



# The Ramsar Wetlands Convention

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# An Introduction to Ramsar

- **What is the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat ?**
  - Intergovernmental treaty
  - Framework for action and cooperation
  - Intended to call attention to high rate of loss of wetlands
  - Very long name, unusual nickname





# The Basics

- One of the oldest environmental conventions
- Wetlands broadly defined:
  - 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 fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.





# Mission

- “The conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world.”





## The Basics (cont.)

- **Three pillars: Parties commit to:**
  - Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands;
  - Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management;
  - Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.





# How does the Convention work?

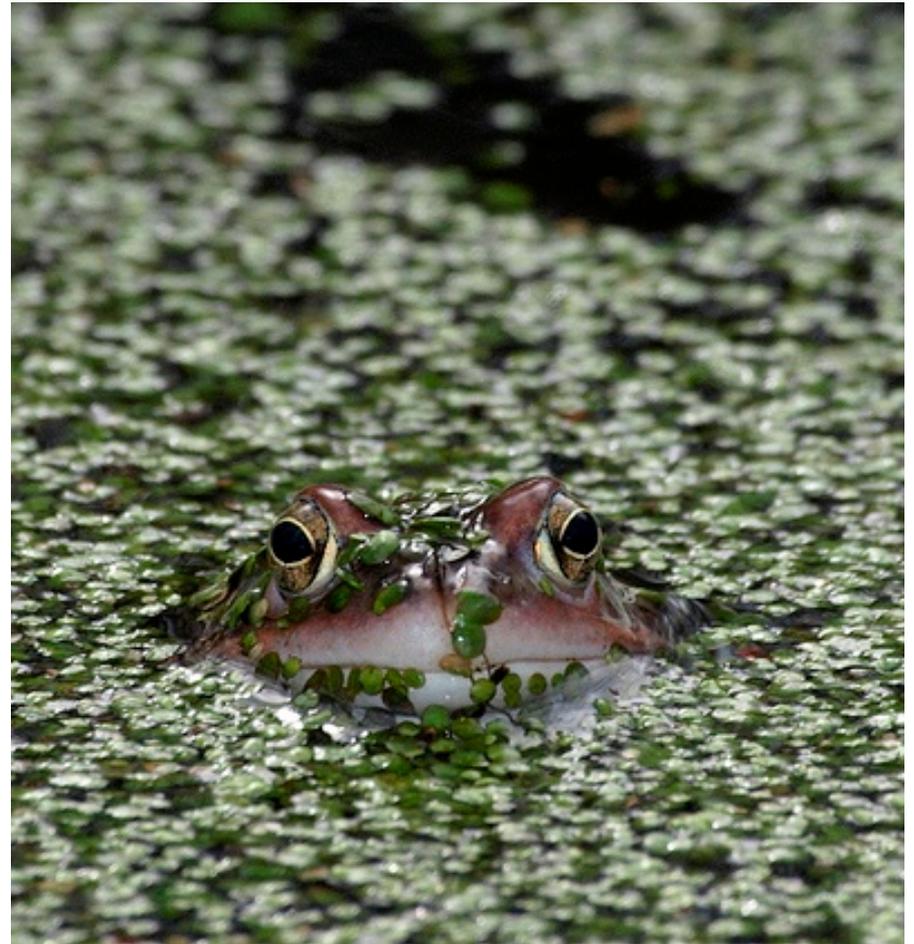
- Conference of the Parties
- Standing Committee
- Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness
- IOPs
- USNRC





# The Convention by the numbers

- 168 Parties
- 2,193 sites
- 208,843,804 hectares





# The United States by the numbers

- U.S. became a party in 1986
- 37 sites
- 1,859,176 hectares
- Most recent – Door Peninsula Coastal Wetlands
- Smallest – Wilma H. Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park





# Challenges

- Half the world's wetlands have disappeared since 1900 – 40% in last 40 years
- Current loss of wetlands is exceeding our capacity to conserve
- World population growth is driving an increasing demand on water
- Wetlands are equated with wasteland
- Limited public understanding of the vital benefits wetlands bring





## Challenges (cont.)

- **Ramsar not meeting its potential**
  - **Overly ambitious**
  - **Unfocused**
  - **Poorly resourced**
- **Governments not fulfilling their commitments**
  - **Status of sites unknown**
  - **Countries not making financial contributions**
  - **Site managers not well informed**
  - **Policymakers unaware**





# What are we doing about it?

- **U.S. priorities: efforts to instill discipline, focus in Convention and its bodies**
  - Scientific delivery revisited
  - A more strategic Strategic Plan
  - Budgetary discipline instilled
  - Outside resources leveraged
  - Messaging and outreach improved





# What happens next?

- COP-12
  - Key agenda items of interest to United States
- Standing Committee
- STRP member selection

