

Severe pollution cuts short 2020 *Swim for Rivers* initiative

Cape Town open water swimmer Andrew Chin is taking to the water once again with fellow athletes Dr Mandy Uys and Joy Roach from East London, to raise awareness around the poor state of our country's rivers and to highlight the urgent need to restore them. However, after communication with farmers in the area, original plans to swim a 50-60km stretch of the Wilge River in Gauteng have been scrapped due to the severely polluted state of the river, which would have exposed swimmers to untenable health risks.

Amongst other pollutants, the Wilge River carries high levels of faecal coliform in the water – including E.Coli – due to runoff from the many farms, mines, and residential areas it flows through.

These conditions strongly highlight the issue at the very heart of the Swim for Rivers initiative, but Chin, Roach and Uys have decided to go ahead with a swim on a cleaner, 10km section of the river's main tributary, the Bronkhorstspruit, which will limit the risk to personal health.

The swimmers will set off from the Bronkhorstspruit Dam wall at 08h00 on Sunday 9 February, accompanied by support crew of paddlers, and have issued an open invitation to any swimmers to join them for this important awareness-raising swim. This weekend marks the sixth event of the "Swim for Rivers" extreme swimming challenge that was launched by the courageous Capetonian in 2015.

The challenge involves athletes attempting to swim a distance of up to 350km in a major river in each of South Africa's nine provinces. The swims aim to spark debate about what the authorities and public can and should be doing to save our life-giving rivers.

As part of their river health awareness weekend, the group will also participate in a World Wetlands Day cleanup of the Hennop's

River at River View Park, Centurion on Saturday 8 February from 08h00, coordinated by Fresh.NGO action group in association with a number of other environmental non-profit organisations. 2020 Swim for Rivers has been sponsored by the 8 Mile Club and friends of founding swimmer Andrew Chin, and is supported by the Bronkhorstpruit Catchment Forum, Impact Adventure Africa and Media Ventures.