



MEDIA ADVISORY

PROVINCIAL WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2011

The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs will host the Provincial World Wetlands Day celebrations on Friday, 04 February 2011 from 09:30 till 13:00 at the Tshiya Education Resource Centre in Phuthaditjhaba, Qwaqwa. Qwaqwa is specifically chosen as the venue because it has a wetland called the Monontsha and there are a number of schools that are taking part in the management of environment and wetlands.

World Wetlands Day commemorates the 1971 signing of the Convention on Wetlands, more popularly called the Ramsar Convention. This year the wetlands community is focussed on the theme "**wetlands and forests - forests for water and wetlands**" in celebration of the United Nations International Year of Forests.

The word wetland signifies images of areas with tall reeds, open water and lush green vegetation. Many wetlands occur in areas where surface water collects and/or where underground water (also referred to as groundwater or subsurface water) discharges to the surface (referred to as seeps, springs or fountains), making the area wet for extended periods of time. Other wetlands occur along our coasts, such as estuaries and sometimes even coral reefs.

Destruction of wetlands releases all the pollutants retained by the areas over the years onto the surface, which could have very dangerous repercussions.

According to the latest national wetland inventory, the Free State has more wetlands than any of the other provinces in South Africa; a total of 54 000 wetlands. Most of these wetlands are located in the drier western region of the Free State where they occur as depression wetlands, commonly referred to as pans.

About 70 people were temporarily employed as wetland rehabilitators in 2010.

The preliminary programme for the day includes the Eco-schools award ceremony where schools are awarded certificates for taking part in projects developed to improve, maintain and sustain environmental management and wetlands. The aim of the programme is to improve environmental management and promote environmental learning in schools.

The District Mayor of Thabo Mofutsanyane, Ms. Mathokoana Mopedi will be the guest speaker for the day.

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**Issued by Communication Unit
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