

Botswana Report on World Wetlands Day Commemoration 2011

FORESTS FOR WATER AND WETLANDS



Community ready for the wetlands march



Hon. Mokaila giving a keynote address



Deputy Secretary General Ramsar Convention, Prof Nick Davidson



Welcome Remarks with Kgosi Morake



Tree planting at Kasane Fire Station...trees were donated by Barclays Bank



Chobe CJSS Essay winners posing with the Minister



Matsosangwao entertaining the audience



Borwa CJSS students showcasing their project

This year's commemoration was significant as it was the 40th Anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands of International importance commonly known as Ramsar. Botswana joined the rest of the world by commemorating World Wetlands Day which aims at reinforcing efforts to raise public awareness on the role of wetlands in the ecosystem and economic development as well as campaigning for their sustainable utilization for generations to come.

In Botswana, World Wetlands Day was commemorated on the 3rd February at Chobe District in Kasane Township. Chobe District was selected because of its vast forest reserve as well as the magnificent Chobe River and Zambezi Wetlands System. Chobe is the home of all forest reserves in the country.

An event preceding the commemoration was Tree Planting which was done on the 2nd February 2011 at Kasane Fire Station. The trees were donated by Barclays Bank Botswana. Both local authorities and

the community at large attended this very important event.

The commemoration started with a wetland march through the streets of Kasane. The day was a fun-filled with entertainment by local traditional groups, marimba shows as well as a Drama depicting wetlands management and issues in Botswana. The Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism Honorable Kitso Mokaila in his address emphasised on the importance of the wise use of wetlands, their contribution to economic development and livelihoods.

He stated that the national wetlands commemorations are held on rotational basis among the districts, towns and cities in order to ensure that the message reaches most parts of the country.

He further said that, *"the commemorations have reinforced the need for a better understanding of how wetlands systems work, opportunities*

they offer to humanity, the challenges they face in our fast changing world.

The Minister encouraged the general public to actively take part in caring for wetlands.

He also highlighted that the Chobe District like the rest of the country is faced with problems of excessive use and destruction of natural resources. Particularly evident in the area is the issue of veld fires. This causes a lot of destruction to forest areas and has the potential to completely alter the ecosystem.

The Deputy Secretary General of Ramsar Convention Prof. Nick Davidson gave an international Perspective on Wetlands of International Importance.

Some of the activities organized for the day included national essay and art competition based on the slogan: Forest for water and Wetlands. This competition attracted over 160 participants. There was also

the National wetlands fair, where close to 40 different institutions exhibited their product and services related to wetland management and interacted with members of the public. Some of the exhibitors such as Local Enterprise Authority (LEA), Botswana Power Corporation (BPC), Elephants without Borders etc., won themselves prizes and certificates for showcasing its wetlands management activities.

A series of excursions were also organized to enhance the appreciation of the wetlands and forest services to humanity and the whole environment. These excursions included visitation to the Savuti Channel (a marsh like area) which was said it has not been flowing for the past 20 years and now it's ecologically and hydrological active.

The whole event was publicized through customized local posters, radio live interviews, newspaper adverts to mention but just a few.