

Being the custodian of our national heritage

By Nomonde Vuthela

Photo: Sgt David Nomtshongwana

International Environmental Day celebrated on 5 June 2003 is about the environment, birds, bees and how human beings are part of the equation.

The SANDF Environmental Awards held on this day at the SA Air Force College in Thaba Tshwane honours not only the recipients, but also the parents,

teachers and community leaders who teach children not to litter or that "an apple a day keeps the doctor away". For it is such pieces of advice that make a child aspire to protect the world.

Every single South African is born with a direct link to the environment, a relationship so often undermined by some and scorned by many. Humanity is expected to take from the environment all that is required while at the same time conscientiously making

Concentrate on what we have.

the effort to maintain a balance that is sustainable so that provision is made for tomorrow.

The SANDF Environmental Awards acknowledge those units and individuals that go the extra mile to ensure that the environment is looked after as the people endeavour to live off it.

Front, fltr: Sgt Tania Snyman (AFB Louis Trichardt), Col D.T. Delcarme (AFB Louis Trichardt), WO2 Chengan (ASB Durban), Cpl Dharma Thumbiran (ASB Durban), Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge (Deputy Minister of Defence), Lt Col Frans Furstenburg (ASB Oudtshoorn), Capt Rod Jefferey (RFIM Cape Town), WO1 Piet Nortjé (121 SAI Bn) and Col Philip van Dyk (ASB Potchefstroom). Back, fltr: Maj Roy Bosman (ASB Durban), Capt Martin van Jaarsveld (AFB Louis Trichardt), Capt Marais (ASB Kimberley), Brig Gen Pierre du Plessis (AFB Hoedspruit), Brig Gen Rod Penhall (AFB Waterkloof), WO1 (Ret) D.C. Swart (SAS SALDANHA), Capt (SAN) Rob Shelley (SAS SALDANHA), Brig Gen Bobo Moerane (DOD Log Sup Fmn), Capt Hennie Davel (RFIM Polokwane) and Capt Deon van Tonder (ASB Potchefstroom).



Because water is one of Africa's scarce resources the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2003 as the International Year of Freshwater. It is the view of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) that unless local wetlands are rehabilitated, South Africa will not have enough fresh water by the year 2020.

The Water Affairs and Environmental Departments together with the Mondi Wetlands Project (MWP) are currently involved in a programme designed to reverse the situation and rehabilitate the Ntsikeni Nature Reserve in the Eastern Cape, according to a newspaper article. The Ntsikeni Wetland and its catchment area which is situated near Kokstad was declared a reserve because it is one of the few remaining high-altitude wetlands which has good water, the article further indicated.

Noted in the article is the fact that 50% of South Africa's wetlands supply water to millions of poor people who do not have access to drinkable water, except for the water from the

wetlands, and that so far the repair work has cost the government and the MWP R3.4 million. The article also praised the Government's new Water Act as probably "one of the best water acts in the world" and that it could help alleviate the situation.

Presenting the DOD Annual Environmental Awards, the Deputy Minister of Defence, Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, announced that the trials for the Environment Management System would commence within the next month. She said, "This is a major achievement and a milestone in the history of the environment function in the DOD, which ushers in an entirely new frontier in the military integrated environment management."

"Another milestone I wish to mention is that of the 2003 International Conference on Military Integrated Environmental Management which will be jointly hosted by the Defence Department of South Africa-United States Committee (DEFKOM)," continued the Deputy Minister of Defence.

The welcome event where environmental scientists, military training area managers and military planners from around the globe can share expertise will take place during the first week of August 2003. About 120 local and foreign military delegates from all over the world are expected to attend.

Ms Madlala-Routledge congratulated those military units, bases and individuals that "stand out" by their achievements in environmental performance. She said that this furthermore served as a commitment to civil society and other

state organs and that the SANDF takes seriously its role as the custodian of our national heritage.

The SA National Parks Floating Trophy was awarded to Army Support Base Oudtshoorn for the highest level of military integrated environmental management in the DOD.

Army Support Base Potchefstroom won the Endangered Wildlife Trust Floating Trophy for ecological management, the Keep Durban Beautiful Award for integrated waste management, as well as the Professor Kristo Pienaar Floating Trophy for environmental education and training categories. ASB Potchefstroom was also the runner-up for the Caltex Floating Trophy in the base environmental management category.

After an absence of two years 121 SA Infantry Battalion was awarded the Caltex Floating Trophy for base environmental management and was also joint winner in the integrated waste management category. The unit's good performance also earned it the place of runner-up in the ecological management category.

The Conservamus Floating Trophy for environmental services was awarded to Cpl Dharma Thumbiran of Army Support Base Durban. The team of Col Phillip van Dyk and Capt Deon van Tonder of Army Support Base Potchefstroom were worthy runners-up. Another worthy runner-up in the Conservamus competition was Capt Hennie Davel of the Regional Facilities Interface Managers Office in Polokwane.

Army Support Base Durban was awarded the Aquator Award for the efficient use of water, and was appointed a runner-up in the environmental education and training competition.

Ms Madlala-Routledge challenged all participants to increase the degree of environmental performance and involvement, especially in the areas of integrated waste management and energy and water efficiency. 

