



**World
Wetlands Day**
2 February 2017

Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction



Wetlands sustain lives. How can we take care of them?

Healthy wetlands can reduce the damage caused by disasters and make recovery faster. Yet worldwide, wetlands are in alarming retreat; at least 64% of them have disappeared since 1900.



Mismanaging wetlands can make disasters worse...

- Canalizing rivers and limiting drainage reduces the natural floodplain sponge effect and makes flood surges more powerful.
- Clearing mangroves to create shrimp fisheries and salt pans removes the natural coastline buffer and reduces carbon storage.
- Mining coral reefs can leave the shoreline exposed to stronger than normal waves.
- Draining or filling in wetlands for agriculture and development removes their function as a natural sponge against flooding.
- Burning and draining peatland releases CO₂ in large quantities.



So how can we help wetlands to help us instead?

COMMUNITIES

- Find out how the wetlands in your area are being used or overused - and who depends on them. How do wetlands protect your area during extreme events?
- Adopt practices that ensure long-term sustainability of the local wetlands for everyone. Measures might include controlling illegal fishing and dumping, no-take rules, set catch limits and regulate the type of activities by season.
- Clear rubbish from wetlands, and unblock streams and rivers.

POLICY-MAKERS

Governments can include wetlands in their strategy for coping with disasters. Possible measures:

- Designate wetlands in flood- and storm-prone zones as protected areas.
- Restore degraded wetlands that act as protective barriers.
- Work with local stake holders and civil society to promote sustainable agriculture, fisheries and tourism.
- Adopt cross sectoral policies especially in agriculture and water to help protect wetlands.

INDIVIDUALS

- Organize or join a wetland clean-up.
- Become a Wetland Ambassador advocate for wetlands.
- Use water more sparingly and avoid toxic products that drain into wetlands.
- Participate in actions to conserve and restore wetlands.

Coastal Protection Strategy for Tacloban, Philippines

In 2013, the city of Tacloban in the Philippines was struck by typhoon Haiyan, the deadliest tropical cyclone in the country's history. In 2016, a new nature- and infrastructure-based plan was presented, showing how the area could "future-proof" itself against disasters. The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) and experts from Deltares, Arcadis, Wetlands International, the Red Cross, Rebel and Van Oord suggested a combination of measures and outlined ways to fund them:

- restoration of mangroves and other ecosystems
- identifying specific sites along the coast for building infrastructure that works with nature
- capacity building for communities and government agencies

Expert suggestions on managing wetlands to reduce the risk associated with disasters can be found in Ramsar Handbooks 1,2,8,9,10,12,16 and 19.



World Wetlands Day is made possible by the Danone Fund for Water.

