



# KRUGER2CANYON

## NEWS



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Hoedspruit, Limpopo email: editor@kruger2canyon.co.za

# When the Heavens Opened and the Rivers Rose How Farm Watch's Unified Force Held Hoedspruit Together



Mark Bishop

**Hoedspruit has always lived in a delicate balance with water. The rivers that sustain our farms, wildlife and livelihoods can, in a heartbeat, become forces of destruction. Over the past two weeks, that balance tipped violently.**

From Thursday, 8 January, relentless rains pounded the Lowveld. By the second weekend, the Blyde, Zandspruit, Klaserie and Oliphants rivers had burst their banks, roads disappeared beneath swirling brown water, bridges failed, and entire pockets of our region were cut off

from the outside world. For many, it was the worst flooding since 2012. And yet, in the chaos, something remarkable happened. Hoedspruit did not descend into panic. It organised. It mobilised. It responded.

At the centre of that response stood Farm Watch - our crime-fighting and security body, but also a fully-fledged community disaster response unit. Tested under extreme pressure, Farm Watch's newly unified structure proved its worth not on paper, but in mud, rain, darkness and danger.

This is the story of how a volunteer organisation became the backbone of Hoedspruit's flood response - when time,

weather and circumstance gave no second chances.

### From Safety to Survival: A System Built for Crisis

Just over two years ago, Hoedspruit's two principal safety organisations - Farm Watch and Town Watch - merged under one umbrella: Farm Watch. The intention was simple but ambitious: remove duplication, streamline communication, and create a single, powerful safety structure serving the town and rural surrounds alike.

Few could have imagined that within months, this new system would face its greatest trial - not in the form of crime, but nature.

The floods of January 2026 became the first true stress-test of Farm Watch's unified model. And it passed with flying colours. What distinguished Hoedspruit from many other flood-affected towns was not luck, nor geography - but readiness.

While rainfall warnings were being issued elsewhere, Farm Watch volunteers were already monitoring river levels along the R527, at low bridges near Driehoek, the Blyde River crossings, farm access routes stretching towards Moria, The Oaks and the Air Force Base perimeter, and the R40 from Bushbuckridge to Phalaborwa. No access route was left to chance.

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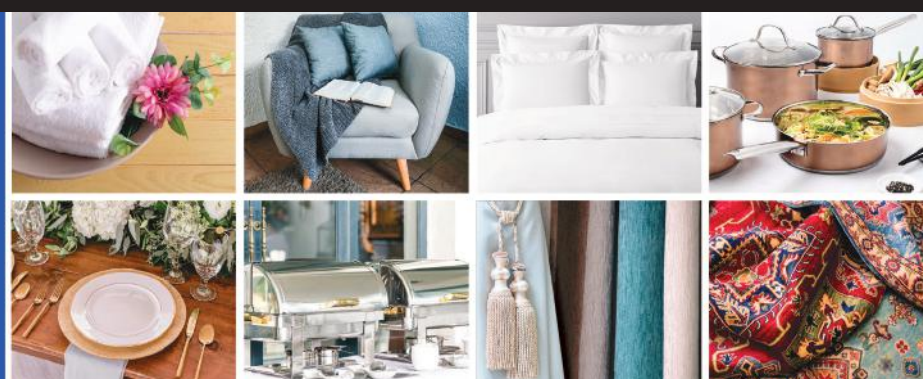
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