



INTERNET ARTICLE

Protecting and preserving wetlands during National Water Month

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In a collaborative effort to safeguard water resources, the Mpumalanga Provincial Operations, alongside the City of Mbombela, Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency, SANPARKS, Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, SAPPI, ESKOM, and the Mpumalanga Department of Education, launched a comprehensive clean-up and educational campaign in Kabokweni, City of Mbombela, on 13 March 2025.

This initiative, held during National Water Month, focused on revitalising a local wetland and raising awareness about the importance of protecting water resources.

The campaign centered on the cleaning and restoration of a wetland and adjacent stream near the Mielieland bridge and Ngodini High School. The area, which had become an illegal dumping site, was cleared of waste, with all debris transported to a designated disposal facility. To address the root cause of pollution, neighbouring households, businesses, and passersby were engaged in discussions about the detrimental effects of environmental degradation on water resources.

The initiative extended beyond the streets and into the classroom, with learners at Ngodini High School participating in an educational program. Students were taught about the critical role wetlands play in ensuring water quality and sustaining natural water flow. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of wetlands in mitigating climate change impacts, such as droughts and floods, and encouraged learners to take an active role in protecting these vital ecosystems.

Mr. Themba Khoza from the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) Mpumalanga Provincial Operations highlighted the significance of wetlands in water security.

"March is a special month, as it marks both Human Rights Month and National Water Month. The proximity of World Water Day on 22 March to Human Rights Day on 21 March underscores the intrinsic link between water and human rights," he said.

"Access to water is a fundamental human right, and with that right comes the responsibility to protect and conserve our water resources. As one of the driest countries in the world, South Africa must prioritize water conservation to ensure security for current and future generations."

Mr. Khoza also stressed the role of wetlands in combating climate change. "Wetlands act as natural reservoirs, storing water during wet periods and releasing it during droughts. They also reduce the risk of flooding by slowing water flow. Given their importance, it is crucial that we

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prevent their pollution and destruction. Let us all commit to being responsible citizens and safeguarding our water supply,” he concluded.

To empower learners to become stewards of water conservation, practical water-saving tips were distributed, encouraging students to share these practices with their families and communities. Additionally, SANPARKS donated indigenous trees to the school and demonstrated tree-planting techniques using drip irrigation to minimize water waste.

This collaborative campaign highlighted the power of partnerships in achieving meaningful environmental impact. By working together, stakeholders demonstrated that collective action can lead to the preservation of precious ecosystems and the promotion of sustainable water use.

As National Water Month continues, the initiative serves as a reminder of the shared responsibility to protect and preserve our water resources for generations to come.

Themba Khoza

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