

INTERNET ARTICLE

DWS in Gauteng calls for public to appreciate wetlands and conserve water.

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To ensure that wetlands are conserved and sustainably used, South Africa joined the international community in celebrating World Wetland Day under the theme: “**Wetlands Action for People and Nature**”. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) in Gauteng commemorated this day at Saulsville, West of Pretoria under City of Tshwane on 02 February 2022”.

Gauteng DWS collaborated with City of Tshwane, South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Saulsville community members to make the commemoration of World Wetlands Day a success. This year marks 51 anniversary of the World Wetlands celebrations.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on the 2nd of February annually, with an objective to raise an awareness about the importance of wetlands for all living organism on earth. The Convention of Wetlands also known as Ramsar Convention was adopted on the 2nd of February 1971 hence it is commemorated on this day.

Speaking at the celebration with community members, Soulcent Project Director Mr Mashudu Makhado said South Africa is a water scarce country and water in many streams are polluted.

“Wetlands play a vital role by removing toxic substances and sediment from the water, while also improving downstream water quality and the overall health of communities”, said Makhado. He further added that wetlands come in many different forms such as lakes, rivers, swamps, peatlands, deltas, tidal flats, mangroves and coral reefs, and are vital sources of biodiversity and fresh water.

Mr Makhado added that different forms of wetlands can be found all over the world and they are essential for the survival of countless plants and animal species as they provide habitats and breeding grounds. Humans too depend on them, as they are an essential source of fresh water

Wetlands are beneficial to the society by reducing the severity of droughts and floods because they are helpful by regulating stream flow during floods. Besides these indirect benefits to society, wetlands also provide many direct benefits in the form of resources such as fibre for making crafts as well as recreational opportunities. However, lack of community awareness on the value and benefits of wetlands often leads to their destruction by humans.

DWS Gauteng Project Leader Ms Tebogo Mashiane stressed that the Department calls on the public to adopt wetlands and play an active role in ensuring that they are protected, preserved, restored, and sustained. He said that they play a major role in water quality, stream flow regulation and water security.

“Wetland ecosystems support a host of animals and plants lives. They are also critically important for the survival human beings, from the mitigation of Climate Change to the protection of human settlements from floods. If we protect wetlands, we also protect our planet and ourselves”, Mashiane said.

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Ms Mashiane further emphasised that, restoration of wetlands improves the quality of water entering the streams and sea, and as a result fewer water-quality problems will be encountered and everyone is able to live in a healthy environment.

Climatic extremes which amongst others include floods and droughts are predicted to become worse in the not so distant future and wetlands can play an important role in mitigating the effect of these extremes.

“An important strategy is to significantly reduce the stress on these systems caused by human activities that weaken the health of the wetland and make it less resilient to change caused by climate change. This means that we will need to manage our wetlands better. The Department of Water and Sanitation continues to urge the public to manage wetlands better and to be mindful of the quantity of water that we abstract or divert from these wetlands such as dams or afforestation.

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