



World Wetlands Day
2 February 2018

Wetlands for a sustainable urban future



Retain and restore: practical ways cities can manage and preserve urban wetlands

Urban planners and decision-makers face a practical dilemma: how to meet the increasing demand for land in cities while still preserving the natural environment. Urban wetlands play a vital role in making cities safe, resilient and sustainable; the aims of SDG 11.



Restore urban wetlands

Located in a loop of the Thames River on the site of four old water reservoirs, the London Wetland Centre is a 40-hectare (100-acre) restored urban wetland run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT). It is home to a vast range of wildlife including 180 bird species. This site is now a focus for wetland education attracting 170,000 visitors annually, and includes a visitor centre with an observatory.

Reduce excessive water consumption and harmful runoff

From 2012-14, Quito received support to measure its carbon and water footprints. Now the city aims to cut the municipal water footprint by 68% by 2032. New policies to promote ecological toilets, water efficient appliances and water recycling will avoid around 1.5 billion cubic meters of water consumption.

Organize community wetland clean-ups

Bolsa Chica is a 356-hectare (880-acre) protected coastal wetland in Huntington Beach, a suburb of Los Angeles. The Bolsa Chica Conservancy holds two public service days each month. Volunteers remove an estimated 10 tons of trash and debris from the site's waterways and trails annually.

Involve local residents in wetland planning

The Stung Treng Ramsar Site covers 14,600 hectares (56 sq. miles) of river wetland and islands along the Mekong River. Its 21 villages and 10,000 people depend heavily on fishing, and the Site is home to the critically endangered Siamese crocodile. An assessment in 2007 led by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature helped inspire a community-led movement to restrict fishing in critical zones of the Site and as well during spawning season. The result is larger fish are returning.

Integrate wetlands into policy and planning

Accra is Ghana's capital and largest city, located on a coastal plain where wetlands provide natural flood control, water filtering and fishing. As growth threatens its wetlands, the city has responded by mainstreaming wetlands into policy and planning. It is strictly enforcing building regulations and pollution controls, has defined clear greenbelts to limit sprawl, created programs that encourage residents to help conserve local wetlands, and designated two of them as Ramsar Sites.

Did you know?

During Hurricane Sandy, wetlands averted \$625 million in property damage in coastal areas of the US. Following the severe storms and the damaging floods that hit the Caribbean, the USA, Bangladesh and Nepal in 2017, more cities recognize the vital role of urban wetlands.



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