



water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

Month of July kicks off the Clear Rivers Campaign 2019.

03 July 2019

In the month of July the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) embarks on the Clear Rivers Campaign- **a campaign dedicated to Nelson Mandela**. This campaign calls on everyone to dedicate **their 67 minutes of goodwill** activities towards cleaning up rivers, streams, wetlands, dams, canals and any freshwater source. Everyone is encouraged to participate in cleaning up our water ecosystems, on any day during Mandela Month.

The 2019 theme for Mandela Month is **“Action Against Poverty”**. For the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), this theme carries a lot of meaning as we strive to ensure that each and every citizen, especially the poor gain access to clean water.

The Clear Rivers campaign is one attempt by DWS to ensure clean rivers and allow for poverty stricken communities near rivers to have clean and usable water. In this way, we are ensuring dignity of the poor amongst us as a nation.

Water is life and the rivers are the lifeblood that ensures reliable supply of this source of life. Pollution is having a serious negative impact on the water resources, as it affects the quality as well as the quantity of usable water. Pollution also negatively affects the flow of rivers in a way that the waste dumped in our rivers may block the flow of water resulting in lack of supply for the communities downstream. Pollution may also block the normal flow of rivers leading to flooding during heavy downpours.

Various river cleaning activities will be held around the country and DWS will keep the public informed, so that they can participate in these activities. The objective of the Clear Rivers Campaign is to undertake a collaborative effort and engage communities as well as promoting and creating awareness and education on protecting our water resources. Fostering volunteerism among communities is actively encouraged as part of a proactive approach to protecting our rivers, streams, wetlands, and other water ecosystems. The campaign aims to achieve well informed and environmentally conscious communities and pollution free rivers.

The incorrect disposal of feminine hygiene products, disposable nappies, oil, and etcetera remains a serious concern as they are directly dumped into our rivers, streams, wetlands and other freshwater eco systems, impacting on the water quality and ultimately affecting water security.

The campaign comes against the backdrop of a report compiled by the University of Cape Town in 2017 which found that the river pollution, aggravated by the drought, is putting water supply at risk. Rivers feed dams and 29 of 100 major dams have a "red" health risk from either high nutrient levels or algae-like organisms called blue-greens, some of which produce toxins dangerous to humans, the report said.

Rivers have been extremely helpful to men in all parts of the earth from the very early times. They provide water to slake the thirst of all living species, fertilize the soil, and they provide a means of communication for the goods that are transported from place to place. Furthermore,





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rivers provide food, energy, recreation and water for irrigation and for drinking. They are an essential element and the single most important commodity in our lives.

Against this background, the department calls on all South Africans to roll up their sleeves and remember this historic day by participating in Clear Rivers Campaign in their own areas. Industries and various individuals are primarily responsible for the negligent practice of dumping toxic waste into the country's rivers.

End

Issued by the Department of Water & Sanitation

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