

WORLD WETLAND DAY 2006

The Ministry of Environment and Forests observed the World Wetland Day 2006 on 2nd February, 2006 in collaboration with WWF – India in New Delhi. The World Wetland Day commemorates the signing of Convention of Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) which came into being in 1971. The slogan for this Wetland Day was **“In the face of poverty, wetlands are lifelines”**. Many senior officers from the Ministry participated in the function.

As per Ramsar Convention, 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 tides does not exceed six meters. In addition, wetland may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetland, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six meters at low tide lying within the wetlands. This is the most comprehensive definitions of wetlands, extending to a wide variety of habitat types, including rivers, coastal areas and even coral reefs.

Wetlands are among the most productive life support systems in the world and are of immense socio-economic ecological and bio-esthetic importance to mankind. They are of critical importance for the survival of natural Biodiversity and are recognized as sources, and transformers of chemical and biological matter. By virtue of natural functioning, they play an important role in improvement of water quality, removal of sediment load, production of oxygen, recycling of nutrients, control of floods, recharging of aquifers, treatment of waste water and pollution abatement etc.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests is the nodal agency for implementing the conservation programme on wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs. Started in 1987, the programme is guided by a national committee on wetlands mangroves and coral reefs, conservation of these ecosystems and to suggest specific sites for conservation and result oriented R&D programme. Several wetlands sites in the country have been selected on priority basis for conservation and management, financial support for which is being extended by the Ministry. Already 71 wetlands, 38 mangroves and 4 coral areas have been identified for conservation and management where 100% assistance is given for various important conservation activities to the concerned state governments.

So far, India has designated 25 wetland sites as Ramsar Sites of International Importance. The total area covered under the 25 sites is 6,77,131 ha. 25 new wetland sites represent different habitats. To facilitate this process of designating new sites, Ministry of Environment and Forests and WWF-India is making joint efforts to designate more and more sites from this country as Ramsar sites. WWF is helping the Ministry in documentation of selected sites and also cartographic help to make the maps as per designated Ramsar sites. Monographs of six sites have already been published by WWF-India in collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Forests pertaining to Wullar from J&K, Chilika from Orissa, Loktak from Manipur, Harike from Punjab, Sambhar and Keoladeo National Park from Rajasthan. Work on publishing Monographs on new Ramsar sites is already under process. This will facilitate information on the designated sites for their conservation and management and can be used by any user agency interested in wetland conservation programme. Fact sheets for earlier Ramsar sites declared were jointly by MOEF & WWF and released at COP08 meeting held at Valencia, Spain in November, 2002.

**LIST OF WELANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE UNDER RAMSAR
CONVENTION (INDIA)**

S. No	Wetland	State
1.	Ashtatmudi Wetland	Kerala
2.	Bhitarkanika Mangroves	Orissa
3.	Bhoj Wetland	Madhya Pradesh
4.	Chilka Lake	Orissa
5.	Deepor Beel	Assam
6.	East Calcuta Wetlands	West Bengal
7.	Harike Lake	Punjab
8.	Kanjli	Punjab
9.	Keoladeo National Park	Rajasthan
10.	Kolleru Lake	Andhra Pradesh
11.	Loktak Lake	Manipur
12.	Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary	Tamil Nadu
13.	Pong Dam Lake	Himachal Pradesh
14.	Ropar	Punjab
15.	Sambhar Lake	Rajasthan
16.	Sasthamkotta Lake	Kerala
17.	Tsomoriri	Jammu & Kashmir
18.	Vembanad-Kol Wetland	Kerala
19.	Wular Lake	Jammu & Kashmir
20.	Upper Ganga*	Uttar Pradesh
21.	Surinsar-Mansar*	Jammu & Kashmir
22.	Hokera (Hokersar)*	Jammu & Kashmir
23.	Rudrasagar*	Tripura
24.	Renuka*	Himachal Pradesh
25.	Chandertal*	Himachal Pradesh

* Wetlands identified as Ramsar sites during the CoP 09 meeting held at Uganda during 8-15 November, 2005.

ODS PHASE-OUT IN INDIA
India to host meeting on ozone layer protection

The combined 7th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 17th meeting of Parties (MOP) to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was held recently in Dakar, Senegal. Mr. Namo Narain Meena, the Minister of State for Environment and Forests, led the Indian delegation at the high-level segment of this meeting. Some of the important decisions taken at this meeting include replenishment of the Multilateral Fund for the year 2006-08, membership of the executive committee for the year 2006 and venue of the 18th MOP. MOP approved a budget of US\$ 470 million for the period 2006-08. It also endorsed the selection of India as a member of the executive committee for the year 2006, along with China, Sri Lanka and the Philippines as co-opted members. India's proposal to host the 18th MOP to the Montreal Protocol in India in 2006 was also agreed to.

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