



## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **DWS celebrates Clear Rivers Campaign**

6 July 2020

The Department of Water and Sanitation will this month conduct a virtual celebration of the Clear Rivers Campaign to mark July as Mandela Month.

The Clear Rivers Campaign is the department's annual event in which thousands of South Africans celebrate the Mandela Month by cleaning the country's rivers and other polluted water sources, in areas where they live. The objective of the campaign is to undertake a collaborative effort and actively engage communities as well as promoting and creating on-going awareness and education on protecting our water resources. Fostering volunteerism among communities is actively encouraged as part of this is proactive approach to protecting our rivers, streams, wetlands and other water ecosystems.

However, because of the lockdown rules that prohibit mass gatherings, the department is appealing to South Africans to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mandela Month by keeping the rivers in their neighbourhood clean to enable the sustainability of access to water. They should not litter or throw foreign objects into rivers that will impact negatively on the lives of downstream users.

Rivers carry water and nutrients and they play an important part in the water cycle. We use rivers for water supply which we use for drinking in our homes, watering on farms, making products in factories and generating electricity.

In September 2019 the department released a quarterly report which painted a gloomy picture of South Africa's state of the rivers. Known as the River Ecosystem Monitoring Programme (REMP), the report put most of the country's rivers in Category D/E of the generic description of ecological conditions which meant that conditions might rarely and temporarily decrease below the upper boundary of acceptable standards. The report stated that the resilience of river systems was often under severe stress and could be lost permanently if adverse impacts continued.

In a water-scarce country such as ours that receives less than half the world average rainfall, we can scarcely afford to waste a single drop through negligence.

A research by the Water Research Commission states that river pollution is among the top five serious threats to the economy. It identifies factories and big businesses as major polluters of rivers and dams.

Last year the Deputy Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, David Mahlobo, accused the coal mines on the Highveld of Mpumalanga of polluting 90% of the region's groundwater. In the absence of surface water, groundwater plays a vital role in supplementing surface water when the latter dissipates through evaporation.

Some mines tend to pollute surface water through the acid mines mine drainage by failing to rehabilitate or recycle the water that was used in the production of minerals.



## **water & sanitation**

Department:  
Water and Sanitation  
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Against this background the department calls on all South Africans to be mindful of the pollution of water resources, including rivers, as this may also jeopardise government's efforts to fight the spread of Coronavirus that has infected nearly 197 000 people and claimed the lives of 3 199 others by Monday 6 July 2020

**END**

**Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation**

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