

WHAT IS THE RAMSAR CONVENTION?

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) is an international treaty that provides for international cooperation for the conservation of wetlands it was signed on February 2nd 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.

It emphasizes the conservation and wise use of wetland ecosystems that are important for biological diversity and human communities.

WHAT ARE WETLANDS?

The Ramsar Convention defines wetlands as "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters" e.g. mangroves, marshes also known as "morass" and even, coral reefs and seagrass beds.



BENEFITS OF JOINING THE CONVENTION

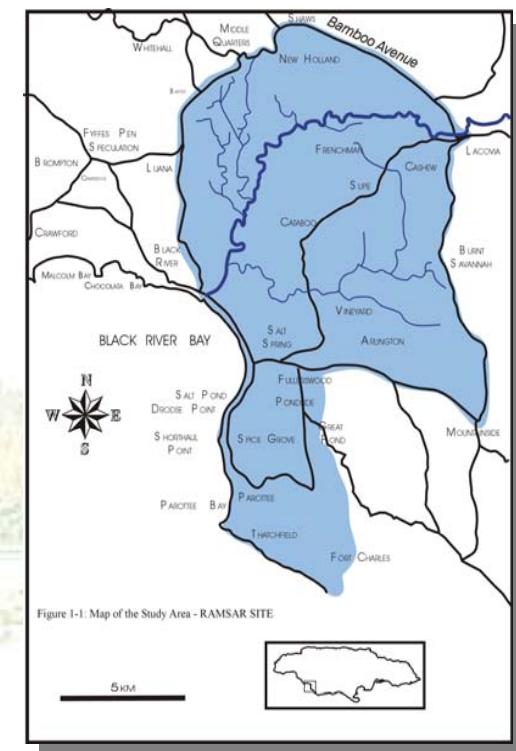
- Facilitates development at the national level of policies and actions for the wise use of wetlands.
- Presents an opportunity for a country to be heard in the principal forum on conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- Brings increased publicity and prestige for wetlands.
- Encourages international cooperation on wetlands and brings access to expert advice on national and site-related problems of wetland, conservation and management.
- Provides access to financial aid through the Convention's Small Grant Fund.
- Brings access to information and advice on application of the Conventions' internationally-accepted standards, such as guidelines on application of the wise use concept and management planning in wetlands.

OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION

- To recommend sites for inclusion in the "List of Wetlands of International Importance".
- To ensure wise use of wetlands.
- To establish reserves and promote training in wetland research, management and wardening.

BLACK RIVER LOWER MORASS RAMSAR SITE

On February 7, 1998, Jamaica became the 104th party to join the convention and the Black River Lower Morass was included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance. There are presently over 1,000 Ramsar sites included in the List.



GOALS

- Ensure wise use of natural resources (e.g. fish, shrimp, crabs, craft material, surface and ground water).
- Ensure the survival of representative natural ecosystems (mangroves forests, marshes, riverine forests) as well as rare and endemic species (e.g. West Indian Manatee and the West Indian Whistling Duck).

THREATS TO THE MORASS

- ☛ Lighting of fires for agricultural purposes.
- ☛ Introduction of species which can invade/destroy native species.
- ☛ Speeding by boats on the river which may cause erosion of the banks.
- ☛ Development activity e.g. tourism, residential and agricultural.
- ☛ Unsustainable harvesting of flora and fauna.
- ☛ Pollution e.g. industrial waste.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT WETLANDS

- ☛ Learn more about wetlands in your area
- ☛ Join a local environmental group interested in wetland conservation
- ☛ Do not dump garbage and other wastes directly into wetlands or into rivers and gullies
- ☛ Report activities likely to have a negative impact on wetlands

National Environment and Planning Agency

Vision

That Jamaica's land and natural resources are used in a sustainable way and that there is broad understanding of environment, planning and development issues, with extensive participation amongst citizens and a high level of compliance to relevant legislation.

Mission

To promote sustainable development by ensuring protection of the environment and orderly development in Jamaica through highly motivated staff performing at the highest standard.

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The Convention on Wetlands

