

PREVIOUS WORLD WETLANDS NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

YEAR	VENUE	THEME
2004	Sironga Wetlands, Nyamira	<i>'From The Mountain To The Sea Wetlands Work For Us'</i>
2005	Kingwal Swamp, Nandi	<i>'There's Wealth In Wetland Diversity- Don't Lose It'</i>
2006	Lake Ol Bolossat, Nyandarua	<i>'In The Face Of Poverty...Wetlands Are Lifelines'</i>
2007	Karanda Primary School, Abero Town, Nyando	<i>'Wetlands Support Fisheries Keep Them Healthy'</i>
2008	National Museums Headquarters, Nairobi	<i>'Healthy Wetlands Healthy People'</i>
2009	Sabaki(Athi) River estuary, Malindi	<i>'Upstream- Downstream : Wetlands Connect Us . All'</i>
2010	Kihooto Grounds, Lake Naivasha	<i>'Caring For Wetlands an Answer To Climate Change'</i>
2011	Lake Nakuru, Rift Valley	<i>'Wetlands and Forests'</i>
2012	Ombaka Pry School - Kisumu County	<i>"Wetlands and Tourism"</i>

What we need to do?

- **Embrace and Implement IWRM framework:** Public agencies, the private sector and the community need to work together at all levels in an integrated, holistic and cooperative effort. Water Resource User Associations (WRUAs), Community Forest Associations (CFAs) need to be integrated with county-level activities and basin wide programmes to achieve desired goals. The general public should stop and object to drainage of wetlands and always insist on EIA license for any development on or within wetlands.
- **Mitigate pollution:** Integrated pollution management such as integrated solid waste management and use of constructed wetlands to treat wastewater emanating from farms, hotels, residential areas is

imperative towards realizing Vision 2030 aspirations. Managing wetlands for water provisioning should be taken as a personal responsibility by all of us. Local actions to recycle, reuse and conserve water are the basis of sustainable water management.

- **Integrate Indigenous knowledge and gender equity principles:** Stakeholders are encouraged to ensure that their experiences and concerns are integrated into water management decision-making. The power to change through grass roots advocacy and action should be promoted so as to ensure ownership of these resources at the local level and thus promotion of sustainable utilization.

- **Partner and support wetland management:** Awareness raising, education and rehabilitation programmes, contribute immensely to the general management and sustainable utilization of wetland resources including water. Awareness and education campaigns are integral in any wetland management programme.

- **Promote Science-Policy Dialogues:** A lot of good scientific research is routinely carried out on wetlands aimed at improving the knowledge base. These information needs to be shared with actors and decision-makers to improve management of wetlands.

Build-up activities:

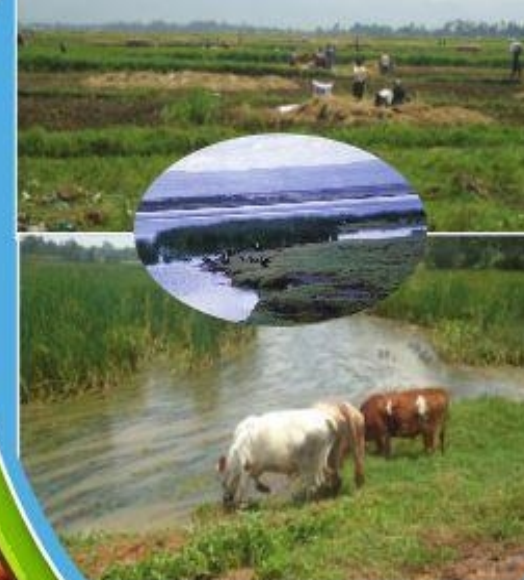
The National Steering Committee aligned several build-up activities towards commemoration of the World Wetlands Day 2013. These included Radio and TV talk shows (Citizen TV, NTV, KBC TV and Radio and other local FM stations), e-social links/network through the use of Facebook and Twitter as well as interviews and panel discussions. A panel discussion themed Wetlands take care of Water, was also held at the National Museums of Kenya. In addition, a tree planting exercise aimed at rehabilitating and restoring the ecological integrity of River Sosiani in Uasin Gishu County was undertaken.

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World Wetlands Day 2013 "Wetlands take care of Water"



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World Wetlands Day (WWD), what is it?

Background

The World Wetlands Day (WWD) is commemorated every 2 February each year globally. It marks the date of the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on 2 February, 1971. The celebrations aim at rallying government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and groups of citizens at all levels of the community to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness on wetland values and benefits, sustainable development and wise use of wetlands.

Kenya adopted this Convention in 1990 and has so far designated six wetlands as Ramsar sites-wetlands of international importance. These include lakes Baringo, Bogoria, Nakuru, Naivasha, Elementaita and lastly Tana Delta, the newest in the list having been designated in October last year.

The theme for WWD 2013 is *Wetlands take care of Water*, to emphasize the interdependency between wetlands and water. The theme correlates well with the idea of valuing wetlands as the kidneys of the earth, performing similar functions as the human kidney.

Further, the United Nations has declared this year as the UN International Year for Water Cooperation. This is a result of the recognition that water is critical for sustainable development and for human health and well-being and thus provides an ideal opportunity to look at the intersectionality between water and wetlands. Wetlands store huge quantities of water and release this much needed water for various functions and tasks including domestic, industrial, car-washing, irrigation/crop husbandry, fish farming and life sustenance to various aquatic and semi-aquatic life forms/organisms.

Wetlands, the biological supermarkets

Wetlands are among the world's most productive environments. They have been famously described as 'biological supermarkets' because of the extensive food webs and rich biodiversity they support and as 'kidneys of the landscape' because of the functions they perform in the hydrological and chemical cycles.

Wetlands constitute the transition zone between a water body and the dry land and consist of rivers (riverine wetlands), lakes (lacustrine wetlands), swamps (palustrine), rice paddies, seashore, dams, tributaries, that support specific plants and animals. The depths of these water bodies do not exceed six metres.

Wetlands play a regulatory role in climate system, water purification and waste removal, recharge and discharge of groundwater, and wetland water provides suitable homage to many aquatic plants and animals.



Threats to Kenya wetlands from a water perspective

Here in Kenya, millions of people heavily depend on wetlands for various goods and services such as water, food, medicine, security and other sources of livelihood. However, despite wetlands playing a significant role in provision of goods and services for human well-being, many wetlands are faced with a myriad of challenges including:

- Pollution from both direct and indirect sources
- Effects of alien invasive species,
- Wetland modifications and drainages mainly for agriculture and human settlement
- Inappropriate land use and unsustainable practices within wetland catchment areas resulting in catchment degradation,
- Poverty and low socio-economic status of wetland dependent communities,
- Inequity and inequality including land tenure systems and inheritance
- Population Increase and climate change and climate variability

National World Wetlands Day at Marula Swamp, Uasin Gishu County

This year's national World Wetland Day 2013 focuses on Marula swamp in Uasin Gishu County. The swamp is situated nine km from Eldoret town and it is a riverine wetland with an area of approximately 560ha that stretches for a distance of about 10 km long and 700 metres wide at the widest point. The swamp provides many benefits to the adjacent communities. It also harbours many wildlife species such as crested cranes and other birds. The wetland has a catchment area of 21,000 ha and is dominated by papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) flanked on either side by shorter emergent vegetation.

The swamp is used by local communities as a source of water for domestic use, agriculture, horticulture, livestock grazing during dry seasons as well as a source of raw materials for handicraft and firewood. The main challenge to the swamp is effluent emanating from the flower farms. Despite the heavy reliance on the wetland and its water by the community, it has continued to undergo degradation as a result of human encroachment for settlement and agriculture. Agriculture places the greatest single demand on water thus the need to increase efficiency in agriculture and reduce water losses and waste. Currently, flower farming is one of the biggest threats to sustainable management of this important wetland.

