



WASTE SULLIES Nahal Hava in the South. (Dead Sea Drainage Authority)

Dead Sea Drainage Authority to restore polluted Nahal Hava

• By SHARON UDASIN

Aiming to revive a riverbed that has been used for decades as an illegal waste dump, the Dead Sea Drainage Authority has embarked upon a restoration plan for Nahal Hava in Mitzpe Ramon, the authority announced on Sunday.

Working in conjunction with the Open Spaces Protection Fund and the Environmental Protection Ministry, the authority has launched a restoration plan that is also set to involve the conveyance of water to local moshavim for desert agriculture.

The riverbed receives a seasonal stream that initially collects rainwater from the slopes of Mount Sa'ad, which flows to Nahal Teref and Nahal Daras down to Nahal Zin, the authority explained.

In the Nahal Hava riverbed, decades of illegally dumped waste has accumulated, and near the head of the stream channels have long been blocked.

"Hundreds of dunams have

been transformed to a landfill in the backyard of Mitzpe Ramon, adjacent to the tourist area of the community through which the Israel National Trail passes," the authority said.

Planning for Nahal Hava's NIS 6 million rehabilitation began in conjunction with the Mitzpe Ramon local council in 2011, according to the authority. In June 2014, the Dead Sea Drainage Authority began implementing the rehabilitation work, which consists of treatment, separation, disposal and recycling of waste, as well as a reconstruction of the channel and development of hiking and biking trails. The improvements also include the establishment of a campsite in order to attract travelers to the region, the authority said.

The entire project is expected to be completed by August, and drainage authority officials expressed hopes that the changes will transform the area into a destination for backpackers, as well as allow farmers to save fresh water.