

CONSERVATION

The importance of clean rivers for SA's future

THEMBA KHOZA

THE pollution of water resources, especially rivers is a major threat to water security and socio-economic development in our water scarce country. Water is life but water pollution changes the narrative and make water a threat to humans, animals, and the environment. Pollution makes water toxic and is a threat to lives and economic development.

Rivers, especially clean and healthy rivers and other watercourses are not only essential for human survival and environmental health, but they are also central to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of society. Some rural communities still rely on rivers and streams for drinking water, cooking, washing, and sustaining livestock therefore it is essential to keep rivers clean and safe. Clean and healthy rivers are also important for cultural and religious ceremonies. Rivers are part of our heritage therefore we must ensure they are always protected and healthy.

Clean and healthy rivers are also essential for socio-economic development as they help to create economic opportunities and job opportunities. All sectors of the economy depends on



DYSFUNCTIONAL waste water treatment plants have been pointed out as major contributors to water pollution in our rivers, says the writer. | **TIMOTHY BERNARD**
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clean water which calls for healthy rivers. The agricultural sector, both crop and livestock depends on clean rivers and streams for quality products. The pollution of rivers can have seriously negative consequences as it can lead to the country's products not meeting international standards leading to loss of export markets and job losses.

The pollution of our rivers denies people of their livelihood. Pollution kills fish and plants in the rivers and riverbanks cutting food sources for communities. Pollution of rivers and

wetlands destroys sources of natural materials used to build homes, weave baskets, and craft mats thereby destroying local economies.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is reminding the public of the importance of clean and health rivers and urging all South Africans to roll up their sleeves, clean polluted rivers and protect all watercourses against pollution and destruction as part of the Clear Rivers Campaign in the month of July, Mandela Month. The Clear Rivers Campaign 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.

This year, the campaign is undertaken under the theme: "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, wetlands, and other watercourses by actively protecting and restoring these essential water ecosystems.

The Clear Rivers Campaign is a clarion call for everyone to clean, protect and ensure that our rivers, streams and all other watercourses are pollution-free and contribute to water secu-

rity, especially as the water scarce South Africa needs every available drop and cannot afford to lose precious water.

Pollution is mainly the result of human behaviour and actions, therefore it is in our hands to ensure clean and healthy rivers in our communities. We all need to be responsible citizens, treat our rivers and all other watercourses as a treasure, protect them and keep them clean and health. With responsible behaviour and actions, we can stop the scourge of pollution in our water resources and contribute to a clean environment and water security for the current and future generations.

Dysfunctional waste water treatment plants have been pointed out as major contributors to water pollution in our rivers. The flow of untreated raw sewage into our watercourses has a negative impact as the pollution increases e-coli levels in the water making water dangerous and unfit for humans, livestock, plants, and the entire ecosystem. Municipalities and all responsible authorities need to up their game and keep all waste water treatment plants well maintained and functioning optimally to stop this problem and keep our rivers clean and healthy. Communities must also put pressure on municipali-

ties to stop the pollution.

Residents also need to play their part. Overflowing manholes spilling sewage all over the place resulting in the pollution of streams and rivers is mainly the result of residents throwing foreign objects in the sewer lines. Let us be responsible citizens and prevent sewer spillages and protect our water resources. Residents also need to become responsible and stop using streams, rivers, and wetlands as dumping sites for all kinds of waste, including disposable nappies. Waste pollutes, so let us stop dumping waste in our water resources and keep our rivers clean.

All economic sectors, including mining, manufacturing, industries, hospitality, and agriculture, must also play an important role in keeping rivers and other watercourses clean and healthy by not disposing toxic chemicals into the water resources.

The Clear Rivers Campaign further seeks to strengthen the country's efforts to promote water security, so let us all work together to clean and protect our rivers and all watercourses. Let us adopt rivers in our communities, clean and keep them safe and healthy. Pollution kills, so let us keep our water resources clean and healthy to ensure that water is always life.