



## THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST CELEBRATES THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR RIVERS IN THE MARICO RIVER CATCHMENT

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According to the Water Research Commission, by 2050 the world's population is estimated to have swollen to 9 billion human beings, all competing for the same, dwindling natural resources. 25% Of people in developing countries already have to purchase their drinking water from private vendors while only 58% of people on the African continent have access to safe drinking water. In light of this gloomy reality the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) commemorated the International Day of Action for Rivers on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> of March to promote the conservation of our healthy rivers and to call for the improvement of policies and practices affecting this precious commodity.

“The International Day of Action for Rivers is set aside as a day to take note of victories such as dam removal and river restoration across the planet. The day also provides an opportunity for us to educate one another about the threats facing our rivers and to learn about better water and energy solutions. By acting together we demonstrate that these issues are not merely local but global in scope and consequence,” said Bridget Corrigan, Project Executant of the EWT's Healthy Rivers Project.

The EWT's Healthy Rivers Project has a strong focus on the headwaters of the Marico River in the North West Province and led a party of media and community stakeholders on a tour through the area on the International Day of Action for Rivers.

“The Marico has been selected as the focus area because of its relatively good ecological condition and its importance to water users downstream. This project also functions as a valuable case study by providing the scientific information necessary to protect river sections identified in the National Freshwater Ecosystems Priority Areas (NFEPA) project. The outcomes of the project include the protection of these river segments through biodiversity stewardship agreements with local landowners and management plans being put in place; the re-establishment and protection of populations of various Red Data fish species through the development of fish sanctuaries in these river sections; and the development of sustainable use activities with the relevant stakeholders to ensure the long-term protection of the system,” continued Corrigan.

The EWT's Healthy Rivers Project aims to proactively address the need to conserve threatened freshwater aquatic species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people. The EWT

**Physical Address:** Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,  
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

**Postal Address:** Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa

**Tel:** +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** [ewt@ewt.org.za](mailto:ewt@ewt.org.za) **Web:** [www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za)

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

**NPO Number:** 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature  
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has been working on the fringes of water conservation for many years, focusing on wetland conservation and restoration, riverine habitat rehabilitation and the conservation of river and wetland dependant species such as cranes, Pel's Fishing Owls and Giant Bullfrogs as indicators of the river and wetland health. Since its inception in 2010 the Healthy Rivers Project has developed a robust network of stakeholders and has assisted the local Marico Catchment Conservation Association with their applications to declare a Protected Area and Nature Reserve around key freshwater priority areas. The EWT is also working with the North West Parks and Tourism Board and the North West Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism to develop a Biodiversity Stewardship Programme for the province.

“Due to its ecological and cultural value, the conservation of this river system is a clear imperative. This flagship river of national importance is also surrounded by a number of unique sites such as the dolomitic eyes where crystal clear water bubbles up from aquifers underneath the surface; the tufa waterfall formations - a living waterfall that is extremely rare in South Africa; and many sensitive aquatic species. We have a duty to ourselves and all those who come after us to ensure that our rivers and fresh water sources are conserved and remain unpolluted for the very simple fact that there can be no life of any kind without water,” concluded Corrigan.

The Healthy Rivers Project is sponsored by the Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Charitable Foundation and Rand Merchant Bank. Transport to the Groot Marico was sponsored by Nissan.

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**Contact:** Bridget Corrigan  
Project Executant  
Source to Sea Programme: Healthy Rivers  
Endangered Wildlife Trust  
Tel: +27 11 372 3600  
[bridgetc@ewt.org.za](mailto:bridgetc@ewt.org.za)

and

Nomonde Mxhalisa  
Communications Manager  
Endangered Wildlife Trust  
Tel: +27 11 372 3600  
[nomondem@ewt.org.za](mailto:nomondem@ewt.org.za)

**Physical Address:** Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,  
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**Tel:** +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** [ewt@ewt.org.za](mailto:ewt@ewt.org.za) **Web:** [www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za)

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