

Keep our rivers clean at all times

Themba Khoza writes:

Rivers are the lifeblood of the nation as they bring water, the source of life.

These and other water ecosystems are important for reliable supply and security, especially for a water-scarce and dry country like ours.

It is therefore important that we keep them clean, healthy and free-flowing at all times to get clean and healthy water for our basic use and socio-economic development.

Climate change is a reality and this also makes it more critical for all of us to take care of our remaining flowing rivers.

Clean and healthy rivers provide a multitude of benefits for the communities surrounding them.

In many rural places, people still depend on rivers and streams for their livelihoods.

Healthy rivers provide fish which is a good food source and can also be sold for economic benefits.

Different types of plants grow in and on the banks of healthy rivers and provide much-needed materials for humans to use. The reeds in wetlands are used to make mats, baskets and other products which bring economic benefits to communities.

We also use rivers for religious and cultural ceremonies, so it is crucial that we always keep them clean, healthy and free-flowing.

These activities show the close relationship between rivers and communities and make the need for healthy rivers more critical.

Pollution is a major risk to our rivers, streams, wetlands and other water ecosystems. We need clear rivers for clean water, but the things we do to these ecosystems leave much to be desired.

In some areas, people have changed rivers and streams into

waste dumping sites.

Paper, plastic, diapers, empty cans, unwanted clothes and all sorts of waste that are thrown and dumped into our watercourses are unsightly and unhealthy to the rivers systems and ourselves. The dumping of waste in our rivers reduces the quality in our water ecosystems.

Using our rivers and streams as waste dumping sites also negatively impact the quantity of usable water we get. Pollution negatively affects the water quality, making less water fit for use.

This basically translates to the loss of precious resources.

Pollution not only affects quality and quantity, but also leads to flooding. The waste we dump in our rivers and streams obstructs the normal flow. This impediment leads to flooding, which results in loss of property and at worst, the loss of life.

It is therefore crucial to protect and keep our rivers and streams clean and free-flowing to prevent flooding and the loss of property and precious lives. Healthy riparian vegetation reduces the possibility of flooding during rainy seasons.

As a way of encouraging communities to help in keeping rivers and all other water ecosystems clean, healthy and free-flowing, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) came up with the Clear Rivers Campaign to adopt and clean rivers, streams and other watercourses around them. The Clear Rivers Campaign takes place in July as part of promoting volunteerism in the celebration of Mandela Month.

Let us join the DWS and participate in efforts to clean our rivers, streams, wetlands and other watercourses to keep them clear and free-flowing.

Let us always remember that we need rivers and watercourses more than they need us, as water has no substitute.