

## WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATIONS-2 FEBUARY 2008

### 1. What are wetlands?

- Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil, or is present either at the surface or near the surface of the soil all year or for varying periods of time during the year.
- Wetlands are amongst the most productive ecosystems in the world. An immense variety of species of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish and mammals can be part of a wetland ecosystem. Physical and chemical features such as climate, landscape, topology, geology, movement and abundance of water help to determine the plants and animals that inhabit each wetland.

(More on: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/>)

### 2. Definition of wetlands.

Under the text of the Ramsar Convention (Article 1.1), wetlands are defined as:

‘Areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary. with water that is static or flowing , fresh, brackish or salty, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters”

(More on <http://www.ramsar.org>)

### 3. Functions of wetlands. Ecological services

- Provide crucial habitats for a multitude of plant and animal species
- Provide food, shelter and breeding grounds for many animal species.
- Provide direct spawning and rearing habitats for fisheries
- Replenish groundwater supplies with cleaner water after filtering it
- They are important genetic reservoirs.
- Stabilize and protect shorelines by reducing waves energy and other erosive forces.

#### **Flood control and groundwater recharge**

- Recharge aquifers and provide water for urban and agricultural use
- Help control flooding and flood damage

#### **Sediments/nutrient retention**

- Absorb and filter pollutants that would contaminate ground water, rivers, lakes and estuaries.

#### **Aesthetics/recreational**

- Provide for fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation

(More on <http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/functions.html>)

#### **4. What is the Ramsar Convention?**

The Convention on wetlands is an intergovernmental treaty adopted on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Because wetlands are important for maintaining key ecological processes, are rich in flora and fauna, benefits the local communities and human society, the objective of the convention is to ensure their conservation and wise use.

(More on: <http://www.ramsar.org>)

#### **5. What is World Wetlands Day?**

2 February each year is World wetlands Day. It marks the date of the signing of the convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The Convention's suggested theme for World Wetland's Day, 2 February 2008, is "Healthy wetlands, Healthy People"

The theme this year emphasizes the strong relationship between maintaining functioning wetland ecosystems and human health. Some of the positive effects on human health of maintaining healthy wetlands are clean water, provision of food, recreational opportunities, mental well being and pharmaceutical products.

More on: <http://www.ramsar.org>

#### **World Wetlands Day celebrations 2008 in Mauritius**

World wetlands day provides an opportunity to draw attention to the need for wise management of the world's wetland's through a variety of events such as workshops and seminars, nature walks and guided tours, children's art contests and photographic competitions, community clean ups, planting activities or other local initiatives.

Tentative programme for Mauritius:

- A. Drawing/painting competition for primary schools
- B. Essay competition for secondary schools
- C. Programme on Television, Radio, Press articles
- D. Main event at the Blue Bay Marine Park with the proclamation of the park as a Ramsar Site of International Importance, Or a one Day workshop presentation at Rivulet Terre Rouge Bird Sanctuary Visitor's Centre Roche Bois.