

NATIONAL WATER WEEK 15 – 19 MARCH

The United Nations has declared 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. "Learning through Nature" will list and highlight a number of environmental days each month in the "Meander Chronicle". The topic of biodiversity will be dealt with at a later stage but for this month we will highlight the very important matter of water.

The annual National Water Week follows hot on the heels of World Wetlands Day which was celebrated on the 2nd of February. Water Week also coincides with World Water Day on the 22nd of March. The theme this year is "Water is Life – Securing the Nation's Water Needs across Generations."

This year the theme for World Wetlands Day is "Caring for wetlands – an answer to climate change." The theme focuses on wetland species and an ecosystem which is under continuous threat from unsustainable human practices. Wetlands are dynamic ecosystems that provide indispensable ecosystem goods and services - clean water being one of these numerous services. Many of South Africa's wetlands have been lost because of agriculture, timber plantations, mining and urban development.

There is a crucial link between clean water and health and the objective is eradicating water-borne diseases like cholera which is currently affect communities in some parts of the country.

Water is one of South Africa's most limited resources. South Africa is regarded as a semi-arid country. We have an average of 450mm of rain per year and a high rate of evaporation. Conserving water is the responsibility of all in South Africa. The way we handle our water resources has a bearing on our future generations.

Demand on water resources will continue to increase at a fast pace in the coming decades and we should ensure efficient and responsible use of water and is the responsibility from all communities to industries. By doing this it will assist us in meeting the economic growth targets as well as ensuring that every citizen has access to this precious resource and that future generations are provided for.

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