

World Wetlands Day 2009



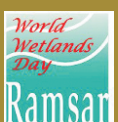
Each year, February 2nd is observed as the 'World Wetlands Day'. The Convention on Wetlands was adopted on this day of the year 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and groups of citizens at all 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. The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 158 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1718 wetland sites, totalling 159 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.



The satellite township of Navi Mumbai, with a total area of 344 sq km and spread over Thane and Raigad districts of Maharashtra, harbours a variety of wetlands like rivers, creeks, lakes, ponds, salt pans, in addition to a fairly dense cover of mangrove marshes. By definition, wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated flora and fauna. Wetlands contribute significantly to the region's economy by providing water, fishery resources, agricultural products and tourism opportunities. Important wetland functions include water storage, groundwater recharge, protection from storms, flood mitigation, shoreline stabilization, erosion control, retention of nutrients and providing habitats for several species of flora and fauna. But despite their ecological, socio-economic and environmental importance, wetlands have not received the attention they merit.

To address this lack of concern about wetlands and to create awareness among students about wetland ecosystems, TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute), in association with the Ramsar Convention, Switzerland (www.ramsar.org), commemorated the World Wetlands Day on February 02, 2009 by visiting 8 schools in Navi Mumbai. TERI interacted with around 1000 students and explained about the wetland ecosystems and the importance of these in our day to day life. About 60% of the students belonged to the schools run by the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation. Many of these students belonged to the local fishing community and are therefore a part of the local wetland ecosystems. All the students shared their concern about the degradation of wetlands and pledged their support in preserving these vital ecosystems. TERI believes that children can carry and propagate the message of wetlands preservation effectively among their family, friends and the society at large, and therefore awareness programmes on wetlands would go a long way in sowing the seeds of environmental conservation in their minds.

TERI has joined hands with CIDCO (City & Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd) in preservation & sustainable management of the freshwater wetlands in Navi Mumbai. (<http://cidcoindia.com/cidco/admin/NewsFiles/ERC.pdf>)



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