



World Wetlands Day
Monday, 2 February 2015



Wetlands for our Future

Wetlands and the Sustainable Development Goals

The sustainable use of water and wetlands, by protecting the services they provide, is critical to enable society to achieve sustainable social and economic development, adapt to climate change and improve social cohesion and economic stability. The proposed United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a universal agenda that, for the first time, recognises the need for restoration and management of water-related ecosystems, including wetlands, as a basis for addressing water scarcity and water risks. Wetlands are a solution for several key challenges around the world related to water, food and climate, and key to meeting the SDGs. Most of the proposed SDGs are relevant in some way or another to wetlands, but the following are of particular importance:

Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Rice grown in wetland paddies is the staple diet of nearly three billion people. The average human consumes 19 kg of fish each year. Most commercial fish breed and raise their young in coastal marshes and estuaries. 70 % of all fresh water extracted globally is used for crop irrigation.

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Wetlands ensure fresh water, help replenish ground aquifers, and purify and filter harmful waste from water – such as fertilizers and pesticides, as well heavy metals and toxins from industry.

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Wetlands act as natural sponges absorbing rainfall, providing protection against coastal and river flooding to (partially) offset the need for man-made infrastructure. They also help reduce drought, protect coastal areas for fisheries nurseries and regulate sediment transport thereby contributing to land formation and coastal zone stability.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Wetlands act as carbon sinks. Peatlands alone store more than twice as much as all the world's forests. Coastal wetlands reduce the impact of rising sea levels, acting as storm surge buffers and providing erosion control.



Convention on
Biological Diversity



COP12 / MOP7 / MOP1
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Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Without wetlands, the water cycle, carbon cycle and nutrient cycles would be significantly altered. Water cycles, essentially the continuous movement of water on, above and below the surface of the Earth, are of critical importance to biodiversity and to the functioning of virtually all terrestrial and coastal ecosystems.

Coastal wetlands are important for sustaining seas and marine resources, for example as nursery grounds for many marine fisheries.

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

The values of benefits provided by wetlands, per unit area, have been consistently shown to be orders of magnitude higher than for other ecosystems with the major benefit delivered through improving water security.

Information sourced from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

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Important links

- Convention on Biological Diversity: www.cbd.int
- Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets: www.cbd.int/sp
- CBD Programme of Work on Inland Waters Biodiversity: www.cbd.int/waters
- Global Biodiversity Outlook 4: www.cbd.int/gbo4
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention): www.ramsar.org
- World Wetlands Day 2015: www.worldwetlandsday.org
- Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>

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