



MEDIA STATEMENT

DWS officially opens the boating season on the Vaal River

10 September 2024

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) officially opened the boating season on the Vaal River on Saturday, September 7, 2024, at Stonehaven on the Vaal in Vanderbijlpark. This event marked a significant achievement in the battle against invasive aquatic plants that had been causing devastation to the river.

For several months, the Vaal River had been plagued by the rapid spread of water lettuce and water hyacinth. These invasive species had taken over large areas of the river, choking out native plant life and disrupting the ecosystem. The situation was exacerbated by high levels of pollution in the river catchment, which fuelled the growth of these plants.

Recognizing the severity of the problem, the DWS took decisive action to address the issue. They collaborated with various stakeholders, including the Vaal River Community and Rand Water, to tackle the infestation. Through a combined effort, the water lettuce and water hyacinth were successfully removed, allowing the river to start the process of recovery.

To prevent a reoccurrence of this problem, the DWS appointed and funded Rand Water to implement a proactive preventative program. This program aims to ensure that the Vaal River Barrage reservoir never experiences the same level of invasive aquatic weed coverage again. By taking a proactive approach, the DWS hopes to mitigate future infestations and protect the ecological health of the river.

The opening of the boating season was a celebration of the victory against the invasive species on the Vaal River. Boaters and recreational enthusiasts gathered at Stonehaven on the Vaal to commemorate this milestone and enjoy the pristine waters. With the removal of the water lettuce and water hyacinth, the river is now free of these invasive plants, allowing for a safer and more enjoyable boating experience.

The restoration of the Vaal River is not only important for the preservation of the environment but also for the well-being of the communities that rely on it. As the river regains its biodiversity and becomes cleaner, it will provide a healthier habitat for aquatic life and become a more attractive destination for outdoor activities. Moreover, the improved ecological health of the river will have a positive impact on local businesses that depend on the river for tourism and recreational activities.

The successful removal of the water lettuce and water hyacinth on the Vaal River is a testament to the dedication and collaboration of various stakeholders. The efforts put forth by the DWS, Rand Water, and the Vaal River Community have shown that with a united front, it is possible to overcome environmental challenges and restore the natural beauty of our waterways. As the

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boating season opens on the Vaal River, let us celebrate this victory and continue to work towards the preservation and conservation of our precious water resources.

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