

# THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT CELEBRATES 2024 WORLD WETLANDS DAY

## WHY WORLD WETLAND DAY?

World Wetlands Day, celebrated annually on 2 February, aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and the planet. This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests. Yet, wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, world economies, and more.

It is urgent that we raise national and global awareness about wetlands to reverse their rapid loss and encourage actions to conserve and restore them. World Wetlands Day is the ideal time to increase people's understanding of these critically important ecosystems.

## 2024 WORLD WETLANDS DAY THEME:

The Standing Committee of the Convention has approved *"Wetlands and human wellbeing"* as the 2024 theme, which will be used to celebrate the World Wetlands Day.

## THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DALRRD) IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD WETLANDS DAY:

DALRRD through the directorate Land and Soil Management (LSM), sub directorate Landcare has been part of World Wetlands Day celebrations since the inception of the Landcare programme. Different events have been organised in different provinces with the sole purpose of raising awareness about the importance of wetlands to the ecosystem. This events also provides an opportunity to celebrate the beauty and biodiversity of wetlands while also addressing the challenges they face. World Wetlands Day promotes the importance of preserving these unique ecosystems for current and future generations. The LandCare Programme have also provided funding for the rehabilitation and conservation of several wetlands over the years.



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Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



## THE IMPORTANCE OF WETLANDS:

The wetlands of southern Africa are of international importance as they are the southern destination for many migratory wading birds. Wetlands have been used for centuries as grazing for domestic stock, and as a source of reeds used for thatching, hut construction and basket weaving. They also are important for natural water quality improvement, flood protection, shoreline erosion control, opportunities for recreation and aesthetic appreciation and natural products for our use at no cost.

## DANGERS WETLANDS FACES:

The input of pollutants, such as sediment, fertiliser, human sewage, animal waste, road salts, pesticides and heavy metals can exceed the wetland's natural ability to absorb such pollutants and cause degradation.

## How to Get Involved with World Wetlands Day 2024?

**Participating in World Wetlands Day can be a rewarding experience. Here are some ways to get involved and make a positive impact on wetland conservation:**

- **Visit a Wetland:** Explore a nearby wetland area, observe its biodiversity, and learn about its importance to the ecosystem.
- **Organise an event:** Plan or participate in events such as guided tours, clean-up activities, bird-watching excursions, or educational workshops focused on wetlands.
- **Support Conservation Organisations:** Contribute to or volunteer with organisations dedicated to wetland preservation and restoration efforts.
- **Advocate for Wetlands:** Raise awareness about wetland conservation by sharing information with your community and advocating for policies that protect these ecosystems.



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