

Ramsar Convention

What Ramsar Is:

- In 1971, an international convention was held in Ramsar, Iran and participants signed a treaty entitled, “The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat.”
- The Ramsar Convention provides a framework for voluntary international cooperation for wetland conservation.
- The U.S. acceded to the Ramsar Convention April 18, 1987.

What Ramsar Does:

- Recognizes wetlands’ importance to communities, cultures, governments, and businesses and encourages wetland conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- Establishes criteria for designating rivers, marshes, coral reefs and other areas as a “wetland of international importance.”
- The Ramsar Secretariat facilitates implementation of wetlands conservation decisions made by nations, by preparing wise use guidelines, creating training opportunities, and providing access to financial resources.

What Ramsar Does Not Do:

- Ramsar does not impose restrictions on nations and landowners. Ramsar is not a regulating entity, nor is it a United Nations Convention.

How We Benefit from Ramsar:

- Wetlands provide many environmental services, including clean water, flood abatement, wildlife habitat, recreation, tourism, fishing, groundwater recharge.
- A “wetland of international importance” designation can bring economic benefits to surrounding areas due to increased tourism, fishing and recreation.

Who can nominate a site

- Any local government, group, community, private organization, or landowner can nominate a site for inclusion on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. The Federal government can also nominate sites, such as National Parks, National Forests, or National Wildlife Refuges.
- A written agreement is required from all landowners and a Member of Congress representing the geographic area.

Nomination package

The petitioner must submit a complete nomination package to the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20006, with a copy to the Global Program, Division of International Conservation, FWS. This package must include:

- A cover letter addressed to the Director describing how the proposed site meets the Ramsar criteria;
- Written endorsements from each of the landowners, the local or state wildlife or natural resource agency, and a member of Congress representing the geographic area.
- Although not required, additional letters of support from other

stakeholders associated with the proposed site greatly contribute to the nomination process; and

A completed Ramsar Information Sheet, is available online at <http://bit.ly/1HIU7PR>

Nine Criteria for “Wetlands of International Importance” Designation:

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it meets any one of the following criteria. The site:

1. contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region; or
2. supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities; or
3. supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region; or
4. supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions; or
5. regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds; or



6. regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird; or
7. supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity; or
8. is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend; or
9. regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal.

- San Francisco Bay in California is the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast of the U.S. and provides key habitat for a broad suite of wildlife and a range of ecological services such as flood protection and carbon sequestration.

- Florida's Everglades serve as a vast filter and reservoir of clean water, which supplies Florida's expanding human population.

- Roswell Artesian Wetlands in New Mexico plays a critical role in the life cycles of over 100 varieties of dragonflies and damselflies, the largest collection in the world.

Ramsar Sites Worldwide:

- 168 nations have signed on to the Ramsar Convention Treaty.

- 2,200 sites have been designated to date, covering a surface area of more than 516 million acres / 208,674,247 hectares.



Palmyra Atoll NWR/USFWS

Ramsar Sites in the United States of America:

37 sites have been designated in the United States. Some notable sites include:

United States Ramsar Sites

1. Izembek National Wildlife Refuge & State Game Area, AK	20. Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve, CA
2. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, NJ	21. Grassland Ecological Area, CA
3. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, GA & FL	22. Kawainui and Hamakua Marsh Complex, HI
4. Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, NV	23. Francis Beidler Forest, SC
5. Everglades National Park, FL	24. Wilma H. Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park, OH
6. Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex, MD & VA	25. Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge, Pacific Islands
7. Cheyenne Bottoms, KS	26. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, FL
8. Cache-Lower White Rivers Joint Venture Area, AR	27. Upper Mississippi River Floodplain, MN, WI and IO
9. Horicon Marsh, WI	28. Humbug Marsh, MI
10. Catahoula Lake, LA	29. Roswell Artesian Wetlands, NM
11. Delaware Bay Estuary, DE, NJ, & PA	30. Laguna de Santa Rosa, CA
12. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, FL	31. Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs, WI
13. Caddo Lake, TX	32. Congaree National Park, SC
14. Connecticut River Estuary and Tidal Wetlands Complex, CT	33. The Emiquon Complex, IL
15. Cahe River-Cypress Creek Wetlands, IL	34. Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refufge at Hennepin and Hopper Lakes, IL
16. Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, SD	35. San Francisco Bay Esuary, CA
17. Bolinas Lagoon, CA	36. Missisquoi and Bay Wetlands, VT
18. Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, KS	37. Door Peninsula Coastal Wetlands, WI
19. Tomales Bay, CA	38. Chiwaukee Illinois Beach Lake Plain, WI and IL

For more information contact:

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