



the denc

---

Department:  
Environment & Nature Conservation  
NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X6102, Kimberley, 8300, SASKO Building, Tel: 053-807 7430, Fax: 053-831 3530

## **REPORT ON WORLD WETLANDS CELEBRATION IN NIEWOUDTVILLE, NORTHERN CAPE, ON 24 FEBRUARY 2015**

### **1. Background**

The World Wetlands Day celebrations started from 1997 and is since celebrated annually on 2<sup>nd</sup> February to mark the adoption of the Ramsar Convention, a wetlands convention, which took place in the Iranian city of Ramsar near the Caspian Sea on 2 February 1971. Around 160 countries have signed the Treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. This day aims at raising awareness on the importance; values and benefits of wetlands and the Ramsar Convention in particular. Every year a specific theme is chosen and the 2015 theme was : "**Wetlands for our Future**"

The Department of Environment and Nature Conservation (DENC) celebrated World Wetlands Day in Nieuwoudtville, in the Hantam municipality, which falls in the Namakwa district, on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015, with 43 learners from Protea High School; 47 learners from Protea Primary School in Nieuwoudtville; a total of 170 community members from Loeriesfontein, Calvinia and Nieuwoudtville and three councilors from Hantam municipality. This event was also attended by the Head of the Department of Environment and Nature Conservation, Mr D van Heerden and the Director of Programme 6 of this department, Mr L Abrahams.



*Fig 1 : Some of the Learner and community members in the hall*

## 2. PROGRAMME

The first part of the programme was done in the hall of Protea High School where a teacher, Mr. P Boks, and 2 learners gave a short overview of their wetlands Eco-School's project after which the keynote address was done by councilor Swartz. The keynote address alluded the importance of wetland ecosystems; the functions that wetlands render to biodiversity and humans, the threats to wetlands and the responsibilities of humans to conserve wetlands.



*Fig 2 : Learners and educator from Protea High School gave a synopsis on their Eco-School Wetlands project*

The rest of the programme was done at a beautiful wetlands in the community, which forms part of the Eco-School's project of the local high school. The community was separated from the learners and the learners was divided into 2 groups : the grade 6 and 7's learners in 1 group and the grade 11 and 12's in 1 group. All the groups were transported to the same wetlands, adults gathered at the northern side of the wetlands and the learners at the southern side.

In the adult group the wetlands eco system was explained in a simplified way to demonstrate the interlinked between the different species at the wetlands. A simple wetland food chain, with big pictures, was also illustrated with the impacts if 1 of the species are threatened or extinct. The different functions of a wetland were emphasized again; the role of the local government structures; tourist possibilities and the role of the community with regards to conservation of wetlands was highlighted during this session.



*Fig 4 : Community members at the wetlands*

The grade 6 learners played against the grade 7 learners a game that depict the importance of wetlands; threats to wetlands and wetlands biodiversity in the form of questions and pictures as part of the game. This got them very excited and at the same time assimilation of information also took place.



*Fig 5: Game is explained to Grade 6 and 7 learners*

The activity at the wetland for the Grade 11 and 12's focused on the : the Ramsar convention; ecological functions of wetlands; destruction of wetlands and management guidelines for wetlands. The learners can expect a On-going water quality tests, at different locations on the wetland, will be done by these learners to monitor potential changes over time and establish possible causes for these changes.



*Fig 6: Grade11 and 12 learners at the wetland*