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SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CapeNature welcomes 475 new participants

WEEKEND ARGUS REPORTER

CAPENATURE has proudly welcomed 475 enthusiastic new participants into its three-year Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), reaffirming its commitment to skills development, environmental conservation, and community upliftment across the Western Cape.

This significant intake was celebrated at Kogelberg Nature Reserve on Mandela Day, 18 July, a date that serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggle against poverty and inequality. The event not only marked the beginning of new opportunities for participants but also highlighted the vital role of meaningful employment in fostering social change.

The 2023 Mandela Day theme, "It's still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity," resonates deeply with CapeNature's goals for the EPWP. The programme aims to address both environmental challenges and socio-economic issues faced by communities throughout the province. By providing a comprehensive platform for training, mentorship, and hands-on experience, CapeNature is poised to make a lasting impact on the lives of participants and their communities.

Participants in the EPWP will receive critical training in areas such as invasive species management, wild-fire response, biodiversity monitoring, and eco-tourism across various provincial nature reserves. The programme prioritises the inclusion of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, aligning with national targets to support vulnerable groups. Between 2022 and 2025, the programme is set to employ a total of 1,366 participants, offering three-year contracts instead of just one, thereby providing greater job security and opportunities for growth.

MEC for Local Government, Environmental Affairs and Development Planning, Anton Bredell, emphasised the transformative power of the EPWP during the welcoming event. "During this time, there will be opportunities for training, and you will have the chance to explore your particular interests in conservation, tourism, or working with our many neighbours and stakeholder communities," he said.

Bredell highlighted past successes where participants have made significant advancements in personal development, including securing permanent employment as a direct result of their commitment to the programme.

The inspiring stories of past participants illustrate the programme's potential. Thabiso Mokoena, who joined the EPWP after completing his undergraduate diploma, started as an Environmental Education Officer and is now a successful SMME Development Specialist. He attributes his career progression to the valuable skills and mentorship he received through the programme. As CapeNature continues to cultivate a skilled workforce, it remains dedicated to empowering individuals and fostering sustainable development in the Western Cape.

This initiative not only invests in people but also in the preservation of nature, proving that meaningful employment can yield profound societal benefits.