

**OPENING ADDRESS BY HER WORSHIP CLLR
TLOTLANANG MOGOTLANE THE EXECUTIVE
MAYOR OF WATERBERG DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY
DURING THE DISTRICT WETLANDS FOR
PROSPERITY WORKSHOP HELD ON THE 22ND
SEPTEMBER 2015 AT MOGALAKWENA COUNCIL
CHAMBER AT 10H00.**

Programme Director,

Mayor of Mogalakwena Local Municipality Cllr Parks
Sebatjane,

All Mayors in the District,

Speakers and Chief Whips,

Magoshi arena,

All Councillors present,

Representative of ICLEI-Local Governments for
Sustainability Ms Liz Metcalfe,

Directors and Deputy Director from various institutions,

Representatives from SALGA,

Representatives from South African National Biodiversity
Institute,

Representatives from US AID and Department of
Environmental Affairs,

Representative of Waterberg Conservation Forum Mr Chris
Wagner,

**Presenters and Facilitators,
NGOs and Representatives of Working for Wetlands,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.**

Good morning. Thobela!

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to be part of the wetlands for prosperity workshop. On behalf of the people of Waterberg, I really thank the organisers for choosing the district because of its biodiversity and eco-tourism.

We are meeting here today as we celebrate Tourism and Heritage Month. Tourism Month opens the door to new opportunities, and this is a good time to focus more than ever before on promoting our amazing offering to domestic and international tourists.

September is also a Heritage Month in our country as we seek to promote and preserve South Africa's living heritage. Our heritage is part of the South African story. This workshop takes place at the right.

Programme Director, we are also excited that the Local Action for Biodiversity programme is going to be implemented in our district. Let me from the onset, declare that we shall support this programme.

Wetlands are complex and dynamic ecosystems that are extremely important to society and provide significant economic, social and cultural benefits. Wetlands support our agricultural activities by providing a source of water for irrigation and livestock and for domestic consumption.

Many coastal and inland wetlands are popular locations for tourism and recreational activities such as swimming, boating, fishing, camping and bird watching thus offering income opportunities for local communities.

Wetlands also act as natural sponges that store water in times of heavy rainfall and release it during dry periods. And in a dry country like South Africa, this is crucial.

By regulating water flows during floods, wetlands reduce flood damage and help prevent soil erosion. Wetlands also purify water by acting as natural filters and trapping pollutants, which include heavy metals and disease-causing bacteria and viruses.

Despite the valuable services provided by Wetlands, it has been found that they are the most threatened ecosystems globally. It is estimated that in South Africa alone we have lost an estimated 50% of wetlands through unwise and poor land management.

Programme Director, Waterberg Wetlands are classified as the most clean and fresh natural biologically diverse ecosystems in the District Environment region.

They occur in all River Catchments of the Waterberg, namely the Mokolo River Catchment, The Crocodile River Catchment, the Nyl River Catchment.

The Waterberg Nylovlei is the largest inland floodplain wetland system in South Africa. Nylovlei is within the world renowned UNESCO Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. The Waterberg Nylovlei is our pride in Eco-Tourism, a leisure destination of choice in Limpopo.

Nylovlei Nature Reserve is a 40 square kilometre protected area, lying on the floodplain of the Nyl River and the uppermost section of the Mogalakwena River. The area has been declared a RAMSAR Wetland site because of its international biodiversity conservation importance that is endemic to the area.

All our Waterberg Wetlands are not in a good state. There is great need to develop a Regional Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Plan for the Waterberg Wetlands in promotion of Biodiversity Conservation and Eco-Tourism.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all know that partnerships and community involvement will be critical in sustaining the Nylovlei Nature reserve as a Wetland of International Significance. Environmental education is very important for sustainability of the area.

We are asking for your help in turning the tide and helping to create awareness of how essential wetlands are for our future. Ignoring protection of the wetlands can only result in disasters, food insecurity and the destruction of biodiversity that would ultimately hasten the onset of the negative impacts of climate change.

Let's work together to secure our Wetlands for them to provide for our future and the future generations. I wish this workshop fruitful deliberations.

Together we move Waterberg and South Africa Forward

I THANK YOU.