, in the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Storm Water Master Plan for the Maltese Islands, emphasizes the importance of Malta taking immediate action about this problem. In this Master Plan the building of new reservoirs is being proposed.

The question is can something be done to existing abandoned reservoirs? How about restoring the Has-Saptan Reservoir limits of Birżebbugia?



This reservoir was built in 1977 when the new runway was constructed. Its purpose is to collect the rainwater that falls on this runway. This reservoir has a capacity of 70,000m³. From information provided by Eng. Marco Cremona, this reservoir loses water through leakages therefore it is not in use anymore.

He surveyed the reservoir's condition in winter of 2006. After 48 hours of heavy rainfall, practically no water remained in the reservoir. The small amount of water not totally wasted is that which seeps into the ground which recharges the aquifer. The rest runs rapidly down the valley ending in the sea in Birżebbugia.

The situation from 2006 till today seems to have worsened. After 60.8mm rainfall registered by the Met Office, between 19th and 28th February 2011, the reservoir emptied in less than 24 hours as this photo taken by ourselves on the 29th February shows.

It's a shame that 70,000,000 litres of surface run-off water is wasted and not being wisely used considering that water in Malta is a limited resource with an average of 547mm of rainfall in 85 days a year.

All this water can be used for irrigation of green areas, cleaning of roads in dry seasons or offered to the Malta International Airport for its landscaping.

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