



MEDIA STATEMENT

DWS' Clear Rivers Campaign calls for communities to join in securing country's water future through cleaner, healthier watercourses

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) urges all South Africans to roll up their sleeves and participate in cleaning polluted rivers as part of the 2025 Clear Rivers Campaign.

The campaign, which is observed annually in July, is a nationwide effort, themed: ***“South Africa is a water-scarce country – clean up and protect our water resources,”*** to encourage communities to take ownership of their local rivers, streams, and wetlands by actively protecting and restoring these essential water ecosystems.

In alignment with Nelson Mandela Month, the campaign promotes hands-on public involvement and aims to strengthen a culture of environmental responsibility and water stewardship across the country.

The Clear Rivers Campaign was first introduced in 2016 as an initiative to inspire action and awareness around the state of South Africa's water resources. Since then, it has grown into a cornerstone movement encouraging communities to dedicate time during the month of July, particularly on Mandela Day, to clean up nearby rivers, streams, wetlands and canals.

Healthy rivers are not only essential for human survival and environmental health, but they are also central to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of communities. In many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, rivers are relied upon for drinking water, cooking, fishing, washing, and sustaining livestock. Indigenous riverbank vegetation also supports wildlife, helps prevent erosion, and provides materials for everyday use and small business crafts.

Rivers hold deep cultural and spiritual meaning for many South Africans. From ancestral rituals to religious ceremonies such as baptism and ceremonial cleansing, clean and accessible rivers are sacred spaces for reflection, healing and heritage. The degradation of these natural sites does not just pollute the environment, it diminishes cultural identity and connection.

Economically, rivers and wetlands are sources of natural materials used to build homes, weave baskets, craft mats, and support local artisanal trades. When managed sustainably, these resources can help strengthen local economies and create pathways to economic resilience and dignity.

Beyond clean-ups, the Clear Rivers Campaign is part of a broader drive to entrench environmental awareness and behavioural change in everyday life. It highlights the need for integrated and inclusive water resource management, where individuals, communities, and institutions work together to protect freshwater systems from pollution, misuse, and neglect.

SOUTH AFRICA IS A WATER-SCARCE COUNTRY





water & sanitation

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Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



The Clear Rivers Campaign further seeks to strengthen the country's efforts to promote water security, environmental awareness and behavioural change.

The Department encourages South Africans to take action in their communities, whether by organising river clean-up drives, adopting sections of rivers for long-term care, or educating others on the importance of keeping water ecosystems healthy and pollution-free.

"By taking part in the Clear Rivers Campaign, citizens are not only cleaning rivers, but they are also helping to secure the country's water future, protect biodiversity, and honour the legacy of a leader who believed in collective responsibility. Clean water begins with clean rivers and protecting them is a duty shared by all," said departmental spokesperson, Wisane Mavasa.

Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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