



OLIFANTS RIVER WETLAND AWARENESS Ebenhaeser

“The Ebenhaeser Wetland is found on the southern bank of the Olifants River, approximately 15 kilometres upstream of the river estuary and the Atlantic Ocean. River water quantity and quality play an important role in the

irrigation and farming practices are resulting in increased levels of salt in the soil, and a decline in fertility.” Explains Sarlon Mannel, a DWAF trained water mentor, local environmentalist, and board member of the

Long term goals:

- Protect and preserve the wetland and other natural areas around Ebenhaeser.
- Develop a set of environmental awareness materials focussing on the wetland, river and estuary.
- Establish an environmental club.
- Develop a hiking trail.
- Create employment and empower the local community.

Contact:

Olifants River Wetlands Awareness Ebenhaeser MPRC

Sarlon Mannel and Frederick Fortuin
PO Box 37
Ebenhaeser
8149

Tel: 076 161 7609 or
027 217 1833

Fax: 027 217 2481 / 1930



survival of the wetland, and the livelihoods of the subsistence fishermen.

Ebenhaeser Multi-Purpose Resource Centre (MPRC).

“Over time, the river and wetland has slowly degraded, probably due to the changes in land use and the increased use of agrochemicals such as fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. To make matters worse, poor

Ebenhaeser is a community with about 150 emerging farmers, who each own a piece of land where they plant their crops. Most of the farmers also have a few head of cattle and the cattle need pasture. The farmers burn the reeds in the wetlands,





Water and the Environment



forcing new growth which is good for grazing. “The farmers do not realise the damage that are doing. The reeds are slowly starting to encroach into agricultural land. The burning of the reeds is also killing and displacing many birds,” explains Mannel.

According to Mannel, “The broader community and specifically the small-scale farmers need to be made aware of how vulnerable and delicate the eco-system bordering their farms is.”

The Ebenhaeser MPRC has initiated an Olifants River Wetlands Awareness programme. It aims to provide information and create awareness that will ensure the sustainable utilisation of the wetland not only by the cattle farmers, but also by the subsistence fishermen and local ecotourism initiatives.

The long term goals of the project are to:

- Protect and preserve the wetland and other natural areas around Ebenhaeser.
- Develop a set of environmental awareness materials focussing on the wetland, river and estuary.
- Establish an environmental club.
- Develop a hiking trail.
- Create employment and empower the local community.

“The farmers, fishermen and community will all benefit by taking ownership of the project and becoming custodians of the river and wetland,” says Mannel.

