



WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2004

&

THE SOUTH EASTERN RIVER BASIN DISTRICT



What is World Wetlands Day (WWD)?

The 2nd of February each year is World Wetlands Day. Each year, groups at all levels of the community in countries around the world use the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of **wetland values and benefits**. The Convention on Wetlands was signed on 2nd February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The Convention provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.



Wetlands form part of the hydrological cycle, and in themselves possess a unique beauty, value and function.

The theme for WWD 2004 is:

"From the mountains to the sea - Wetlands at work for us",

...and wetlands are working for us all the time; storing and purifying freshwater; controlling floods; replenishing groundwater supplies; stabilising the shoreline; protecting against storms; acting as nurseries for freshwater or marine fish; providing us with food, water, a place for recreation and education and a transport medium.



Tramore Backstrand. Source: Fiona Murphy, SERBD

A recent pilot project undertaken by Wexford County Council and Coastwatch Ireland identified the occurrence of 26 different wetland types in Co. Wexford alone.

Few European countries could boast such diversity in similar areas. Wetlands are an integral

part of our heritage and are a distinctive feature of our countryside for which Ireland is renowned. Yet they are often subjected to the threats of unsustainable activity that can place their functioning or existence in jeopardy.



Source: Coastwatch Ireland Website.

There are currently 45 designated Ramsar Wetland sites of international importance in Ireland. Protection of these areas requires ensuring that activities within the wetlands or their catchment areas are conducted in a sustainable manner.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)



The European Union has recently taken an important step towards securing the future protection of all waters (rivers, lakes, coastal waters, and

groundwater) and their wetlands. In December 2000 the **EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)** came into force. It is arguably the most significant legal instrument in the area of water management and will have a profound effect on how water is managed in Europe over the next twenty-five years.

The main aims of the WFD are to:

- Protect/ enhance all waters; surface; ground and coastal waters.
- Achieve “good status” for all waters by end 2015.
- Manage water bodies based on river basins (catchments).
- Use a “combined approach” of emission limit values and quality standards.
- Involve the public
- Streamline legislation.

The Approach to the WFD in Ireland

The WFD was transposed into Irish law on the 22nd of December 2003 by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations (S.I. No. 722 2003). The Regulations identify the relevant Local Authorities, acting jointly, as the responsible bodies for the making of River Basin Management Plans to meet the objectives of the Directive.

The Regulations identify the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as responsible for coordinating measures

established by local authorities, and for reporting to the European Commission and other specified functions. The island of Ireland has been divided into eight administrative River Basin Districts (RBD's), seven within the Republic of Ireland.

The South Eastern River Basin District (SERBD)

The South Eastern River Basin District (SERBD) covers 14,000km². Of the 45 Ramsar designated sites nationally (Annotated list, 2002), 7 lie within the SERBD. These are:

- 1) Dungarvan Harbour (WD)
- 2) Pollardstown Fen (KE)
- 3) The Raven (WX)
- 4) Slieve Bloom Mountains (LS,OY)
- 5) Tramore Backstrand (WD)
- 6) Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. (WX)
- 7) Bannow Bay (WX)



Ramsar Sites in the SERBD.
Source: SERBD GIS

The SERBD Project has been established to begin the implementation of the Directive.

Public Participation programme for 2004

Public Participation is essential to the success of the SERBD

Project, particularly in helping to implement the measures to protect all waters and their wetlands. A Public Participation Plan for 2004 has just been finalised (available on website). The focus of activities in 2004 will be the **Characterisation** of the SERBD. In plain terms this is a systematic description of the river basins and environmental pressures impacting on all waters within them. It is an essential first step in the river basin planning process. The Project's public participation activities will endeavour to raise awareness and involve people in this process.

Contacts Details

Additional information is available on the following websites:

<http://www.ramsar.org>

<http://www.serbd.com>

<http://www.wfdireland.ie>

To express your views or concerns, or to find out more about the project, please contact the following:

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