



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### Celebrating Wetlands through public education

07 February 2024

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) in partnership with Africa Green Earth Projects, City of Mbombela Local Municipality and the Department of Education celebrated World Wetlands Day through a public education awareness campaign in Buyelani village on 05 January 2024.

DWS and the stakeholders engaged stakeholders throughout the streets and households in the area and educated them about wetlands and the importance of keeping them, other watercourses and the environment at large clean and healthy. The community was encouraged to dispose of their waste in a manner that will not pollute the environment.

It was encouraging to see that the area was clean and the community members have dug holes in their yards for waste disposal and were also dumping other waste at the dedicated spot in the area.

It was basically a learning curve for all as the community members were reminded of the importance of keeping their environment clean and healthy and the stakeholders were also taught of different ways of disposing waste. "As you can see my yard is clean, I hate rubbish and have a hole where I throw waste here at home. You won't see waste and my place does not stink as my waste hole is structured in such a way that you won't see the waste as it has a small opening where we put in the waste", stated one of the residents, Ms Masuku.

Annually on the 2nd of February, the world comes together to recognise the importance and vital role of wetlands through the celebration of World Wetlands Day. World Wetlands Day is an important day in the environmental calendar as it aims to raise global awareness and create people's understanding of the critical importance of wetlands. The day also makes a clarion for the protection, restoration and preserving of this critical ecosystem for ensuring water quality, water security, health and wellbeing.

This year, World Wetlands Day is celebrated under the theme "**Wetlands and Human Wellbeing**", which highlights the interconnectedness between wetlands and human life and wellbeing. The theme underscores how all aspects of human wellbeing are tied to the health of the wetlands. Wetlands are central to human wellbeing. Healthy wetlands equate to human wellbeing, whether it is through the provision of clean water, as a source of food, or protecting humans from extreme weather events. Human beings have depended on wetlands for

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centuries, drawing sustenance, inspiration and resilience from these productive ecosystems. This theme is therefore a call to value and steward wetlands.

Wetlands provide essential freshwater, contribute to global food production, and act as natural shock absorbers mitigating rainfall impacts and reduce flooding. Wetlands have numerous important benefits which include increased biodiversity, replenished and filtered water supply, enhanced protection against floods and storms, more local and sustainable livelihoods reducing poverty, increased tourism and higher quality leisure time, increased carbon storage and avoided emissions.

Wetlands also play a major role in water supply security. Wetlands are natural water purification plants leading to improved water quality. Wetlands act as natural filters for water, trapping sediments and pollutants thus improving water quality and protecting downstream ecosystems from water contamination. Wetlands also play an important function of storing water.

The awareness celebration of World Wetlands Day ended with the launch of the Polyco partnership with Africa Green Earth Project and the handover of working accessories to the volunteers. The project is a poverty alleviation project through waste pickers and recycling and it plays an important role in environmental education and keeping the Buyelani area and surroundings clean with healthy water resources and wetlands for human wellbeing.

Mr Themba Khoza from DWS encouraged the volunteers to continue with their wonderful work of ensuring that the water resources and the environment are always kept clean and safe. "Take care of the environment, especially the water resources and they in return will take care of you. Remember that water is life and has no substitute, therefore it is our responsibility to take care of the water resources and use the available water in a wise and sparing manner for water security for the current and future generations as South Africa is a water scarce country", he said.

**Themba Khoza**

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