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### **Key Water Project Shutdown for Vital Maintenance**

The Lesotho Highlands Water Commission (LHWC) has announced an impending six-month shutdown of the LHWP tunnel system starting from 01 October 2024. This strategic move is aimed at implementing critical maintenance and repair work, underscoring the system's importance and long-term reliability. To conduct inspections and repair works, the shutdown of water supply to RSA is required. This implies that the LHWP tunnel system will have to be shut down and emptied to enable inspections and repair work to be performed.

Initiated in January 1998, the LHWP-1 has been consistently functional for 25 years. Its operation necessitates routine checks and maintenance, generally occurring every five to ten years. The 2024 planned shutdown facilitates a thorough examination and restoration of the Delivery Tunnel North (DTN) and Ash River Outfall. Core services will include detailed evaluations, repair advisories and comprehensive reports on parts only reachable when the system is devoid of water.

The Trans-Caledon Tunnel Authority, TCTA, operates and maintains the DTN, RSA section of the LHWP tunnel system and will also be implementing similar critical maintenance and repair work on the DTN and Ash River Outfall. To kickstart the critical maintenance process, TCTA has entered into a contract with Hatch Africa. Renowned for its expertise, Hatch Africa offers professional services, tunnel inspection, technical assistance and supervisory during the execution of the tunnel repair works.

At a recent signing ceremony held at TCTA offices in Centurion, Bruce MacKay, the US-based Managing Director for Hatch's water business, represented Hatch Africa. Johannes Mavuso, the TCTA Executive Manager for Project Management and Implementation, represented the organisation.

Expressing enthusiasm on this stage of the project, Mavuso commented, "This partnership underscores the significance of the LHWP-1 to TCTA and Department of Water and Sanitation. The project stands as a monumental bi-national infrastructure initiative between Lesotho and South Africa." He further emphasised the need to engage with all key stakeholders who will be affected by the shutdown and meticulous monitoring of water use and flow in the rivers throughout the shutdown.

Furthermore, this scheduled outage will address vital repairs identified during the 2019 inspection, including the rehabilitation of steel liners and dewatering shaft piping. Recommendations for repair work along the Ash River will also be formulated.

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