



Blue Guide | Community of practice

Newsletter #3 February 2022

This month was the first celebration of [World Wetlands Day](#). Celebrated on February 2nd to raise awareness about wetlands, the day marks the anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands, which was adopted as an international treaty in 1971.

By adopting Resolution 75/317 in August last year, the UN General Assembly established February 2nd as World Wetlands Day. The theme for this year is [Wetlands Action for People and Nature](#) and seeks to highlight the importance of actions to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands for humans and planetary health.

Nearly 90% of the world's wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests. Yet, wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, world economies and more.

It is urgent that we raise national and global awareness about wetlands in order to reverse their rapid loss and encourage actions to conserve and restore them. World Wetlands Day is the ideal time to increase people's understanding of these critically important ecosystems. Types of wetlands defined by the Convention include freshwater and marine and coastal ecosystems such as all lakes and rivers, underground aquifers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, peatlands, oases, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas,

coral reefs, and all human-made sites such as fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

This year's campaign is an appeal to take action and to invest financial, human and political capital in order to save the world's wetlands from disappearing altogether — and to restore those we have already lost.

The overriding message behind this year's campaign is to **Value, Manage, Restore, and Love** Wetlands, because if we are to inspire action, we also must ignite greater empathy for these rapidly disappearing ecosystems.

This year's campaign highlights three main messages, and we invite you to adapt and share them widely.

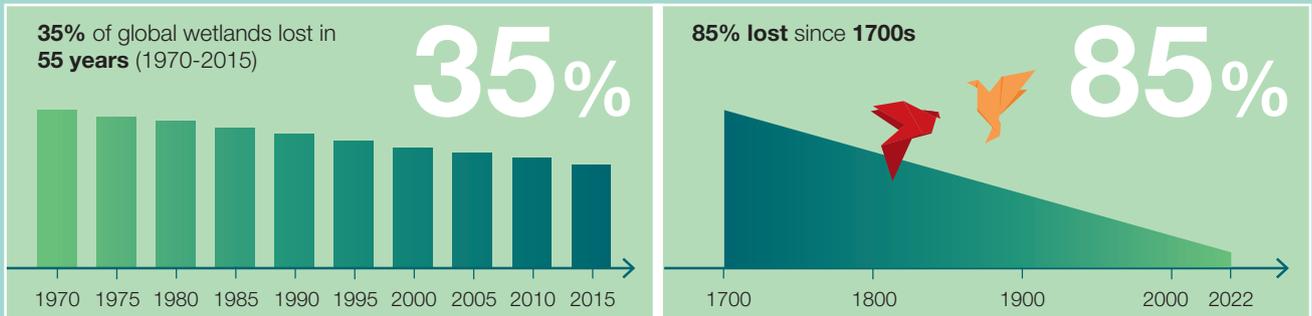
- ▶ Value wetlands for the multiple benefits and nature-based solutions they provide for human well-being and a healthy planet.
- ▶ Manage wetlands wisely and use them sustainably so we can conserve them and maintain the health of these critically important ecosystems.
- ▶ Restore lost and degraded wetlands to revive the rich biodiversity and life found in these life-sustaining ecosystems.

The organising committee has some wonderful resources on how to get involved — including material for schools, communities and organisations to promote actions that support the messages. Click [here](#) to see how you can engage in wetland love!

WETLANDS

A CALL FOR ACTION

NATURAL WETLANDS ARE DISAPPEARING THREE TIMES FASTER THAN FORESTS



WHAT LOSS OF WETLANDS MEANS

FOR PEOPLE

- Water scarcity
- Exposure to flooding and extreme weather events
- Lost livelihoods and well-being
- Food insecurity



FOR THE PLANET

- Biodiversity decline
- Increased carbon and methane emissions
- Loss of natural freshwater filtration



TAKE THREE ACTIONS

<h3>VALUE WETLANDS</h3> <p>BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS FRESH WATER STORES CARBON SINKS SOURCE OF LIVELIHOODS</p>	<h3>STOP DRAINING</h3> <p>THE LIFE FROM WETLANDS USE WISELY</p>	<h3>REWET REFOREST RESTORE WETLANDS</h3>
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SOME WETLANDS TO LOVE

PEATLANDS Pastaza-Marañón Foreland Basin - Peru	CORAL REEFS Great Barrier Reef - Australia	MANGROVES Sundarbans - Bangladesh
MARSHES Okavanga Delta - Botswana	FLOOD PLAINS Pantanal - Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay	ESTUARIES Severn Estuary - UK
COASTLINES Amalfi Coast - Italy	SWAMPS Everglades - USA	BOGS Cuvette Centrale - Republic of Congo



VALUE - MANAGE - RESTORE - LOVE

#WorldWetlandsDay #ActForWetlands www.worldwetlandsday.org

World Wetlands Day
2 February 2022



Wetlands Action for People and Nature

Verbatim: Stefanie Simpson

The Nature Conservancy's Stefanie Simpson, Coastal Climate Program Manager, talks about wetlands and what we can do to protect them.

How did you first get involved in wetlands?

I grew up in South Carolina, USA, a coastal state and spent a lot of my childhood in the coastal system, so it's an area I was drawn to. I did my Masters of Environmental Studies at the College of Charleston focusing on coastal systems, and I worked for the State Department of Natural Resources and Environment. With the Peace Corps, I worked on coastal resource management in the Philippines, in the western Visayas on a little island called Guimaras. Those two experiences were the really big influencing factors for me in working in the coastal wetlands field.

Can you explain Blue Carbon Resilience Credits and how they work?

Essentially, we are looking at different mechanisms that we can tap, in order to get sustainable funding for coastal wetlands. Often, projects are funded on a piecemeal basis – you restore and then you walk away and unfortunately, it's not a sustainable process. I've seen projects that were restored five years ago. You come back, and they are degraded again.

The objective of Blue Carbon Resilience Credits is to tap into alternative funding streams to support coastal wetlands. One major area of interest, especially by corporations, is to offset carbon through carbon credit schemes.

More corporations are looking for unique products and blue carbon. This is a new unique field, generating a lot of interest. Considering that over half the world's population is located within the coastal landscapes, there are a lot of people and a lot of jobs, and there is interest in corporate social responsibility.

Carbon offsets already have a platform and a process via the voluntary carbon market. Other sectors like forestry have already been established in this area and there has been a lot of benefit for these sectors. So we wanted coastal wetlands to also be able to benefit as well, and have some of that financial pie.

We are in the process of developing a pipeline of projects, bringing this to scale. We see where we can tap into the carbon market with wetlands. In the past 5-8 years, we developed really good science on how effective coastal wetlands are at sequestering carbon. We have built that into methodologies and are getting those approved by leading carbon standards. So now we are in those



stages of developing pilot projects to show proof-of-concept, with the hope that what we are learning from these projects will help us scale more broadly.

While we have been developing carbon offsets, there have also been these other conversations on what are the other benefits: we have not been restoring wetlands just for the carbon, we are doing it for all the other benefits. The carbon is just a side benefit that happens to be monetised in the non-conservation world.

That's why we started thinking about resilience credits: resilience is widely recognised, and there is a lot of interest. People can more directly relate to these (resilience) benefits. People are more impacted by floods and storms through climate change. So the conversation has been on how can we turn that into a marketable asset as well.

I work closely with [VERRA](#), a global program that works with these carbon standards — as well as a newer program that they have created in the past few years in their [SD Vista Program](#), the Sustainable Development for Verified Impact Standard. This aims to link more to those other benefits. Through that program, they are targeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

We developed a Coastal Resilience methodology targeting SDG13 (on climate action), which uses very standardised approaches of models of resilience that for instance an insurance company would be familiar with.

The resilience credits can be sold as a stand-alone product to companies, governments and even individuals. Or they can be stacked with a carbon credit. So this is how we come to the Blue Carbon Resilience Credits, which would be offered at a premium price to bring in more

revenue for the restoration or preservation of these projects.

The methodology has already undergone a 30-day public comment period and now it's currently being independently verified to ensure it is applicable and that the science is clear. Once the validation process is complete, we can start to apply it and use these project sites to look at how we can scale up.

The first site we are testing the application will likely be in Belize, and another one in the Caribbean. But hopefully, we can expand that across a range of regions and sites globally.

Where do you see wetlands sitting within the NbS spectrum? What reflections do you have on wetland restoration and recovery?

Obviously, we want to first protect them before we have lost them. But there is a great opportunity: with a lot more interest now around NbS, they are very topical now, so that is a positive. If we can restore areas in a way that's also smart in how we restore them, and at the same time highlight the benefit of these ecosystems to the more urban or developed areas, that would be great.

Ensuring that the people see that having a nature-based infrastructure in place is providing all these benefits, we can capitalise on resilience. Having more resilient cities and focusing on the impacts of climate change that we are feeling now and will be feeling more and more, will be very important.

Not all the communities can for example retreat although that can be a good option for some — but think about how nature can provide the infrastructure, bringing it in to support the wave

reduction, the protection and the ability to bounce back. We may have storms that come in but if we have the ability to work with nature and bring back the capacity at the community level to nurture and steward those places, then we can have the ability to bounce back much quicker, and they can continue to provide those resilience benefits. And then of course we get the other benefits like the fisheries benefits, water quality and biodiversity and all the other things that come from those natural locations.

What can we do to help promote and protect wetlands?

The critical piece to any of these decisions is having the right and most up-to-date data. A big piece of that is mapping: we must understand where these habitats are in relation to communities and infrastructure. We have at our disposal now all these satellites and all these different resources that can contribute to conservation in ways we never had before. There are challenges also with a lot of different priorities and levels of access to some of this data, but I am seeing a lot more conservation organisations and governments coming together to map these habitats and updating maps on a regular basis. This allows us to see the trends of what is happening in these habitats.

One of the things I am seeing more of is this risk mapping where you can see these changes over time and also look at how that is coupled with other things like populations, roads, developments. You can often see more habitat loss by looking at these areas. If we can do more to use this data effectively to include the habitat in the planning, then it can be preserved more with nature as a solution in mind.

The more you get closer to the edge of mainland, the less data we have and the less notice has been taken of those areas. So, we need to use more of that satellite data and use it to track coastal areas and validate the information we are getting.

Hopefully this year, we also get more chances to get out into the field and interact more with the people at project sites.

Stefanie is also interested in project sites that may be interested in these market finance options (project sites that have scaling opportunity) and while some may not be suitable for market incentives, it's possible some of your sites may be.

If you think there might be interest in this area please feel free to contact her on stefanie.simpson@TNC.ORG



Photo:
Milena Castro De Azevedo

A new resource for wetlands: [Ramsar](#) has released a [Global Wetland Outlook](#) report for the Convention's 50th anniversary which presents new findings on the status and value of wetlands globally, particularly in the context of the global pandemic, climate and biodiversity crises.

New training resources

Introductory Course to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: this online course in Chinese, English, French and Spanish. Themes include Policy and Legislation, protected areas, species and extinctions and vulnerable ecosystems.

Wetland Training Institute: based in the US, this institute also offers courses online. It provides professional training in wetland delineation, soils and hydrology, federal regulatory policy, wetland construction and restoration, plant identification, mitigation banking concepts, wetland policy and permitting, and other riparian resources conservation issues.

Other resources & news

[Realising the potential of nature-based solutions for a transformative societal change](#)

This document from the British Academy COP26 briefings provides an overview of the current state of knowledge concerning nature-based solutions (NbS) for enhancing social and environmental outcomes. It aims to answer the following questions:

- ▶ Which issues do NbS address and where?
- ▶ Who is driving forward the NbS agenda?
- ▶ Why are some NbS becoming more successful and emblematic than others?
- ▶ How can the evidence base be strengthened to promote upscaling of NbS?

[OPPLA Information hub for nature based solutions](#)

This European portal provides access to a wide range of global resources, drawn from the most innovative communities of science, policy and practice. The purpose of Oppla is to be a 'one stop shop' for the latest knowledge and good practice on ecosystem-based solutions for issues such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, desertification and loss of biodiversity.

[Nature-based Solutions in Bangladesh: Evidence of Effectiveness for Addressing Climate Change and Other Sustainable Development Goals](#)

This systematic review published in November 2021 looked at a wide range of NbS being



implemented in Bangladesh and found robust evidence of the benefits of these activities for reducing vulnerability to cyclones, storm surges, floods, landslides, and salinisation, and helping communities adapt.

[China launches new guidelines for coastal ecosystems to enhance disaster risk reduction](#)

The Department of Marine Early Warning and Monitoring of Ministry of Natural Resources developed technical guidelines for coastal ecosystem surveys and assessments, and for disaster risk mitigation through ecological means.

The survey guidelines cover eight types of coastal ecosystems: mangroves, salt marshes, coral reefs, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, sandy coasts, estuaries and bays; while the ecological restoration guidelines cover mangroves, salt marshes, coral reefs, seagrass beds, oyster reefs and sandy beaches, in addition to other areas.

Do you have burning questions on nature-based coastal resilience?

We are curious to hear from you! Please let us know the questions you have related to the funding, planning, permitting, design, construction, and monitoring and maintenance of nature based solutions in the coastal zone.

We'll do our best to share relevant information in the next newsletter. [Ask your questions here.](#)

That's all for this quarter - we hope you enjoyed reading this newsletter. Please feel free to share it with colleagues and send us your burning questions for the next quarter's newsletter. This will be out in late April 2022.

Stay safe, stay well,
Sally and Patrick.