

2 FEBRUARY
World Wetlands Day

*“Healthy Wetlands,
 Healthy People”*

**World Wetlands Day
 2008**

Mental well-being



Clean water



Water availability



Wetland food



Water-related diseases



Wetland medicines



Floods



Water pollution



Burning peatlands



Healthy wetlands, Healthy People: good wetland and water management will maximize the positives we see in the pictures above and minimize the negatives



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Wetlands and human health – an introduction

The Convention's suggested theme for World Wetlands Day, 2 February 2008, is *Healthy Wetlands, Healthy People*, and this will also be the theme for Ramsar's 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October-November 2008 in the Republic of Korea.

In our interpretation of this theme, we have taken the opportunity to introduce to the wetland community some topics that exemplify both the direct, positive effects on human health of maintaining healthy wetlands – such as the provision of food, clean water, pharmaceutical products, etc. – and the direct negative effects of mismanaging wetlands that result in the impairment of our health and even the

loss of life – such as through the effects of water-related diseases, burning peatlands, floods, and water pollution.

We aim to emphasise that the strong relationship between healthy functioning wetland ecosystems and human health underlines the importance of management strategies that support **both** the health of wetland ecosystems and the health of humans. And that the costs of poor management can be high – wetland-related diseases, for example, claim the lives of more than 3 million people every year and bring suffering to many more. Of course we don't suggest

that the management challenges have easy solutions – for any country, managing wetlands to keep them healthy and ensure that they continue to deliver ecosystem services for the benefit of people, while at the same time meeting the demands for water for growing crops, supplying energy and responding to the

needs of industry, requires a finely tuned balancing act. What is important is to value correctly the ecosystem services that intact, healthy wetlands supply when decisions on the human uses of available water are made.

Our WWD educational poster illustrates the key topics we have selected, and the accompanying thematic sheets will give a few 'soundbites' of information on each of the topics as they relate specifically to wetlands.

We have done no more than skim the surface of these topics. There is so much more we could say on these issues, and there are other topics we could have considered – but WWD is also a 'warm-up' for the Ramsar community, as a preparation for a more in-depth look at wetlands and human health being carried out right now by Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel. Their report will prepare the Convention for its consideration of wetlands and human health at COP10 and, if it is completed in time, may also provide useful background for all of us for World Wetlands Day.

Need to know a little more now?

We can suggest three key sources of information to broaden your knowledge of the key issues in keeping wetlands – and people – healthy:

1. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, especially those chapters dealing with human health. Begin here: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/Condition.aspx>
2. World Water Development Report 2: http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr2/table_contents.shtml
3. WHO web site on various issues related to water, sanitation and health: http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en/

