

Agricultural Wetlands Research Network

One Month for Agricultural Wetlands Discussion Contest

(2 February – 2 March 2011)

To enter, log on to <http://awrn.projectsaces.com/>. If you are not already a member, please contact Bryan Osborne at boborne@iisd.ca to join.

I. RATIONALE

As noted by the Ramsar Convention (www.ramsar.org), “**2 February** each year is **World Wetlands Day**. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity **to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular.**” 2011 marks the **40th Anniversary** of the Ramsar Convention. The Agricultural Wetlands Research Network (AWRN) is an evolving initiative led by the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Migal-Galilee Technology Center – with the help of a growing list of partners. Initial funding has been provided by the Province of Manitoba in Canada.

II. FORMAT

In order to stimulate maximum Discussion participation in the initial list of case study projects featuring agricultural wetland challenges on three continents, the **One Month for Wetlands Discussion Contest** has been developed. Our hope is that a financial incentive of **\$1,000 CAD** will be enough to engage as many researchers, practitioners, and others interested in agricultural wetlands – via the AWRN – over a short period of time, with no long-term commitment. **ONE BALLOT WILL BE ALLOCATED FOR EACH SUBSTANTIVE AWRN DISCUSSION POSTING PER INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT.**

III. ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible for this contest, an individual must:

1. be a member of the Agricultural Wetlands Research Network (AWRN)
2. contribute a **substantive*** AWRN Discussion posting on **any** topic (ideally on all topics)
3. not be financially engaged with the AWRN project.
4. agree that your submissions may be used as a part of a report generated by the AWRN

*A **substantive** AWRN Discussion posting will be considered as one that meaningfully contributes to the discussion. A substantive posting might, for instance:

1. contribute new information
2. question or strengthen the validity of information provided (either information in case studies presented by the AWRN or in comments by other participants)
3. introduce a new perspective/idea
4. be supported by information/evidence (i.e. be substantiated with an example or reference)
5. provide a relevant “lesson learned” from another site
6. provide a potential solution to a problem being discussed
7. provide an opinion supported by evidence

The AWRN comment reviewers will be alert to whether or not Discussion postings indicate an understanding of the AWRN case study. Such understanding fundamentally requires that the case study background documents **be read** by the participants. The reviewers reserve the right to discount an entry if they do not believe the entrant has read the relevant case study (e.g. a comment may be considered invalid if it contradicts the AWRN case study without explaining why the contradiction exists).

Comments such as “that’s interesting,” or “I don’t agree” are not adequately substantive and will not earn the participant a ballot.

Given that this AWRN Discussion forum is meant to further understanding and debate on the topic of global wetlands, it is imperative that participants understand the **case studies** presented (currently Netley-Libau Marsh [Canada], Lake Hula Wetlands [Israel], Ñeembucú Wetlands [Paraguay], with more to come during contest period), each of which are detailed in AWRN **case study background documents**. It is the intention of the contest organizers that all participants begin their participation with the same base of understanding on the sites, as explained in the AWRN background documents. Therefore, **participants must read the relevant case study prior to participating in a discussion on that location**. Additional AWRN case study background documents will be added during the month, creating further Discussion (and ballot entry) opportunities for all participants.

IV. CONTEST PERIOD.

The Contest begins for existing AWRN members at 12:01 a.m. Central Standard Time (EST) on February 2, 2011, and ends on March 2, 2011 at 11:59 CST. There will be a significant communications effort to attract new AWRN interest surrounding World Wetlands Day (February 2, 2011)

V. HOW TO ENTER

a. To enter, log on to <http://awrn.projectsaces.com/>. If you are not already a member, please contact [Bryan Osborne](mailto:BobOrbne@iisd.ca) at boborne@iisd.ca to join.

b. Read the summary documents on any or all of the featured case studies. The pages for each of the case studies can be accessed via the menu in the top right-hand corner of the page. These documents will also be available at <http://www.iisd.org/wic/research/wetlands/awrn.asp>.

c. Contribute to **any or all** of the discussion questions. Entrants will receive **one** (1) ballot entry for **every substantive comment** made (**there is no limit to the number of ballots each participant may earn**). Entrants may make more than one comment per discussion question. Therefore, **entrants can receive more than one ballot per discussion question and are encouraged to continue to participate in discussions as they evolve**. Any discussions existing on the AWRN website prior to the initial contest date (2 February 2011) will also be considered in the awarding of ballots.

d. At the end of the contest period, the contest organizers will attribute one ballot to each substantive Discussion posting as outlined above. Each qualifying entry will be assigned a number, and all winners will be chosen using a random number table. All winners' names will be noted on the project website.

The current questions posed by the AWRN are*:

**new questions will arise from additional case studies during the contest period, and these will also be eligible for the contest with Discussion postings considered in awarding of ballots.*

For Hula Valley Wetlands:

1. Are the Hula Valley Wetlands viewed as an integral component of the Lake Kinneret (Upper Jordan) watershed ecosystem and community?
2. What can be done to address the tourism and other challenges associated with the influx of cranes staging in the Hula Valley?
3. Are the hydrologic, sediment, and nutrient discharges from Hula Valley fully understood?
4. Any future discussions between Israel and Syria regarding management of Golan Heights could affect the Hula Valley. What can be done to ensure and enhance the long-term sustainability of Lake Agmon if any future border alignments occur? (Bryan also asks on the forum "Can anyone provide an update on how the drought is affecting Hula Valley Wetlands?")

For Netley-Libau Marsh:

1. There will be a need for a Netley-Libau Marsh Authority if significant marsh restoration and management is to occur. There appears to be a need for a management secretariat now. What form should this take?
2. The cessation of dredging in the Red River several years ago has altered flows through Netley-Libau Marsh, likely increasing flows and reducing aquatic vegetation growth. What can be done to address this concern?

3. The "Netley Cut" is an eroded channel, originally installed in the 1920s as a 20m wide access channel from the Red River into Netley Marsh. It is now more than 400m wide and continues to erode. It may now be hydrologically important for flood control, although it limits wetland function in the marsh and has likely contributed to dramatic reductions in aquatic vegetation. What options are there to address this?
4. There is a current challenge relating to addressing fish habitat impact concerns associated with any modification of the marsh. What species are potentially affected and how? What ideas exist for how to mitigate these?

For Ñeembucú Wetlands:

1. There is a lack of baseline scientific information on land use, biodiversity, and climate change? What is required to begin collecting this information?
2. There appears to be a need for much great levels of government support to facilitate an ecosystem management planning process. How can this occur?
3. There is currently no management authority in place for the Ñeembucú Wetlands. Would sustainability of this region be improved with such institutional support?
4. Limited institutional, research, and management capacity is in place. What is needed to increase this?

VI. THE PRIZE

A prize of **\$1,000 CAD** will be awarded to the entrant who made the comment that is associated with the winning randomly generated number. The prize will be awarded as a cheque and mailed to the participant.

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