



World Wetlands Day 2016

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on the 2nd of February, marking the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on February 02, 1971, in the Iranian City of Ramsar. This year's theme, "**Wetlands for our Future: Sustainable Livelihoods**" demonstrates the vital role of Wetlands for the future of humanity and specifically their relevance towards achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals.

About Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is near or at the surface of the soil, all year, or for varying periods of time, during the year. Wetlands include, lakes, rivers, swamps, marshes, wetgrasslands and mangroves forests. Wetlands are indispensable for the countless benefits or "ecosystem services" they provide humanity. Wetland services



The Pantanal which spans Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, is one of the largest and best preserved Wetlands in the world, covering a total area of 150,000km². Its complex system of marshlands, floodplains, lagoons and interconnected drainage lines is home to over 658 species of birds, 190 mammals, 50 reptiles, 270 fish species and a truly outstanding 1,132 species of butterflies.

range from freshwater supply, food and building materials, and biodiversity, to flood control, groundwater recharge, and climate

change mitigation. More than a billion people make a living from Wetlands from fishing, farming and even travel and tourism.



The plight of Wetlands

Wetlands continue to decline globally, both in area and in quality. The global extent of Wetlands is now estimated to have declined between 64-71% in the 20th century, and losses and degradation

continue worldwide. As a result, the ecosystem services that Wetlands provide to society are diminished. Adverse changes to wetlands, including coral reefs, are estimated to result in more than US\$20 trillion in losses of ecosystem services annually.

World Wetlands Day is intended to highlight the plight of Wetlands and to encourage policymakers to take actions to stop and reverse their loss and degradation and loss of services to people. As Wetlands decline so does the biodiversity they support. Scientific information already exists to understand the urgent need to take appropriate actions to conserve wetlands and their services to people.

Wetlands in Guyana

Here in Guyana, the Rupununi Wetland plays a very important role in the lives of thousands of indigenous people. The Wetland feeds rivers and waterways that are a source of drinking water and a main transportation route for the people living in the area. Also, the vegetation found in the Rupununi Wetlands is used by indigenous people for craft, traditional medicine, houses and food.



On the Coast our country, Mangrove Wetlands have the important functions of sea-defence and nurseries for fish and various crustaceans e.g. shrimp and crab. Mangroves are also a source of livelihood e.g. from honey-bee farms. These Wetlands face threats from extraction of trees for different reasons and from alteration due to human related Coastal activities. However, the Mangrove Rehabilitation Project (Implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture) has sought to raise awareness, among other activities, of the importance of Mangrove ecosystems in an effort promote their sustainable use.

All is not lost we can still protect our wetlands?

This World Wetlands Day, it is important for us to recognize that Wetlands are not *wastelands* as our sustainability depends on them being vibrant. Let's start by doing our part diligently to avoid further damage or to even reverse some of the damage caused to Wetlands. Here's what you can do;

- Dispose of your waste properly.
- Reduce the use of fertilizers, pesticides and harmful chemicals.
- Do not use endangered or threatened species as food or souvenirs
- Support conservation.
- Do not move wild plants or animals from one location to another.
- Encourage Wetland Protection in your community
- Lobby for Wetland Protection policies.

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 or you can contact the Agency on 225-5467-9.

Sources:

<http://www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day-2016>

<http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/en/>