



## **WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2013 REPORT**

HELD: 31 January- 01 February & 7 February 2013

AREAS: Cape Agulhas & Khayelitsha

### **Background and introduction**

2 February each year is World Wetlands Day. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general, and the Ramsar Convention in particular.

2013 is the UN International Year for Water Cooperation and an ideal opportunity for Ramsar to look at the connection between water and wetlands. Hence this year's theme was **"Wetlands Take Care of Water"**.

Wetlands take care of water, reflects the interdependence between water and wetlands and the key role that wetlands play. Using our wetlands wisely is an essential component of the delivery of sustainable water management. Therefore looking at who manages water and the many challenges from governance to trans-boundary, agricultural and urban water management issues, to water storage issues and water diversion schemes. Finally we take a look at what we can all do at the global, regional and local levels in ensuring that wetland ecosystems and their water are well managed for the benefit of people and wildlife.



### **Department Events:**

On the 31 of January to 01 February the department in collaboration with SANParks, celebrated Wetlands Day with 30 Grade 12 learners of Albert Myburgh Secondary School and 109 "Working for Wetlands" group at ANP Bosheuvel BSP Centre, Cape Agulhas.

The purpose of celebrating wetlands day was to:

- Raise awareness: On Environmental Issues such as the importance of wetlands and their role in our natural environment and their link to water.
- Encourage action: to encourage behaviour lifestyle change and sustainable water use and resource efficiency practices.
- Promote sustainable living with emphasis on resource efficiency

### **Event discussions/ presentations:**

On the 31 of January we had 30 grade 12 learners that were capacitated and educated on Wetlands with regards to their importance & functions. The learners were also exposed to ANP Working for Wetlands Project where information regarding its history and current status of the project was shared. Furthermore the learners were taken through a range of careers that are available in the Environment sector with focus on water & wetlands, and

motivational speeches on how young people should strive to success through education and government services are available to assist with financial needs for education.



### **Other activities:**

- Educational Hike at Sout Pan Wetland
- Species identification activity in Sout Pan Wetland
- River Canoeing at Bosheuwel Wetland

Present promotional material & pencil cases to learners: After canoeing each learner was given a pencil pod (sponsored by DEADP); which is made out of recycled material. This was to promote sustainable lifestyles in their immediate environment and also to see what can be produced out of recycled paper.



## **Working for Wetlands discussions and activities**

On the 1 of February we had 109 members from a Working for the Wetland group. Sustainable living presentation was done by K. Swanepoel (Directorate: Sustainability) on behalf of the Department. The presentation covered the following discussion themes:

- Sustainable Living with respect to Climate change
- Sustainable water use
- Waste management
- Green/ Eco- purchasing

This was to encourage the audience to incorporate sustainable lifestyle choices in their homes and communities.

Sling bags were also sponsored by DEADP to all the teachers with the purpose of discouraging use of plastic and waste minimisation. Other presentations on wetlands were done by Mr Appel.

## **Other activities**

- Sustainable wetlands competition: five sling bags were given away to discourage the audience from using of plastics and to promote waste management.
- Educational hike at Sout Pan Wetlands



## Wetlands Sign board hand over

Last year (2011/12 financial year) the Department celebrated World Wetlands Day with Noluthando Primary 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. What connected the Department to Noluthando Primary School was the fact that the school has a wetland as a resource in the school premises. As our commitment to motivate for continued educational support, this year the Department sponsored the school with “Wetlands

Educational Signboard, with granted permission to use Ramsar's WWD image of the year 2013. The signboard was for the following purposes:

- To give the wetland identity in the eyes of the public that it exists and needs to be taken care of.
- To advertise it and effectively communicate with the public about the importance of Wetlands.



**KF Swanepoel (left) unveiling and handing over the Wetland Signboard to Noluthando School of the Deaf**

### **Concluding remarks**

Wetlands outweigh many ecosystems in terms of productivity. They provide important hydrological functions, such as, groundwater recharge, water quality improvement and flood alleviation play a significant role in sustaining the livelihoods of communities and the survival of wildlife and biodiversity both in the catchment and downstream.

However, the natural integrity of wetlands has been continually reduced by unsustainable management practices and the impact of climate change. If timely precautions are not taken, then the habitat of rare species of flora and fauna, and wetlands biodiversity overall, are in danger. People's livelihoods may also be trapped in devastating ecological crisis. Hence wetland degradation should be stopped immediately and reversed as much as possible without affecting the functions and services of other ecosystems.

In conclusion it is important to note that sustainable use of wetlands is not the responsibility of the government alone but also a duty of all water users. Therefore our collective style of wetland management is vital.