

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DEPUTY
MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS, MS REJOICE MABUDAFHASI DURING THE
LAUNCH OF THE BIRCHWOOD HOTEL
MODDERFONTEIN ADOPT A RIVER INITIATIVE AT
THE MODDERFONTEIN SPRUIT IN EKURHULENI,
GAUTENG

02 MAY 2013

Programme director;

CEO of the Birchwood & Soweto Hotel Mrs. Lindiwe
Sangweni-Siddo

Representatives of the Gauteng Department of Education;

Representatives of the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan
Municipality;

Representatives of Rand Water;

Representatives of East Rand Water Care Company ;

Government Officials;

Birchwood and Soweto Hotel Staff;

Distinguished guests;

Youth from Ekurhuleni;

Members of the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good day

Today we are here in Ekurhuleni to launch the Birchwood Hotel Modderfontein Adopt a River initiative that seeks to create a partnership between the Department of Water Affairs, the Gauteng Department of Education, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, East Rand Water Care Company and Rand Water through the advancement of the Department of Water Affairs' 2020 Vision for Water Educational Programme.

The Department of Water Affairs initiated Adopt a River project as part of the River Health Programme to ensure that our rivers are protected from any kind of pollution that might seek to threaten the river health.

I also appealed to my colleagues in parliament, municipalities, traditional leaders, business people, NGO's, and community members to adopt rivers where they live. Our rivers are the main sources of our finite precious resource – water.

Programme director, allow me from the onset to commend Birchwood Hotel for heeding this clarion call that would bring all stakeholders together to formulate an integrated approach that is aiming at jointly protecting, conserving and managing the water resource in order to meet the needs of current and future generations.

South Africa is ranked amongst the thirty driest countries in the world. Although South Africa's current water supply is adequate to meet the country's current needs, there could be a problem in meeting future needs if we do not act now to secure effective and timeous smart water-management options.

Through the implementation of the Adopt a River project we will derive benefits such as water savings, skills development for the youth, job creation, and improvement of water quality and of the state of the rivers.

The Adopt a River project consists of the following aspects:

- Cleaning solid waste from river banks;

- Provision of basic water quality testing to monitor quality of water in the rivers;
- Providing training to beneficiaries with the aim of improving the self-esteem and life skills development;
- Promotion of the spirit of volunteerism;
- Enhancing community participation on taking care of the environment and promote more public sector accountability;
- Providing education on preserving the environment

In Gauteng province three Adopt a River projects have been implemented namely Kaalspruit, Jukskei and Moreletaspruit Rivers. Through these projects the following was achieved:

- Training of 300 women participants on water safety, first aid, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and separation of different waste streams;
- The collection of water quality monitoring data before and after the implementation of the project. This information will be integrated into the River Health Programme that informs the state of the River status report;
- Removal of solid waste along the river banks that contribute to pollution of the water in the rivers.
- Reduction of pollutions e.g. sewer manhole overflows and illegal dumping were reported to the relevant authorities;

- An increase in women participation in water resource issues and capacitating them to advocate for behavioural change and increased caring of the rivers and environment in their respective communities;

The Department of Water Affairs continues to implement the 2020 Vision for Water Educational Programme which seeks to educate grades R to12 learners about integrated water resource management, climate change and environment including water related careers. Annually our youth continue to participate at the Stockholm World Water Week.

Annually we host youth water summit whereby learners present their action projects, go for excursions to Rand Water and Roodeplaat Dam, do public speaking and debate on selected topics and participate in national competitions.

I would like to encourage the youths that are here today to actively participate in our different competitions such as the South African Youth Water Prize, Baswa le Meetse, Aqua Enduro and many others.

We need scientists, artisans, engineers and the like. Our current workforce is aging, we need fresh minds and new blood that would be able to take the baton and ensure that every citizen have access to clean water no matter where they live.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Birchwood Hotel for this initiative.

I also would like to thank all the partners that are involved in this initiative such as the Gauteng Department of Education, City of Ekurhuleni, ERWAT, Rand Water, community members and the Schools.

Let water unite us. Water is life, Respect it, conserve it, enjoy it.

I thank you