



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

A Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration

Summary of concept, April 2015

Wetlands are among the world's most productive environments, providing biological diversity, delivering water and other services that countless species and people depend on. Wetlands are indispensable for the "ecosystem services" that they offer, including drinking water supply, cleaning up polluted water, food and building materials, flood control, disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation (TEEB, 2013; WWAP 2015).

Despite the value of their biodiversity and ecosystem services, wetlands continue to decline globally, both in area and quality (Gardner *et al.*, 2015). Since 1900, approximately 64-71% of the world's wetlands have been lost (Davidson, 2014), with the drivers coming from intensive agricultural production, irrigation, water extraction for domestic and industrial use, urbanization, infrastructure development and pollution (TEEB, 2013). Despite this environmental degradation, there is increasing demand for the water services that wetlands provide (Suding, 2011). By 2050, global water demand is projected to increase by 55%, and to meet this growing demand the services of wetlands must be valued appropriately (TEEB, 2013; WWAP, 2015), or the risks to water security will rapidly increase.

While conservation is the cheapest and most straight forward option for securing the ecosystem services that wetlands provide, the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel's recent report on the state of the world's wetlands clearly outlines the need to include a restoration component to stop and reverse the loss and degradation of wetlands (Gardner *et al.*, 2015). The report is an:

“urgent call for Contracting Parties to avoid further wetland loss and degradation and to strengthen wetland assessment, monitoring and restoration efforts in support of the wise use of all wetlands.”
(Gardner *et al.*, 2015)

New opportunities are emerging to promote wetland restoration. Governments, businesses and people around the world are recognizing that wetlands provide critical ecosystem services and that restoration can repair services more effectively and economically than the construction of traditionally built hard infrastructure, while at the same time providing multiple benefits to biodiversity and the livelihoods of people. For example, the city of Philadelphia, USA forecasted expenditures of \$10 billion to solve their storm water problems using traditional built infrastructure, while studies showed that wetland construction and restoration could accomplish the same task for \$2 billion (Valderrama *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, the World Economic Forum and others have highlighted the importance of water security in the global production of food and energy (World Economic Forum, 2011; IUCN and IWA, 2014), and the United Nations has stressed the fundamental role of water in sustainable development and has included wetland restoration in their Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly's Open Working Group, 2014; WWAP, 2015).

A Global Partnership for Wetlands Restoration is therefore being proposed to reverse the loss of wetlands and establish a coherent strategy for delivering wetland restoration at a global scale. A Global Partnership would bring together a political and technical alliance for wetlands restoration, with appropriate policy guidance for decision-makers, targeted scientific and technical guidance for effective implementation, and a network of actors to carry out projects. Such a Partnership would be a platform to set global goals and targets, monitor and share progress, as well as a possible financial mechanism to support projects that are implemented by partners and endorsed by Contracting Parties.

Who would be a part of a Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration?

A Global Partnership would be a cooperative effort between the private sector, governments, the public, NGOs, and other partners, and would be supported by other international organizations. Those involved would collectively lead the Partnership and determine the details of its focus and efforts.

What would be the structure of the Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration?

The Ramsar Secretariat is proposing that a Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration could start to be discussed at the 12th Conference of Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in June 2015, with the creation of a “Task Force” that would explore and advance the potential structure, scope and opportunity. This initial mechanism would allow for open and transparent involvement from a diverse group. Approval and direction from the Ramsar Standing Committee would potentially then be formally sought at the Standing Committee’s 51st meeting in February 2016.

What is the Ramsar Convention’s role in the Global Partnership?

The Ramsar Convention is well positioned to provide the shared vision and framework for reversing the loss of wetlands. Many of the Convention’s Contracting Parties are already world leaders in wetland restoration. The Ramsar International Organization Partners are also implementing numerous restoration projects around the world, and Ramsar has connections to cutting edge scientists and technical experts. The Ramsar Secretariat could act as a catalyst to explore opportunities for convening and constructing a Global Partnership and facilitate progress.

By advancing a Global Partnership, the Ramsar Convention can also highlight the value and importance of wetland ecosystems and promote policies and programmes that encourage the wise use of wetlands.

What will the Global Partnership do?

The Global Partnership will set goals and targets for global wetland restoration and gain commitments from players to achieve these goals. The Partnership will take the necessary steps to establish a global platform that will create the financial, political, and technical support for restoration projects to be implemented by partners.

How can you get involved?

There are a number of possible ways to engage further:

- Send an email to: cadmus@ramsar.org in order to
 - ‘opt in’ and become part of the growing community of individuals and organizations that wish to engage with, and to contribute to the success of, the Partnership.
 - request more information about the current ideas and opportunities for establishing a Global Partnership. More information is available as a longer fifteen page document (currently only available in English, although later versions will be translated).
- Participate in the side event: “**A Global Partnership for Wetland Restoration: ideas on a way forward.**” that will take place during the Ramsar Convention’s Conference of Parties 12, Punta del Este, Uruguay from June 1st to June 9th, 2015.

Literature Cited.

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