

## OPINION



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# LET US PROTECT AND RESTORE OUR WETLANDS

ANNUALLY the world comes together to celebrate World Wetlands Day on February 2, to highlight the importance of wetlands and to advocate for their protection and preservation.

This year, the World Wetlands Day was celebrated under the theme “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future” highlighting the importance of wetlands for humanity and the future generations.

This year’s theme underscores the urgency of bold action to protect these natural habitats for the welfare of all people, and to ensure that future generations continue to benefit from all that wetlands provide.

Wetlands continue to be destroyed all over the world. Humans are the main culprits in the destruction of wetlands.

Pollution, unsustainable developments and climate change threaten the health and existence of these essential ecosystems.

We have turned our wetlands into dumping sites leading to their destruction. We are busy destroying wetlands for human settlements.

Wetlands are destroyed for economic benefits such as building shopping malls and for mining activities. It is so painful to see what humans are doing to wetlands.

Wetlands survival is in our hands. We have to act now to protect and preserve our wetlands. The future of wetlands depend on our responsible actions and behaviour towards the environment, especially watercourses.

Wetlands have many critical benefits for us, therefore we have to protect them to continue enjoying the various benefits they provide.

Healthy wetlands are critical for human health, biodiversity, adaptation and climate change mitigation.

One of the most critical benefits of wetlands is that they play a major role in water security which is important for a water scarce country like South Africa.

Wetlands act as reservoirs storing water and releasing it during dry periods. Wetlands also play a critical role in water purification as they act as natural water purifiers by cleaning water and contributing to water quality in the ecosystem.

Wetlands also play a major role in climate change mitigation. Wetlands store carbon thereby reducing the negative impact of climate change.

Wetlands also help to reduce flooding. Wetlands function as natural sponges that trap and slowly release water. The holding capacity of wetlands helps prevent floods.

Looking at the important role and functions of wetlands, it is important that we actively play a role in protecting and restoring them. Protecting and restoring wetlands is in our common interest.

The future of humanity depends on bold action today to protect and restore wetlands, our indispensable ecosystems.