

Water on line

Protect our wetlands

“Wetlands are an important part of the ecosystem, as they provide many benefits, not only to the natural environment, but also to the people's livelihoods,” says Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Barbara Thomson.

*Wetlands in urban areas add value to communities.
Image credit: Culture trip*

The minister is encouraging South Africans to get involved in [protection and conservation of wetlands](#) in the country.

Included in the benefits that a [wetland](#) affords is the reduction of flooding, replenishing of drinking water, filter waste and provision of urban green spaces, while reducing the impacts of [droughts](#) and floods by regulating stream flow.

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Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Barbara Thomson

As the number of people living in cities continues to increase, the benefits of wetlands become more crucial, she says.

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Wetlands in urban areas are also important for recreational purposes among others, adding value to communities and, not to mention, how they help to nurture our diverse birdlife. Despite this, according to the [Department of Environmental Affairs](#), urban wetlands have been regarded as wastelands, with their vital importance and functions not being fully understood and often [becoming dumping grounds](#) for rubble and waste.

*Manual construction of a gabion wall to rehabilitate the Seekoeivlei wetland employing local people from Memel.
Image credit: internationalflyerz*

Through the department's investment under the [Working for Wetlands programme](#) – which is implemented through the government's Expanded Public Works Programme

(EPWP) methodology – it has improved and secured the health of more than 80 000 hectares of wetland area, while providing 17 575 employment opportunities.

The programme focuses on rehabilitation, restoration maintenance and protection interventions to ensure healthy wetlands.