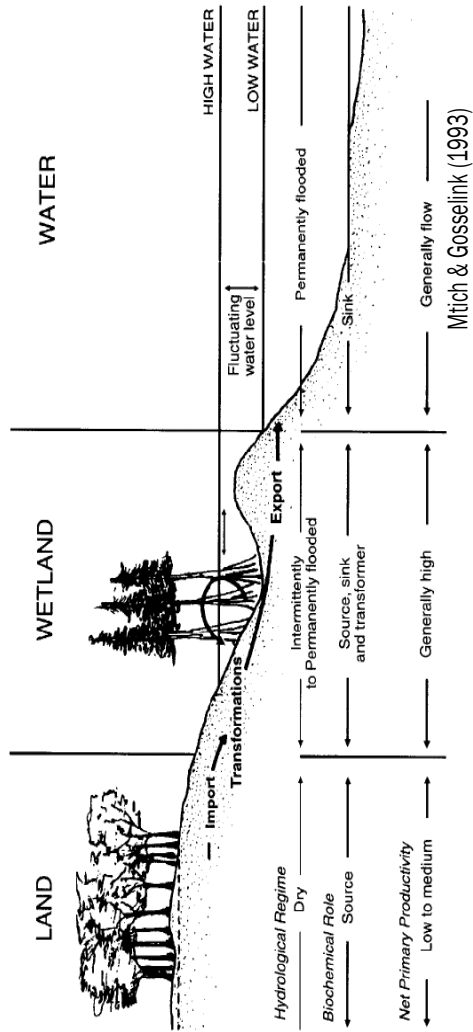


THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DIVISION

One broadly accepted international definition of wetlands is that adopted by the International Ramsar Convention, which defines wetlands 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'.



Wetlands classification

Brackish or marine wetlands. These include estuaries, mangroves, sea grass beds and mudflats. They are adapted to constantly altering conditions such as waves, currents, tides and salinity levels



Freshwater

or inland wetlands. These include standing or flowing fresh water bodies such as lakes, ponds, river, streams. They may be permanent or seasonal and are associated with areas that seasonally flood or interact closely with the water table.

IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO THERE ARE:

Fringe mangroves. These are moderately productive intertidal wetlands. They are usually exposed to the tides and have become adapted to relatively constant salinity regimes, low nutrient concentration, wave action and strong winds.

Fresh water swamps and mangroves. These are common along fresh water rivers, streams, swamps and lagoons.

Fresh water ponds. The Point-A-Pierre Wildfowl Trust is an example of a man made wetland which was created within the compound of an oil refinery.

Estuarine mangroves (Caroni Swamp). These are located along river estuaries influenced by tidal variation and are adapted to brackish conditions.

Coral Reefs (Buccoo Reef) are also classified as a type of wetland habitat. Coral reefs are one of the most biologically diverse and ecologically productive ecosystems in the world. 25% of all marine species are found in coral reefs.



Basin mangroves (Los Blanquizales, South Trinidad). These mangroves develop in close association with fringing forests and are normally separated from direct sea contact except during very high tides or storm events.

Palm forests/ savannahs. These are common on poorly drained soils and are characterized by naturally occurring drainage channels. These are important because of high levels of biodiversity and endemism.

Reservoirs and settling ponds (WASA facilities, Trincity Sewage Treatment Ponds). These are man made storage facilities which evolve naturally into habitats because they attract migratory and pioneering varieties of flora and fauna.

Annual floodplains (Caroni Rice Fields). These areas are seasonal with cycles of productivity. They are dominated naturally by sedges, rushes, water lilies and other aquatic plants accompanied by numerous avian, aquatic and terrestrial fauna. They also provide suitable agricultural lands for crops such as rice.

Threats to Wetlands in Trinidad and Tobago

Deforestation



Quarrying and Mining



Land Reclamation

Chemical pollution from agriculture



Ports and Shipping Activities

Tourism



Natural storm events

Global Climate Change



Over-extractions of resources



Pollution from Urban areas

The Town and Country Planning Division works in partnership with organizations such as the Institute of Marine Affairs and the Buccoo Reef Trust

We attempt to manage land based development sustainably in order to minimize and mitigate any degradation of our wetlands resources

The Town and Country Planning Division helps to promote healthy wetlands and healthy people by:

Setting standards for all types of development throughout the country via Development Plans and Development Control processes.

Continually updating local area plans and policies ensuring that sensitive wetland areas are maintained.

Demarcating wetland boundaries.

Proposing buffer zones at all major rivers and listed wetlands to prevent encroachment from surrounding development.

Ensuring that development in river basins are planned to facilitate natural processes such as seasonal flooding.

Conducting public education in the form of exhibitions and consultations to sensitize the public on the value of wetlands.

Upholding international treaties and agreements such as the RAMSAR Convention on the wise use and conservation of wetlands in the development of policy documents which are then used as development tools.

NEED TO CONTACT US?

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**HEALTHY
WETLANDS,
HEALTHY PEOPLE**

Wetland ecosystems are part of our natural capital. It is estimated that only 3% of the Earth's surface is covered in wetland areas.

A recent assessment of the dollar value of all natural ecosystems globally estimated a value of US\$ 33 trillion.

It is further estimated the global value of wetland ecosystems are an amazing US\$ 14.9 trillion, 45% of the total. The dollar value however, only hints at the functions and products that wetland areas provide, many of which are difficult to quantify.

Wetlands therefore, are invaluable and irreplaceable.