



World Wetlands Day 2015

World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on 2 February on the anniversary of adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on in 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands holds the unique distinction of being the first modern treaty between nations aimed at conserving natural resources.

Wetlands offer substantial economic, social and environmental values and if managed sustainably, will provide benefits to future generations. As such, raising awareness and understanding of Wetlands and their services is essential for ensuring their wise use and conservation.

All over the world on World Wetlands Day, government agencies, non-government organisations and community groups undertake actions to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands.



About Wetlands

Wetlands include a wide variety of natural and human-made habitat types ranging from rivers to coral reefs. Swamps, marshes, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, or bodies of water - whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary are examples of Wetlands. Wetland ecosystems are often undervalued and few realise the range of products derived from freshwater habitats like wetlands.

Benefits of Wetlands

Wetlands:

- Purify and replenish our water;
- Act as a natural sponge against flooding and drought and protect our coastline;
- Abound with biodiversity, and are a vital means of storing carbon;
- Provide a habit for wildlife;

- Control erosion; and
- Serve as natural recreation areas.

Unfortunately, Wetland benefits are not widely known; they are often viewed as wasteland and their ecological importance is often overlooked for economic benefits.

Threats to Wetland's

Recent studies have indicated that two-thirds of the world's Wetlands have disappeared since the 1900. Development and conversion continue to pose major threats to Wetlands, despite their value and importance. Some of these threats to wetlands include:

Industrial Threats

A major threat to Wetlands is the draining for commercial development, including tourism facilities, or agricultural land. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of Wetlands have been drained for agriculture. Globally, agriculture accounts for sixty-five percent (65%) of the total water withdrawal on Earth.

- **Pollution**

Pollution in Wetlands is a growing concern, affecting drinking water sources and biological diversity. Drainage and run-off from fertilized crops and pesticides used in industry introduce nitrogen and phosphorous nutrients and other toxins like mercury to water sources. These chemicals can affect the health and reproduction of species, posing a serious threat to Wetland biological diversity.



- **Climate change**



Climate change is also taking its toll on Wetlands. Global warming is causing Polar ice to melt and sea levels to rise. This in turn is leading to shallow Wetlands being swamped and some species of mangrove trees being submerged and drowned. Yet at the same time, other Wetlands e.g. estuaries, floodplains, and marshes, are being destroyed through drought.

This is the time to act. With World Wetland's Day approaching, we all can learn about Wetlands and recognize the importance of these ecosystems and the role we all have to play in their conservation and management.

Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: "Our Earth, Our Environment", C/o EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, Georgetown or email us at eit.epaguyana@gmail.com.