Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971) Encyclopedia Article

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Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (1971)

Also called the Ramsar Convention or **Wetlands** Convention, the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance is an international agreement adopted in 1971 at a conference held in Ramsar, Iran. One of the principal concerns of the agreement was the protection of migratory waterfowl, but it is generally committed, like much wetlands legislation in the United States, to restricting the loss of wetlands in general, because of their ecological functions as well as their economic, scientific, and recreational value. The accord went into effect in 1975, establishing a network of wetlands, primarily across Europe and North Africa.

In 2002, there were 132 Contracting Parties, each of whom was required to set aside at least one wetland reserve. Over 1,178 national wetland sites have been established totaling over 252.3 million acres (102.1 million ha). The convention has secured protection for wetlands around the world, but many environmentalists believe it has the same weakness as many international conventions on the **environment**. There is no effective mechanism for enforcement. **Population growth** continues to increase political and economic pressures to develop wetland areas around the world, and there are no provisions in the agreement strong enough to prevent nations from removing protected status from designated wetlands.

Resources

Books

Basic Documents of International Environmental Law. Boston: Graham & Trotman, 1992.

Effectiveness of International Environmental Agreements: A Survey of Existing Legal Instruments. Cambridge, England: Grotius, 1992.

Organizations

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