

Help clean up rivers, streams in your area

COMMUNITIES need to be the key agents for action to mitigate problems related to river pollution. Rivers are important part of human lives. But unfortunately, only few are aware of their importance. The proof: tons of trash in our rivers and creeks.

The garbage in rivers is more than just an eyesore because it can contaminate our drinking water and threaten nature, our lives, and those of our loved ones. Even a piece of litter thrown on the street may contribute to the piling garbage in our rivers.

If we, as South Africans, wish to meet our common aspirations of social and economic development, we need to act decisively to prioritise the management of our water resources and ecosystems.

Water is purified before it reaches our taps. However, if our rivers remain polluted, water cannot be purified to the extent that it would be suitable for human consumption.

The health of our rivers and wetlands is measured by the diversity and health of the species we share these resources with. However, water faces many threats on its journey from the headwaters of the river basin to its users. Pollution from fertilisers, wastewater treatment plants and mining threatens to poison our rivers.

Water is a renewable, but irreplaceable resource. We cannot substitute water with anything else. Communities living along rivers need to be the key agents for action to mitigate problems related to river pollution. The Department of Water and Sanitation will this month conduct a virtual celebration of the Clear Rivers Campaign to mark July as Mandela Month. This is an annual event in which thousands of South Africans celebrate by cleaning rivers and other polluted water sources. The objective is to actively engage communities as well as promote and create awareness and education on protecting water resources.

However, because of the lockdown rules that prohibit mass gatherings, the department is appealing to South Africans to mark the 30th anniversary of Mandela Month by keeping the rivers in their neighbourhood clean to enable the sustainability of access to water.

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