

World Wetlands Day – World Water Day Joint Commemoration at Hardap Dam

The winning teams of the school quizzes contacted as part of the World Wetlands Day – World Water Day joint commemoration (*see DS2 Matters Issue No. 14 of January/February 2004*) left for Hardap Recreation Resort on 20 March 2004 to take part in a debate on 22 March, which is also World Water Day. The winning teams that participated in this debate were as follows: Wilma Konjore, Alexander Tjiuji, Leandie Labuschagne and Waverly Awases from Mariental High School, Flavia Kurz, Malcolm Petersen, Marina Sherrif and Lee-Jean Thomas from Westside High School at the coast, Mauria Nteheleng, Ester Iyambo, Edison Hiwanaame and Elilama Nduma from Augustineum Senior Secondary School in Windhoek, and Reginah Ngalangi, Abraham Siviwo, Philips Zuze and Mariane Hamukwaya from Maria Mwengere Senior Secondary School in Rundu.



Mariental High School the winning team from Mariental during the Hardap debate

After arrival at the resort the learners were treated with a welcoming *braai* and the programme of the next days' activities was also distributed upon arrival.



Westside High School the winning team from the coast during the Hardap debate



Augustineum Secondary School the winning team from Windhoek during the Hardap



Maria Mwengere Senior Secondary School the winning team from Rundu during the Hardap debate

The next morning after breakfast they departed to Mariental to attend the Independence celebration on invitation by Her Worship, The Mayor of Mariental.



Her Worship Annemarie Gorases (major of Mariental) addressing the independence celebrations at the town

After the independence celebration the learners visited the Hardap Irrigation Scheme under the guidance of Mr. John Akawa, Namwater's area manager followed by a visit around the dam and and then another braai at the resort's swimming pool.

Monday, 22 March dawned and people from Mariental flocked to Hardap Recreation Resort to attend the joint commemoration of World Wetlands Day and World Water Day. It was previously anticipated that not more than one hundred people could be attending since the day was a public holiday and more people could have been out on holiday elsewhere, only to experience a huge turnout of more than three hundred people at the event.



The huge crowd which turned up for the event at Hardap with the debating teams in the foreground

Among the guests to this year's event was Her Worship the Mayor of Mariental, Honourable Petrus van Zyl, (Regional Councilor Mariental Urban), Ms. Catherine Mutambitwa (IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa) who came to Namibia from Zimbabwe, specifically for this event, Mr. Piet Heyns (Under-secretary: Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development), Mr. John Akawa (NamWater: Regional Head), Mr. Piet de Klerk (Regional Head: Rural Water Supply) and Mr. Leonard Stephanus (Senior Chief Control Officer: Hardap Regional Council).



The guests of honour: L-R: P. de Klerk, L. Stephanus, P. van Zyl, the Mayor and P. Heyns

The Secretary General of the National Youth Council, Mr. Pohamba Shifeta also paid the event a surprise visit and he was one of the judges of the debate together with Mr. John Akawa, Ms. Catherine Mutambirwa and Mr. Salomon Boois of the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia.

The event was officially opened Regional Councillor Van Zyl. In his welcoming address he reminded everyone of the finite nature of water as a resource and its importance sustaining life, development and the environment, and also urged everyone to ensure the sustainable management of our water resources.



Double-worth: Guests of honour a.w.a. judges: L-R: P. Shifeta, J. Akawa, C. Mutambirwa and S. Boois.

He also urged the school teams that were going to debate on wetlands and water issues to be an example to other schools in the promotion of water awareness and wise use of wetlands, which is one of the main objectives of commemorating these days.



Mr. Van Zyl officially opening the 2004 World Wetlands Day – World Water Day joint commemoration event at Hardap Recreation Resort

After the official opening the school teams introduced their team members after which the keynote speaker of the event Mr. P. Heyns delivered his speech. Mr. Heyns spoke about the theme for

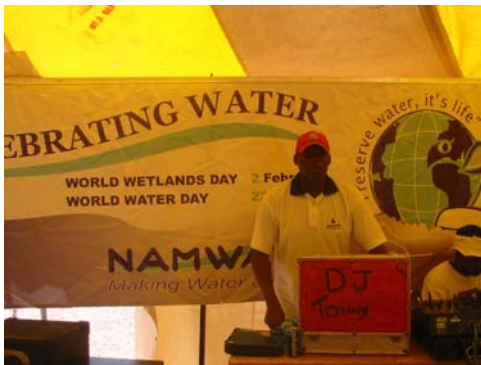
this year's World Water Day: "Water and Disasters", highlighting that the two major disasters related to water are droughts and floods. He also mentioned as the objectives for this year's commemoration, that we must protect our ecosystems, manage the risks of droughts and floods, value water, govern water wisely, share water wisely and meet our basic needs for drinking water, washing and cooking. He also emphasised the importance of the previous day's independence celebrations and the World Wetlands Day – World Water Day commemoration in the national context.



Mr. Piet Heyns the keynote speaker at the World Wetlands Day – World Water Day joint commemoration event

Mr. Heyns also emphasised the need for having more people educated and trained in the water environment as water engineers, scientists, hydrologists, economists, water and environmental lawyers, and technicians. He therefore reiterated the call for learners to study mathematics and science so that they can become the future water experts the country so dearly needs. The speech was concluded by thanking the organisers and sponsors who made this event possible. It was his wish that in years to come this awareness campaign become a national event that will take place in all the thirteen regions of the country.

DJ Tony from Mariental operated the Public Address (PA) System and also provided some entertainment in the form of music. Entertainment was also provided by Empelheim Junior Secondary School Choir, the Catholic Youth Church Choir and the Oshiwambo Cultural Group, all from the town of Mariental.



DJ Tony operating the PA System



Empelheim Junior Secondary School in action



The Catholic Youth Church Choir doing their thing

The first round of school debates started with Maria Mwengere Senior Secondary School taking on Westside High School

debating whether water should be free rather than paid for, and Westside High School who argued that it should be paid for came out victorious.



Oshiwambo Cultural Group performing cultural dance and song

The other debate in the first round was between Augustineum Senior Secondary School and Mariental High School, debating whether water brings life more than disasters. Mariental High School defeated Augustitneum arguing that water brings more life than disasters.

The final round of the school debates was between Westside High School and Mariental High School. The topic this time was: "Wetlands advantages outweigh their disadvantages." The team from Mariental High School argued that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and they became the overall winners of the debate walking away with a cash prize of N\$ 2,400 sponsored by the IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa. The runner up was the team from Westside High School and they walked away with a cash prize of N\$ 1,200 and the other two schools were at third place and each received a cash prize of N\$ 600 from the same sponsor. The best debater at the event was Ester Iyambo from Augustineum Senior Secondary School in Windhoek and she walked away with a cash prize of N\$ 100.

By Uatjavi Uanivi