



Wetlands: essential for a sustainable urban future



Half of humanity lives in urban areas today. By 2050, urban population is projected to increase to 68% as more people move into cities in search of jobs. When unchecked, urbanization is a threat to urban wetlands, often drained, polluted and degraded in the pursuit of land for housing, agriculture and industry.

Urban wetlands make cities liveable

Reduce flooding

Wetlands absorb flood waters. During storms, rivers, ponds, lakes and marshes store heavy rainfall. In addition mangroves, salt marshes and coral reefs form buffers that protect coastal cities during storms surges. In 2012 coastal wetlands along the east coast of the US, helped avoid more than \$625 million in damages from Hurricane Sandy.

Replenish drinking water

Wetlands filter the water that seeps into ground water aquifers, which helps to replenish this important water source.

Filter waste and improve water quality

The silt-rich soil and abundant plant vegetation found in wetlands functions as a water filter that absorbs harmful toxins, agricultural pesticides and industrial waste from water.

The Nakivubo Swamp in Kampala, Uganda provides natural water filtering that is worth US\$2 million per year.

Improve urban air quality

Due to the abundant water and verdant plant life, wetlands produce moist air which naturally provides a cooling and cleansing atmosphere. This micro-climate effect provides relief in both tropical cities and in extremely arid regions.

Promote human well-being

Urban wetlands are natural green spaces where city residents can relax and enjoy access to a wide variety and diversity of plant and animal life. Studies confirm that interacting with nature improves our physical and emotional health.

Source of employment

Wetlands provide wood for building, reeds for weaving and medicinal plants and fruits; all products that are a source of income. Wetlands also attract tourists to swim, snorkel or birdwatch.

Key facts and considerations

- 64% of the world's wetlands have been lost since the 1900's.
- By 2030, the number of mega-cities will increase from 31 to 43.
- Many of these new cities will be in Asia and Africa.
- Cities account for 80% of global economic output

What are wetlands?

Urban and peri-urban wetlands are found in and around cities and their suburbs. They include rivers and their flood plains, lakes, swamps as well as salt marshes, mangroves and coral reefs.



Sustainable cities: retain restore and preserve urban wetlands

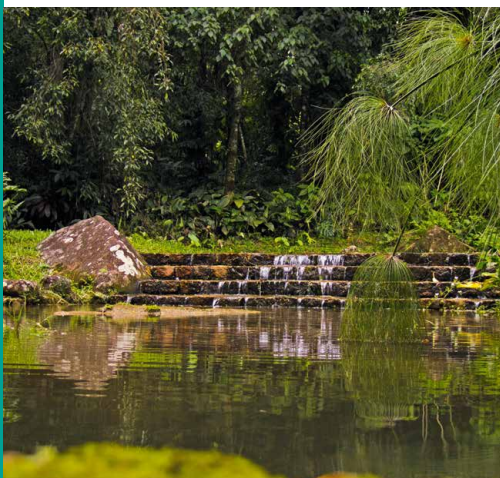


DO NOT

- Fill in or build over wetlands as this disrupts and reduces their ability to provide natural functions.
- Dump rubbish and waste as this degrades wetlands.
- Drain or burn peatlands, as this releases tons of carbon, built up over centuries into the atmosphere.
- Degrade mangroves or mine coral reefs as this exposes coastal cities to storm surges.

DO

- Integrate wetlands in urban land use planning.
- Preserve and restore urban wetlands as well as adopt policies that protect them.
- Involve local residents in wetland management and encourage sustainable use practices.
- Manage water consumption and promote efficient water use.
- Reduce harmful run-off of waste and pesticides.



Measures to help conserve urban wetlands

Wetlands of International Importance: network of protected sites

Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention each commit to designate wetlands considered of high value to their country onto the list of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). They also commit to the wise use and effective management of these Sites as a measure for their long term conservation. There are more than 2,300 Ramsar Sites, and information about each Site is available on the Ramsar Sites Information Service.

Wetland City Accreditation: encouraging the conservation of urban wetlands

Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention in 2015 adopted the Wetland City Accreditation, as a voluntary scheme to encourage cities conserve urban wetlands. Eligible cities receive a certification in recognition of deliberate actions taken to conserve, restore and sustainably use their urban wetlands.



Global response: Sustainable Development Goal 11

In 2015, the international community adopted a set of 17 goals as part of a new global agenda on sustainable development. SDG11 focuses on cities and the ambition is that by 2030 cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

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The Ramsar Convention



The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, is a global inter-governmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It is the only global treaty to focus on one single ecosystem.

