



REFERENCE : WETLANDS DAY EVENT
ENQUIRIES : K.F. SWANEPOEL

WETLANDS DAY 2012 EVENT REPORT

BACKGROUND TO THE EVENTS

World Wetlands Day is held every year on 2 February and marks the signing of the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (the Ramsar Convention) on 2 February 1971. World Wetlands Day was celebrated for the first time in 1997 and since then, events and activities are held world-wide in February each year to raise awareness of wetland values and benefits. RAMSAR is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Wetlands and their wildlife are a key part of the global tourism experience, thus well-managed tourism in and around wetlands can bring significant benefits, both economic and environmental, at site, regional and national levels. Local communities and local government can, and often do, benefit economically in terms of income and employment.

The theme for 2012 is Wetlands and Tourism, emphasising that responsible tourism supports wetlands and people. Tourism can have both positive and negative impacts on wetlands, and on Cape Town's unique and irreplaceable biodiversity. World Wetlands Day is a time to highlight wetlands as great places to visit but to also stress the need for care and respect of wetland environments.

WETLANDS EVENTS CELEBRATED:

1. Noluthando School of the Deaf

Noluthando School is a special school situated in Site B, Khayelitsha, Cape Town serving 360 learners with barriers to learning. Previously the school only catered for Deaf learners, but with the need for skills training in the community they opened their doors for learners with barriers to learning 14 years of age and older. The main focus still remains education and training of Deaf

learners via special curricula and skills development of Boat building-, Electrical-, Hospitality-, Hairdressing-, Plumbing-, Mechanical-, Welding-, Bricklaying- and Sewing Workshops. The learners come from various communities, but the majority has Xhosa as their home language.

The Department celebrated World Wetlands Day with Noluthando School of the Deaf in Khayelitsha. The event included a two day educational pre – programme on the 31/01/12 until 01/02/12, which was coordinated by the Department in conjunction with WESSA and the City of Cape Town.

WESSA staff provided a fun, content rich and interactive programme for learners from Grades 4, 5 and 6 on day 1 (31 Jan) and for Grades 7, 8 and 9 on day 2 (1st Feb). The subject matter covered in the programme included:

- **Wetlands: Introduction** to what are wetlands and why they are important. Ramsar Theme for 2012: Wetland Tourism: A great Experience.
- **Why wetlands are important for the environment (Ecosystems services provided by wetlands)** such as water storage, purification and flood attenuation. Use made of a wetland model and other interactive physical support materials to ensure an interactive learning experience.
- **How are wetlands useful to people**
Interactive learning at the Noluthando School Wetland site with a focus on uses such as harvesting of reeds and fish; and medicinal plants and food plants.
- **Tourism and Wetlands**
Tourism uses and learning what lives in wetlands: birds, fish, frogs, many insects etc. and the link to Tourism. Inc on site interactive work.
- **GIS**
Looking at how the Noluthando wetland fits into the Khayelitsha wetland system.
- **Threats to Wetlands**
Alien plants & animals, development, pollution. Including alien removal on site.
- Preparation for learners feedback at the celebration on 2 Feb.
- Learning materials for ongoing use after the wetland day programme

WAY FORWARD:

- Provision of lesson plans for each grade which will be presented to the teachers. The lesson plans are part of WESSA's Sharenet range which is linked to and supports the National Curriculum. Wessa will provide two sets of each of the 6 lesson plans and hold a group meeting with the relevant teachers around use of these plans to support further learning about wetlands and water.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY: CELEBRATION

On the 2nd February, it was a major celebration event with various stakeholders including the Western Cape Education Department high officials, as well as other partners viz; WESSA, City of Cape Town and other community members, who form part of the School Governing Body.

Noluthando School has the Wetland in the school premises, this created a platform for learners to become tour guides and lead the delegates for a tour to their Wetland, in line with this Year's Ramsar International theme: "Wetland Tourism, a great experience."

About 250 school learners received lunch, packed on the sponsored lunch boxes by ADDIS. The sponsorship was highly valued as this initiative added value in promoting green environmental practices, which were also highlighted at the event, i.e anti - littering on Wetlands campaign.

World Wetlands Day celebration ended up on a high note, with the theatre production by Jungle Theatre, which put more emphasis on taking care of the rivers, by not littering.



2. Eden (Second Event)

The Department celebrated World Wetlands Day with Eden Municipality, at the Wilderness Ebb and Flow – Laerskool Touwsrante. Activities include: St John's Ambulance Introduction to Water Safety and Basic First Aid, Canoe Rides – Wetlands for Tourism and Recreation and other interactive educational activities).

