

Join the fight against pollution of our water resources

THE pollution of water resources, especially rivers, poses a major threat to water security and socio-economic development in our water-scarce country.

Water is life, but pollution transforms it into a danger for humans, animals, and the environment. Contaminated water becomes toxic, jeopardising lives and economic growth.

Rivers and other watercourses are essential for human survival and environmental health. They are central to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of society.

Many rural communities rely on rivers and streams for drinking water, cooking, washing, and sustaining livestock, making it crucial to keep these water sources clean and safe. Additionally, clean rivers are vital for cultural and religious ceremonies, forming an integral part of our heritage that must be protected.

Healthy rivers contribute signifi-

cantly to socio-economic development by creating job opportunities. All sectors of the economy depend on clean water, particularly agriculture, which relies on rivers and streams for quality products.

Pollution can have severe consequences, leading to local products failing to meet international standards, resulting in lost export markets and job losses.

Furthermore, river pollution deprives communities of their livelihoods. It kills fish and plants, cutting off essential food sources.

Contaminated rivers and wetlands also destroy natural materials used for building homes and crafting, undermining local economies.

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) is reminding the public of the importance of clean rivers and urging all South Africans to participate in cleaning polluted rivers and protecting

watercourses as part of the Clear Rivers Campaign during July, Mandela Month.

This campaign highlights the need for integrated and inclusive water resource management, encouraging individuals, communities, and institutions to work together to safeguard freshwater systems from pollution and neglect.

This year, the campaign theme is: “South Africa is a water-scarce country — clean up and protect our water resources.” It aims to encourage communities to take ownership of their local rivers, streams, wetlands, and other watercourses by actively protecting and restoring these vital ecosystems.

The Clear Rivers Campaign is a call to action for everyone to ensure that our rivers and streams are pollution-free, contributing to water security in a country that cannot afford to waste any drop of water. Pollution primarily results from human behaviour, so it is

our responsibility to maintain clean and healthy rivers.

By treating our watercourses as treasures and adopting responsible practices, we can combat pollution and promote a clean environment for current and future generations.

Dysfunctional wastewater treatment plants are significant contributors to river pollution. The flow of untreated sewage into our watercourses raises E. coli levels, making the water unsafe for humans, livestock, and the ecosystem. Municipalities must ensure that all wastewater treatment plants are well-maintained and functioning optimally to prevent this issue.

Communities should also hold municipalities accountable for reducing pollution.

Residents play a crucial role as well. Overflowing manholes, often caused by foreign objects in sewer lines, lead to pollution in streams and rivers. We

must prevent sewer spillages and stop using rivers and wetlands as dumping sites for waste, such as disposable nappies.

Waste pollutes, so it is essential to keep our water resources clean.

All economic sectors, including mining, manufacturing, hospitality, and agriculture, must also contribute to keeping rivers and watercourses clean by refraining from disposing of toxic chemicals in these resources.

The Clear Rivers Campaign aims to strengthen the country's efforts to promote water security. Let us work together to clean and protect our rivers and watercourses, adopting them in our communities to ensure they remain safe and healthy.

Pollution kills, so we must keep our water resources clean to ensure that water remains a source of life.

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