

World Wetlands Day 2001

Wetland world - A world to discover!

In recent years, many people around the world have changed their negative perceptions of wetlands, and tremendous progress has been made towards a true recognition of their important functions and values.

Nevertheless, more has to be done, at all levels of society, to make decision-makers and the public further aware of the importance of wetlands for biodiversity conservation and peoples' well being.

World Wetlands Day 2001 should be an occasion to discover the concrete functions and values of wetlands in your country and, if possible, in the planetary cycles of climate and water.

To provide the basis for this activity, the Ramsar Bureau has produced briefing notes on wetland functions and values. They may assist you in producing relevant information related to wetlands in your country.

In the Northern Hemisphere, schools are in session on 2 February. The school system, together with the media, should offer the most effective vehicles for reaching very large sectors of the population.

In the Southern Hemisphere, in many countries schools will be in their summer recess, but wetlands should be at the peak of their splendor, a perfect time to highlight their values and functions, together with their beauty, through the media and community-based outdoor activities.

30 YEARS HELPING YOU CARE FOR YOUR WETLANDS!

2 February 2001 marks 30 years of work and progress by the Convention on Wetlands. The wetlands community around the world is invited to celebrate this anniversary on World Wetlands Day.

The Ramsar Administrative Authority in each country and the wetlands community at large are encouraged to focus on the efforts made, and the obstacles encountered, in implementing the three main commitments of the countries that have joined the Convention:

Commitment No. 1

Include sites in the List of Wetlands of International Importance and ensure their appropriate management. By July 2000, the 122 Contracting Parties to Ramsar had included 1029 sites in the Ramsar List, covering almost 80 million hectares.

- *How many Ramsar sites are in your country? Are they well managed? Are they facing particular threats? Do the public know that they are Ramsar sites and what this means?*
- *Are there other wetlands in the country that deserve to be included in the Ramsar List?*

You can refer for further information to the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*, adopted by the Convention in 1999 and published in Ramsar Handbook No 7.

Commitment No. 2

Ensure the wise use of all wetlands in the country. To do this the Convention encourages the development and application of National Wetland Policies or equivalent instruments. Many Contracting Parties have already done so.

- *Does your country have a National Wetland Policy or equivalent instrument? If so, is it being fully implemented? If not, is there a possibility to develop one? Ramsar Handbooks No. 1 to No. 6 deal with the application of the "wise use" concept.*

Commitment No. 3

International cooperation. The Convention requires that member countries cooperate in relation to "a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties". Ramsar Handbook No. 9 is devoted to the *Guidelines for international cooperation under the Ramsar Convention* adopted by the Conference of the Parties in 1999. These include issues related to international assistance to implement the Convention.

- *Does your country cooperate with neighboring and other countries in the application of the Convention? Could this cooperation be increased?*

The Ramsar Bureau will be happy to provide copies of materials mentioned in this brochure, as well as copies of the World Wetlands Day set of stickers, with a new sticker for the 30th Anniversary, and a new World Wetlands Day poster. For quick access to these materials, visit the World Wetlands Day section in our Web site at: <http://ramsar.org/>