
South Africa: "Around me, despite good rains, countless fountains are drying up"

The expansion of monoculture tree plantations in the temperate region of the globe is provoking concern due to its negative effects on grasslands that are essential for the world's food production and biodiversity conservation. The shortage of water is one of the most important negative effects of this development in temperate countries and South Africa is a good (bad) example.

A meeting will be held on Friday 25 June at the Nelspruit Botanical Garden, Mpumalanga, to address the current situation of water supply in that country. Delegates from various organizations will talk about the impact of tree monoculture plantations, the state of Mpumalanga's rivers, possible alternative agriculture for the region -as hemp and herbs-, sustainable agriculture, biodiversity in the area and the effect of pollutants on rainfall.

The aim of the meeting, organized by SAWAC (Southern African Water Crisis) is to create informed awareness around the looming water crisis and to establish real contact between relevant stakeholders. It is the intention, to determine the extent of the problem, and to look for possible solutions.

AGENDA (preliminary)

- Mr. Dirk Versfeld, CSIR: The plantation model, effects upon natural and social environment.
- Mr. Morne Lizamore, Dept. Water and Forestry: Stating the facts. The current situation officially.
- Mr. Shaun McCartney, Mondi: The company, the natural, social environment, the future.
- Mr. Gerrit Marais, SAFCOL, The company, the environment and the future.
- Ms. Felicity Weir, SAFCOL: Plantations, the environment, the water.
- Mr. Donald Strydom, Swadini Reptile Park: Plantations and the environment, reptiles.
- Mr. Johann Engelbrecht Lydenburg, Fish Research Institute: Plantations and the environment. Aquatic life.
- Mr. Karel de Wet, Dept. Nature Conservation: Distribution of mammals in Mpumalanga.
- Mr. John McAllistar, Dept. Nature Conservation: Distribution of birds in relation to mono-culture tree plantations.
- Ms. Rosemary du Preez, Agricultural Research Council: Herbs/Medicinal plants. Value and conservation. Large scale potential.
- Mr. Tony Poulter, Working for Water: Working for water... Is it working ?
- Mr. Mark Schoeman, Water Research Council: Pollution and rainfall, The WWW and the possibilities to continue this forum on-line.
- Mr. Davin, Earth Life Africa: Plantations are not forests!
- Mr. Anton Lindstrom, Dept. Nature Conservation: Wetland conservation

People interested or wanting to attend or to receive further information, please contact Philip Owen, A text transcript of the meeting will be published on the internet.

Source: Philip Owen, 24/5/99.

