



INTERNET ARTICLE

Public Private Partnership for clean, safe, and healthy rivers

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The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) in partnership with Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, City of Mbombela Local Municipality, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, South African National Biodiversity Institute, South African National Parks, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Working on Fire, Coca Cola Beverages South Africa, Manganese Metal Company, Sunbake, Abeega Roadhouse, and Real Shift cleaned the Besterspruit stream behind City Centre in Mbombela on 30 July 2024 as part of the Clear Rivers Campaign in celebration of Mandela Month. This shows the power of working together as government, the private sector and communities in doing good for others and the environment.

The activities of the day included cleaning the Besterspruit stream and a soup kitchen for the needy in the spirit of Tata Mandela of doing good for others, especially the needy and vulnerable. The soup kitchen provided a loaf of bread from Sunbake, a cup of soup from Abeega and a bottle of water.

Mandela Day / Month is mainly about doing good for others and the environment we live in. It is about volunteering one's services and resources for the good of others. The Department of Water and Sanitation came up with the Clear Rivers Campaign to encourage people to clean and adopt rivers and other water resources to ensure sustainable flow of clean and quality water. The campaign calls on everyone to dedicate their 67 minutes of goodwill towards cleaning up streams, wetlands, dams, canals and any freshwater source. South Africa is a dry and water scarce country which makes it important to always keep our water resources clean and healthy to ensure water security.

The health of the rivers in our country is threatened by pollution. If we pollute the river in one place, we affect the condition of the river for a long distance downstream. Therefore, active and responsible citizenry is encouraged across the spectrum where people from all walks of life become participants in promoting healthy rivers. The relationship between communities and healthy rivers can never be overstated. The need for water security, particularly in the face of global climate change and a multitude of anthropogenic impacts affecting our rivers, calls for a national and unified approach to protect our rivers, wetlands and broader catchments.

In outlining the purpose of the Clear Rivers Campaign reminded the participants that South Africa is a water scarce country and the negative effects of pollution on the water resources. "We usually preach the gospel and we usually say we are living in South Africa and South

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Africa is one of the driest countries in the world. We have our rivers, we have our dams yet our rivers are polluted. There is little rainfall that we have here in South Africa. So we understand very well that water is life and without water we cannot survive. But when we look at our rivers they are very dirty, they are very filthy. but this day today we dedicate these 67 minutes to clean watercourses. There are a lot of activities people do but as custodians of these water resources, we say today we are going to dedicate the 67 minutes to ensure that we clean our rivers. This is part of an education awareness campaign. Let us go out there in our communities, in our churches, in our areas of work and preach the gospel of keeping our rivers clear and clean for the current and future generations and the global world. This Clear Rivers Campaign assists us to ensure that we keep our rivers clean, There is a quote in the programme that I like that says “it always seems impossible until it is done”. So when we arrived this morning we see the river dirty but when we come out of this place, as the aim of today, we will leave this river clean”, she said.

She also emphasized the importance of awareness creation. “I can see that in this area there are people staying here and I hope that they will join us because one of the purposes of this programme is to bring about awareness, environmental awareness to the communities out there and the people who live in the environment and to say that let’s ensure that we keep our environment clean. So I am hoping that we are not going to leave anyone behind. The slogan is that we leave the rivers clean and we don’t leave anyone behind. Let’s ensure that wherever we are we always maintain our rivers and keep them protected. As I give this purpose and background on this campaign, I’m also advocating that let’s make everyday a Mandela Day and protect our water resources in our water scarce country”, she said.

Ms Raquel from Manganese Metal Company representing the private sector promised to continue with the partnership and supporting such initiatives. “We achieve much more when we work together. So community clean-ups and clean-ups in the water streams play a vital role for our communities in maintaining the health and beauty of our communities. As MMC, we are proud to support the organisers and such initiatives. We will continue to with this partnership”, she said.

The Chairperson of the IUCMA Board, Ms Carol Zulu emphasised the importance of protecting and conserving our water resources. She also stressed on the importance of quality water for socio-economic development. “In everything that you do every day, you must try to make the world a better place for everyone. So obviously as the IUCMA, I must say that one of our responsibilities is to ensure that the water resource is protected and conserved and conserving it ensure that even the quality of water for all users is in a state that is acceptable. Pollution is one of the critical challenges and we can put a hand to limit the pollution and improve the water quality. We have to highlight to others that it is important not to pollute, not to throw waste anywhere, especially in the water resources, and to industries and municipalities to ensure that their discharges to the water resources are of the requisite quality”, she said.

Themba Khoza

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