

At work. NEMA officials cut down eucalyptus trees at River Rwizi banks in Bubare Sub-county, Mbarara District last week. PHOTO BY FELIX AINEBYOONA

Wetland restoration: Nema cuts down trees, plantations

Appeal. District leaders have appealed to the environment authority to work with local teams.

BY FELIX AINEBYOONA
&FELIX BASIIME
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

MBARARA/FORT PORTAL. In a bid to save River Rwizi, officials from the National Environment Management Authority (Nema) have cut down hundreds of acres of eucalyptus trees and banana plantations that were in wetlands of Nyakayojo and Bubaare sub-counties.

Mr Herbert Nabaasa, the senior district support officer in charge of fragile eco system in Western Uganda, said on Tuesday that Nema had destroyed plantations and forests covering 12 kilometres.

The restoration of the wetlands in the two sub-counties kicked off in last month. Mr Nabasa said as an environment watch-dog, they are targeting to restore all wetlands and river catchments in Mbarara, Isingiro, Kiruhura, Sheema, Buhweju, Ntungamo, Lyantonde and Rakai districts.

"River Rwizi is a major water source for five districts. It starts from Buhweju through Mbarara, Isingiro and also parts of Ntungamo. Unfortunately, the river is drying up because of human activities," Mr Nabaasa said.

Drainage channels

He added that they have also closed up all the drainage channels dug by residents to drain water in a bid to create gardens and farms.

"We are targeting the entire catchment area. This therefore serves as a warning to all people, we have started destroying structures and nobody should return to those same places," Mr Nabaasa warned.

He added: "We served them warning notices asking them to leave the catchment areas. In case they defy, they will pay all the restoration costs and be imprisoned."

According to authorities, government earmarked Shs200m to be spent every year on the restoration of River Rwizi.

Initiative

The team, according to Mr Nabaasa has also evicted several people from wetlands in Kiruhura and Buhweju districts since October last year.

The environment authorities have also planted trees in the 200 and 100 meters buffer zone for lakes and rivers respectively.

The Mbarara District speaker, Mr Balam Ndyaguma, on Wednesday said Nema should be vigilant and

CONTINUES TO PAGE 10

REPORT

The cost. According to the Uganda Wetlands Atlas, wetland destruction costs Uganda nearly Shs2 billion annually, and contamination of water resources, which is partly caused by reduced buffering capacity of wetlands near open water bodies, costs the country nearly Shs38 billion annually.

briefly

Veterans advised

MBARARA. The Minister of State for Defence in-charge of Veteran Affairs, Rtd Lt Col Bright Rwamirama, has challenged veterans to work hard in order to remain relevant in their communities. Lt Col Rwamirama told veterans from the greater Ankole sub-region at Mbarara District Council Hall on Tuesday that instead of lamenting about poverty they should organise themselves in groups or co-operatives in order to tap into government programmes and be able to secure funding from donors. [Rajab Mukombozi]

Parents told to help

KABALE. The Kabale District chairperson, Mr Patrick Besigye Keihwa, has asked parents to support government to raise academic standards in schools. Mr Keihwa on Tuesday while handing over 834 iron sheets to 14 primary schools in the district said although the government provides much of the funding to schools, there is need for parents to back it by offering food and other scholastic materials to their children. He castigated parents who have abandoned their responsibilities. [Emmanuel Arinaitwe]

CamScanner