

Ramsar

The Convention on Wetlands

Who pays for all this?

The Conference of the Parties adopts a core budget administered by the Ramsar Secretariat, to which each Party pays a percentage related to its contribution to the United Nations budget. Many countries and other donors also make contributions to special Ramsar projects, including, for example, the Ramsar Small Grants Fund, Wetlands for the Future, the Swiss Grant for Africa, and, from the private sector, the Evian Project with the Danone Group and Biosphere Connections with the Star Alliance airline network.

Need to know more?

The Ramsar Manual (4th edition, 114 pages, 2006) and the Ramsar Info Pack are available both in hard copy and on the Ramsar Web site.

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Our Web site is updated nearly every day. Everything you want to know about the Ramsar Convention can be found there.

www.ramsar.org.



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

January 2008

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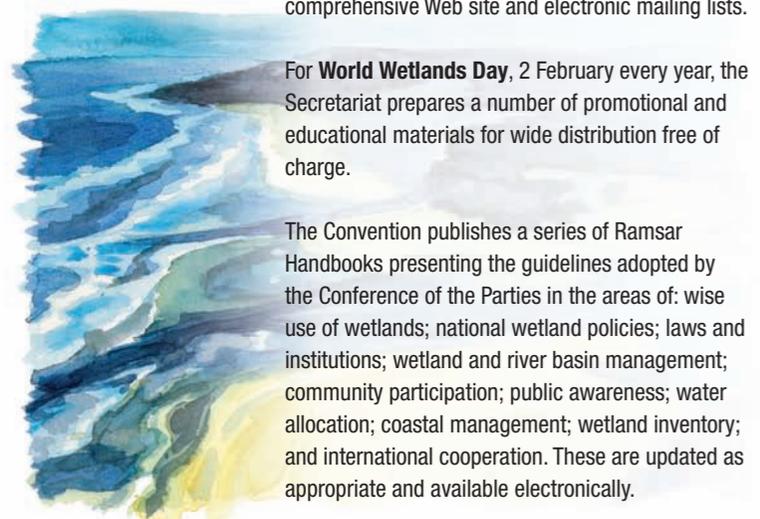
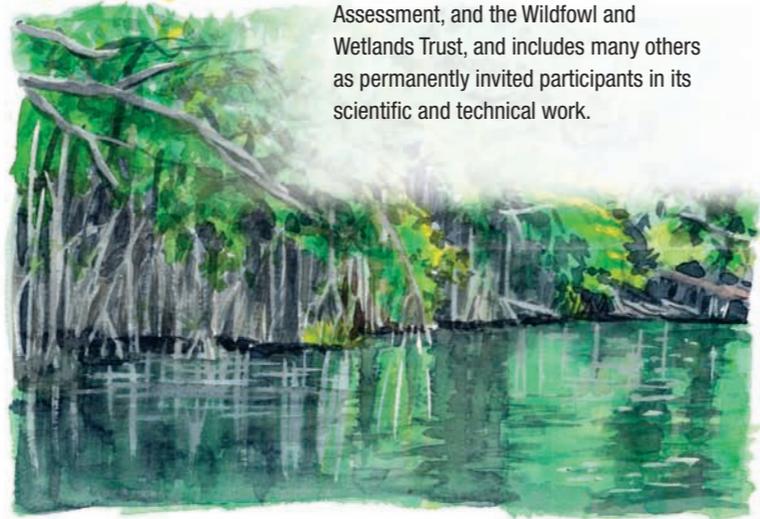


Working together

■ The Convention works closely with other environment-related global and regional conventions. It has Joint Work Plans or MOUs with the Conventions on Biological Diversity, Combating Desertification, Migratory Species, and World Heritage, as well as UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere programme. The Secretariat also works with funding institutions such as the World Bank and the GEF and with river basin management authorities such as those for Lake Chad and the Niger Basin.

■ The Convention has five formally recognized International Organization Partners – BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – which help the Parties by providing expert technical advice at global, national, and local levels, as well as field level assistance.

■ The Secretariat has collaborative relations with many other non-governmental organizations as well, such as the Society of Wetland Scientists, The Nature Conservancy, the International Association for Impact Assessment, and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and includes many others as permanently invited participants in its scientific and technical work.



Tools to help you

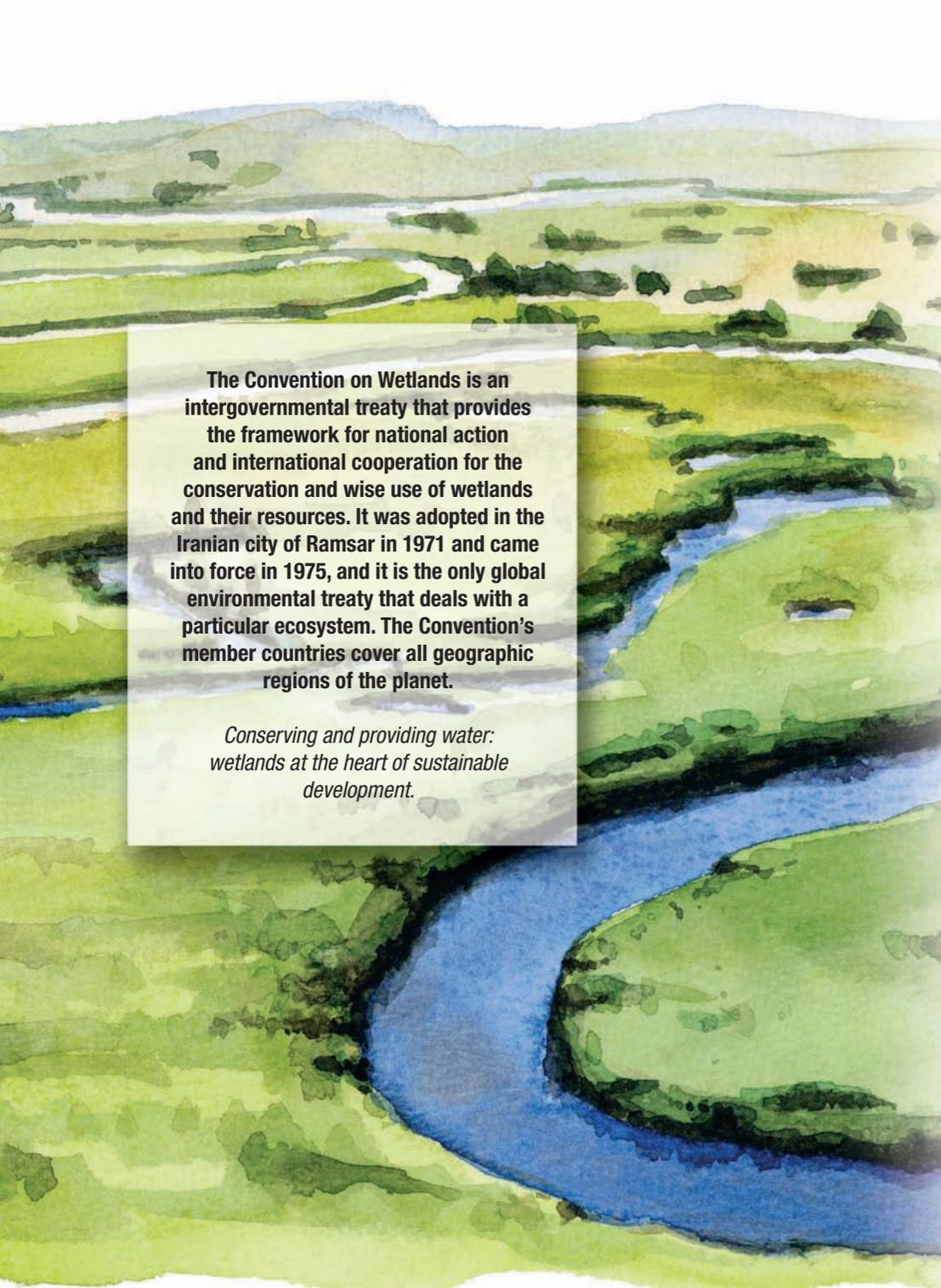
The Convention Secretariat publishes technical and information materials and maintains a number of electronic communication tools, including a comprehensive Web site and electronic mailing lists.

For **World Wetlands Day**, 2 February every year, the Secretariat prepares a number of promotional and educational materials for wide distribution free of charge.

The Convention publishes a series of Ramsar Handbooks presenting the guidelines adopted by the Conference of the Parties in the areas of: wise use of wetlands; national wetland policies; laws and institutions; wetland and river basin management; community participation; public awareness; water allocation; coastal management; wetland inventory; and international cooperation. These are updated as appropriate and available electronically.



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The Convention on Wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. It was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975, and it is the only global environmental treaty that deals with a particular ecosystem. The Convention's member countries cover all geographic regions of the planet.

Conserving and providing water: wetlands at the heart of sustainable development.

What are we about?

■ The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

The Convention uses a broad definition of the types of wetlands covered in its mission, including swamps and marshes, lakes and rivers, wet grasslands and peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, near-shore marine areas, mangroves and coral reefs, and human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

And what about wetlands?

■ Wetlands provide fundamental ecological services and are regulators of water regimes and sources of biodiversity at all levels – species, genetic, and ecosystem.

■ Wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, scientific, cultural, and recreational value for the community.

■ Wetlands play a vital role in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

■ Progressive encroachment on, and loss of, wetlands cause serious and sometimes irreparable environmental damage to the provision of ecosystem services.

■ Wetlands should be restored and rehabilitated, whenever possible.

■ Wetlands should be conserved by ensuring their wise use.



What is wise use?

■ Wise use of wetlands is defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".

■ "Wise use" therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind.

What do Contracting Parties do?

Under the "three pillars" of the Convention, the Parties have committed themselves to:

■ work towards the wise use of all their wetlands through national land-use planning, appropriate policies and legislation, management actions, and public education;

■ designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance ("Ramsar List") and ensure their effective management; and

■ cooperate internationally concerning transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.

By January 2008, more than 1,700 wetlands, covering more than 153 million hectares, have been included in the Ramsar List.

How does the Convention work?

■ The Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP) meets every three years and promotes policies and guidelines to further the application of the Convention.

■ The Standing Committee, made up of Parties representing the six Ramsar regions of the world, meets annually to guide the Convention between meetings of the COP.

■ The Scientific and Technical Review Panel provides guidance on key issues for the Convention.

■ The Ramsar Secretariat, which shares headquarters with the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in Gland, Switzerland, manages the day-to-day activities of the Convention.

■ The MedWet Initiative, with its Secretariat in Athens, provides a model for regional wetland cooperation now being emulated by regional initiatives under the Convention in many parts of the world.

■ Nationally, each Contracting Party designates an Administrative Authority as its focal point for implementation of the Convention.

■ Countries are encouraged to establish National Wetland Committees, involving all government sectors dealing with water resources, development planning, protected areas, biodiversity, tourism, education, development assistance, etc. Participation by NGOs and civil society is also encouraged.

■ Ramsar sites facing problems in maintaining their ecological character can be placed by the country concerned on a special list, the "Montreux Record", and technical assistance to help solve the problems can be provided.

■ Eligible countries can apply to a Ramsar Small Grants Fund and Wetlands for the Future Fund for financial assistance to implement wetland conservation and wise use projects.

