

# Protecting our wetlands: Nature's water purifiers and flood deterrents

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

The theme underscores the urgency for bold action to protect these natural habitats for the welfare of all people, and to ensure our descendants continue to benefit from all that wetlands provide.

Wetlands continue to be destroyed all over the world - humans being the main culprits in their demise.

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 removing wetlands for human settlements.

Wetlands are destroyed for economic benefits such as building

## Issues at stake

With nations having recently celebrated World Wetlands Day, it's a shame how we continue to destroy this wonderful environmental gem, says **THEMBA KHOZA** of the Department of Water & Sanitation

shopping malls and for mining activities.

We have to act now to protect and preserve our wetlands. The future of wetlands depends on our responsible actions and behaviour towards the environment, especially watercourses.

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

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

They act as reservoirs storing water and releasing it during dry periods.

Wetlands also play a critical role in water purification, acting as natural purifiers by cleaning water and contributing to water quality in the ecosystem.

By storing carbon, wetlands mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as acting as natural sponges to reduce flooding.

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.