

INTERNET ARTICLE

Working together to protect water resources in celebration of World Wetlands Day

02 February 2022

It was all hands on the deck on Wednesday, 02 February 2022, when officials from different institutions in the public and private sector joined hands to clean a river in Gutshwa in the City of Mbombela.

The cleaning of Gutshwa River and its surroundings was part of the 2022 World Wetlands Day in support of activities held across the globe. The Department of Water and Sanitation in Mpumalanga spearheaded this activity and partnered with the City of Mbombela, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, SANBI, Working on Fire, Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs, EPWP and community members.

Wetlands play a major role in water security, flood prevention and water quality. Wetlands help to reduce the severity of droughts and floods by regulating stream flows. Wetlands are effective in spreading out and slowing down floodwaters which reduces stream flows and thereby reduce the severity of floods downstream. Wetlands also play a major role in water security as they act as sponges and absorb water during rainy and wet periods and release it during the dry seasons. Wetlands also help to recharge groundwater ensuring access to water.

Annually the world comes together on 02 February to highlight the importance of wetlands in celebrating World Wetlands Day. This year is not different as the World Wetlands Day is celebrated under the theme **“Wetlands Action for People and Nature”**. The theme is a clarion call to take action to protect and sustain wetlands. It is basically an appeal to invest financial, human, and political capital to save the wetlands from disappearing and to restore those that have been degraded.

In responding to the theme and acting, the stakeholders cleaned the river and removed all the waste that was dumped in the water system. It needs to be noted that people have changed the watercourses into dumping sites, and this negatively affects the natural flow of water and the water quality. It was encouraging to see community members joining the cleaning campaign and vowing to stop the dumping of waste in the watercourses.

People need to act now to protect and prevent the pollution, degradation, and destruction of watercourses, especially as South Africa being a water scarce country, needs every drop of available water. The pollution of and degradation of watercourses is the result of irresponsible human behaviour therefore it is crucial for communities to come and work together toward the protection, preservation, and sustainability of watercourses for quality water and water security for the current and future generations.

The ward councillor, Cllr Shabangu thanked the community members for their efforts to keep the watercourse and the environment clean and healthy. “I appreciate your efforts in keeping this area

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clean. Let us work together to always keep this area and our environment clean. The dirt in our watercourses and environment reflects badly on us as a community, so let us protect our watercourses and keep the environment clean and healthy. I would also like to thank our stakeholders for coming up with this cleaning campaign, especially on an important day like this as we celebrate World Wetlands Day”, she said.

Themba Khoza