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For Immediate Release: January 26, 2011

40th Anniversary of Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Celebrated at Gibraltar Carlson High School on World Wetlands Day – February 2, 2011

Gibraltar, Michigan, USA – World Wetlands Day will be celebrated on February 2nd at Gibraltar Carlson High School with a Wetlands Expo (featuring displays from organizations dedicated to wetland preservation) from 9 AM-3 PM and a program that begins at 1 PM, featuring U.S. National Ramsar Committee Chairperson Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Congressman John Dingell, and DTE Energy Vice President Paul Fessler. This event is open to the public from 1-3 PM.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on February 2nd to raise public awareness of wetland values and benefits, and to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. It is celebrated each year on the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971.

The theme of this year's World Wetlands Day is wetlands and forests to highlight the critical role that forests play in the hydrologic cycle and the health of wetlands. These wetlands are important as they deliver significant ecosystem services, are cradles of biological diversity, and support a high diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

In 2010, Humbug Marsh was designated Michigan's first Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Humbug Marsh, located on the lower end of the Detroit River in the cities of Gibraltar and Trenton, is considered an internationally important wetland because of its ecological importance in the Detroit River corridor and the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. Humbug Marsh is also a part of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge, and represents the last mile of natural shoreline on the U.S. mainland of the Detroit River. Humbug Marsh serves as a vital habitat for 51 species of fish, 90 species of plants, 154 species of birds, seven species of reptiles and amphibians, and 37 species of dragonflies and damselflies.

"I am honored to be part of this 40th Anniversary Celebration of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands Treaty," noted Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Chair of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee. "On February 2nd, Ramsar Sites in over 160 countries will be celebrating this important day. I am excited to join in the activities at the Humbug Marsh Ramsar Site and am pleased to spend the day with the community. The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge has established partnerships for wetland conservation that are important to Michigan and the Great Lakes Basin, and are a model for the nation."

“It is truly a privilege for DTE Energy to be part of this World Wetlands Day celebration,” noted Paul Fessler, Vice President, Fossil Generation, DTE Energy. “We at DTE Energy are proud of our environmental work, which includes a particular focus on wetlands protection. In fact, four of our power plants are within the boundaries of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. And at our Monroe Power Plant, we have recreated wetlands on marginal farmland, providing wetland habitat for wildlife and an outdoor classroom for high school students.”

“Michigan is a state with an abundance of freshwater resources, rare habitats, and exceptional recreational opportunities,” noted Director Dan Wyant of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment. “The World Wetlands Day event is a wonderful time to celebrate our rich wetland resources, and encourage understanding and appreciation of these critical resources. Humbug Marsh is truly a gem in our state, and we are extremely proud to have our first Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.”

“I am indeed so proud that we have saved Humbug Marsh, that it has been designated Michigan’s first and only Wetland of International Significance, and that I will be with all of you for this 40th Anniversary Celebration,” notes Congressman John Dingell. “This Ramsar designation is an enormous source of pride for our people in southeast Michigan and is a critical element of quality of life for us, our children, and our grandchildren.”

The Detroit River IWR covers 48 miles of shoreline along the Detroit River and western Lake Erie (www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/). The Refuge focuses on conserving, protecting and restoring habitat for 30 species of waterfowl, 117 kinds of fish, and over 300 species of birds. The Detroit River IWR is the first international refuge in North America. Unique habitats being managed in the Refuge include islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals and riverfront lands.

For more information, contact Anne Hokanson of Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (517-241-4506), John Hartig of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (734-692-7608), John Austerberry of DTE Energy (313-235-8859), or Bill Stevenson, Principal of Gibraltar Carlson High School (30550 W. Jefferson Ave., Gibraltar, MI; 734-379-7100).



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2

International Affairs

International Affairs



Home [SITES](#)

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[Grants](#)

[Conservation Programs](#)

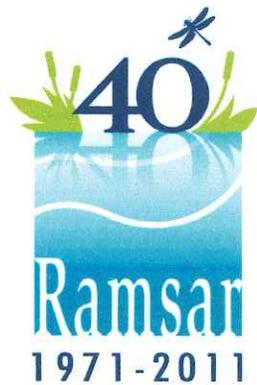
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International Wetlands Program



World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on February 2nd to recognize the many values and benefits associated with swamp and other wetland areas and to promote their conservation. It's celebrated on the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in 1971. Wetlands are valuable because they support a high degree of biological diversity and provide habitat for a wide variety wildlife species. A number of National Wildlife Refuges and over 160 Ramsar sites around the world will be hosting special events marking the occasion.

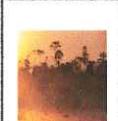
40 Tweets for 40 weeks to celebrate 40 Years! Follow us on [Twitter](#) to hear fun facts about wetlands conservation all year!

Visit our [Facebook](#) page to view a list of events being held for World Wetlands Day 2011 and the 40th Anniversary of the International Wetlands Convention.

View the U.S. National Ramsar Committee World Wetlands Day [Flyer](#) (PDF)

Learn more about the [day's events](#) at Caddo Lake Institute in Texas on World Wetlands Day, February 2, 2011 (PDF)

Read the [press release](#) for the World Wetlands Day event celebrating the designation of Humbug Marsh in Michigan as a Wetland of International Importance. *Note the date of this event has been changed to February 9, 2011.

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Wetlands	
Funding 2009	

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders program serves as the administrative authority for the International Wetlands Convention in the United States.

The International Wetlands Convention, signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971, was created to help governments coordinate wetlands conservation on an international scale. The Service and the Department of State are the administrative authorities for this Convention in the U.S., and it is this treaty that serves as the cornerstone for the Service's International Wetlands Program.

[Factsheet](#) on the Wetlands Convention (PDF)

Wetlands Sites - Areas designated as Wetlands of International Importance through the Wetlands Convention:

[Federal Register](#) U.S.

Wetlands Site Listings (PDF)

U.S. Site Nomination and Designation [Factsheet](#) (PDF)

U.S. Wetlands Sites [Brochure](#) (PDF)

[Photo Gallery](#) of U.S. Wetlands Sites (PDF)

Wetlands Management - Download the [Guide](#) to management planning for Site Managers (PDF)

Helpful Links:

[International Wetlands Convention](#)

[U.S. National Ramsar Committee](#)

[USFWS National Wetlands Inventory](#)



Last updated: January, 21, 2011

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The Ramsar Convention
on Wetlands

Ramsar > About Ramsar > Ramsar FAQs

What are wetlands?

10/08/2009

Wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life. They occur where the water table is at or near the surface of the land, or where the land is covered by water.

The Ramsar Convention takes a broad approach in determining the wetlands which come under its aegis. Under the text of the Convention (Article 1.1), wetlands are defined as:

“areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres”.

In addition, for the purpose of protecting coherent sites, the Article 2.1 provides that wetlands to be included in the Ramsar List of internationally important wetlands:

“may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands”.

Five major wetland types are generally recognized:

- marine (coastal wetlands including coastal lagoons, rocky shores, and coral reefs);
- estuarine (including deltas, tidal marshes, and mangrove swamps);
- lacustrine (wetlands associated with lakes);
- riverine (wetlands along rivers and streams); and
- palustrine (meaning “marshy” - marshes, swamps and bogs).

In addition, there are human-made wetlands such as fish and shrimp ponds, farm ponds, irrigated agricultural land, salt pans, reservoirs, gravel pits, sewage farms and canals. The Ramsar Convention has adopted a Ramsar Classification of Wetland Type which includes 42 types, grouped into three categories: Marine and Coastal Wetlands, Inland Wetlands, and Human-made Wetlands.

Wetlands occur everywhere, from the tundra to the tropics. How much of the earth’s surface is presently composed of wetlands is not known exactly. The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre has suggested an estimate of about 570 million hectares (5.7 million km²) – roughly 6% of the Earth’s land surface – of which 2% are lakes, 30% bogs, 26% fens, 20% swamps, and 15% floodplains. Mitsch and Gosselink, in their standard textbook *Wetlands*, 3d ed. (2000), suggest 4 to 6% of the Earth’s land surface. Mangroves cover some 240,000 km² of coastal area, and an estimated 600,000 km² of coral reefs remain worldwide. Nevertheless, a global review of wetland resources prepared for Ramsar COP7 in 1999, while affirming that “it is not possible to provide an acceptable figure of the areal extent of wetlands at a global scale”, indicated a ‘best’ minimum global estimate at between 748 and 778 million hectares. The same report indicated that this “minimum” could be increased to a total of between 999 and 4,462 million hectares when other sources of information were taken into account.

Why conserve wetlands?

Wetlands are among the world’s most productive environments. They are cradles of biological diversity, providing the water and primary productivity upon which countless species of plants and animals depend for survival. They support high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species. Wetlands are also important storehouses of plant genetic material. Rice, for example, which is a common wetland plant, is the staple diet of more than half of humanity.

The multiple roles of wetland ecosystems and their value to humanity have been increasingly understood and documented in recent years. This has led to large expenditures to restore lost or degraded hydrological and biological functions of wetlands. But it’s not enough – the race is on to improve practices on a significant global scale as the world’s leaders try to cope

with the accelerating water crisis and the effects of climate change. And this at a time when the world's population is likely to increase by 70 million every year for the next 20 years. Global freshwater consumption rose sixfold between 1900 and 1995 – more than double the rate of population growth. One third of the world's population today lives in countries already experiencing moderate to high water stress. By 2025, two out of every three people on Earth may well face life in water stressed conditions.

The ability of wetlands to adapt to changing conditions, and to accelerating rates of change, will be crucial to human communities and wildlife everywhere as the full impact of climate change on our ecosystem lifelines is felt. Small wonder that there is a worldwide focus on wetlands and their services to us.

In addition, wetlands are important, and sometimes essential, for the health, welfare and safety of people who live in or near them. They are amongst the world's most productive environments and provide a wide array of benefits.

Wetland values

Wetlands provide tremendous economic benefits, for example: water supply (quantity and quality); fisheries (over two thirds of the world's fish harvest is linked to the health of coastal and inland wetland areas); agriculture, through the maintenance of water tables and nutrient retention in floodplains; timber production; energy resources, such as peat and plant matter; wildlife resources; transport; and recreation and tourism opportunities.

In addition, wetlands have special attributes as part of the cultural heritage of humanity: they are related to religious and cosmological beliefs, constitute a source of aesthetic inspiration, provide wildlife sanctuaries, and form the basis of important local traditions. These functions, values and attributes can only be maintained if the ecological processes of wetlands are allowed to continue functioning. Unfortunately, and in spite of important progress made in recent decades, wetlands continue to be among the world's most threatened ecosystems, owing mainly to ongoing drainage, conversion, pollution, and over-exploitation of their resources.

[Back to top](#)