



THE SOURCE
2024 Annual Review
Wetlands International



Wetlands
INTERNATIONAL



**WETLANDS
INTERNATIONAL
IS THE GLOBAL
NOT-FOR-PROFIT
ORGANISATION
DEDICATED TO
THE CONSERVATION
AND RESTORATION
OF WETLANDS**

What are wetlands?

Wetlands occur wherever water meets land – mangroves, peatlands, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains, flooded forests, ricefields, and even coral reefs.

Wetlands exist in every country across the world and every type of region – polar, tropical, wet, dry, high and low altitude.

Healthy wetlands are key to restoring nature and healing our climate, yet the world has lost two-thirds of wetlands since 1900.

Urgent action is needed to reverse this decline and revive these natural wonders.

Our Vision

A world where wetlands are treasured and nurtured for their beauty, the life they support and the resources they provide.

Our Mission

To inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.

While small on a map, Guinea Bissau is one of the most sizeable mangrove countries in the world. In its beautiful Cantanhez and Cacheu National Parks and its buffer zones, Wetlands International naturally regenerated over 2,600 hectares of mangroves.

FROM OUR CEO & CHAIR OF SUPERVISORY COUNCIL

While the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss remain enormous, there is growing recognition internationally that wetlands are an important part of the solution. We are seeing this reflected in countries' climate plans and biodiversity strategies, hearing it in discussions at global conferences like the biodiversity COP16 in Colombia and climate COP29 in Baku, building on it through global initiatives like the Freshwater Challenge and the Mangrove Breakthrough.



Panama joins the freshwater challenge. From left to right: Juan Carlos Monterrey - Panama's Special Representative for Climate Change, Han de Groot - CEO Wetlands International, Juan Carlos Navarro - Minister of Environment, Paula Martinelli - Global Water Advocacy Officer and Diego Dipieri - President Anarap, at COP16 in Cali, Colombia.

As the single largest international organisation dedicated to working for wetlands, we are proud of the role that Wetlands International has played in these developments. As an international network, we have a prominent voice on the global stage, while having deep local roots all over the world. Through our projects, we have demonstrated how reviving wetland landscapes can improve people's livelihoods, boost biodiversity, and strengthen water security and climate resilience. And we are using this proven on-the-ground experience to influence policy, develop partnerships and mobilise finance to deliver these solutions at scale.

In this annual review, you can read about just some of the work we are doing to achieve our ambitious strategic targets and contribute to global goals on climate, nature and sustainable development. From helping people in the Pantanal in South America to prevent and recover from wildfires, to upscaling ecological mangrove restoration and community-based interventions in Africa and Asia, to mapping and restoring peatlands and the carbon they hold in Europe and India, this year has brought inspiring progress.

Yet we are also seeing disturbing counter-trends. Some governments are backsliding on commitments, reversing positive policies and cutting budgets. Some businesses and finance institutions are stepping away from their environmental and social responsibilities. Environmental and development NGOs are coming under unjustified attack. There is a real danger that many of the achievements we have fought so hard for may be undone, creating serious risks for people's livelihoods and security and causing long-term damage to our environment.

We cannot afford to lose momentum at this crucial time. And I am confident that the investments we have made in strengthening our organisation in key areas – including fundraising, capacity development and sharing knowledge throughout our global network – will stand us in good stead as we seek to scale our impact.

To lead these efforts, we are looking forward to welcome Dr Coenraad Krijger as our new CEO in 2025. Coenraad brings a wealth of scientific expertise and practical experience to the organisation, most recently as director of the Dutch branch of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). He has an outstanding track



Dr. Coenraad Krijger - Future CEO Wetlands International, Musonda Mumba - Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, Han de Groot - CEO Wetlands International, at COP16 in Cali, Colombia.

record of leading international programmes and networks and building collaborations across countries and sectors. I am grateful to everybody who has supported us in the past year, to our many partners and to our tireless staff. We have come a long way together, and we must stay the course. The world needs wetlands, and it needs the solutions that Wetlands International offers.

Han de Groot
CEO, Wetlands International

Jan Karel Mak
Chair of Supervisory Council



Fisherman on a boat in Kenya.

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FROM OUR CEO

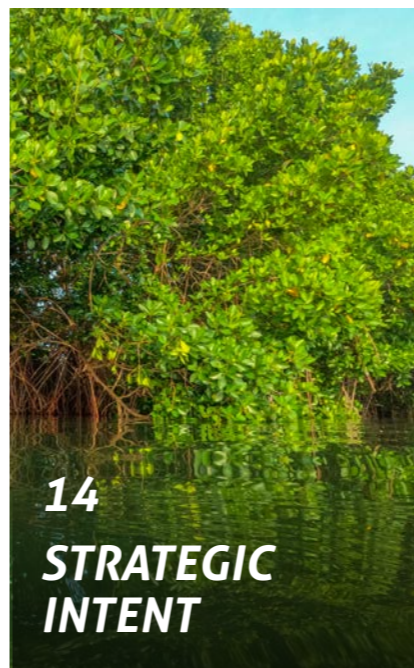


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YOU**

HIGHLIGHTS

Protecting the Pantanal

In the heart of South America, the Pantanal is the world's largest tropical wetland and a haven for biodiversity. This giant seasonal floodplain, which covers an area around the size of England, is home to over 4,700 animal and plant species. It provides water, food and livelihoods for around 1.5 million people, and affects millions more living downstream.

But this incredible place is in trouble. In recent years, the Pantanal has been ravaged by fires – brought on by a combination of climate-induced drought and unsustainable human activities. Last year brought severe fires, with 1.5 million hectares burnt in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul alone. This has devastated communities and wildlife, and released massive quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

In response, we have helped put in place a monitoring and alert system that has since been adopted by government agencies to respond quickly to fire risks. We have also worked closely with the Kadiwéu Indigenous people, providing equipment, training and support to help fight fires and to manage their 538,000-hectare territory.

At the same time, we are working with local people to restore areas affected by fire. Involving local communities in ecosystem restoration and enabling them to benefit is critical. In priority areas like the Sesc Pantanal Ramsar site, our innovative restoration approach focuses on creating economic opportunities and improving livelihoods – for example, setting up community nurseries to grow native seedlings helps restore natural vegetation while boosting local incomes.



An indigenous leader of the Guató people, holds ashes from a burned area near her home in the Baía dos Guató Indigenous Land, Mato Grosso. The territory where she lives, was heavily affected by the fires.



A jaguar (Panthera onca) and its cub amidst the ashes and burned vegetation in the fires. Scientists estimate that nearly half of the jaguars living in the Pantanal were affected by the fires.


We help to safeguard some of the most pristine parts of the Pantanal by supporting the management of protected areas, including national and state parks and private reserves. These include a network of protected areas in Serra do Amolar, a region of exceptionally high biodiversity value, and the Pantanal do Rio Negro State Park, where we are helping to develop a comprehensive management plan and fire management strategy.

However, protected areas make up only a small proportion of the Pantanal. Most of the land is privately owned, so engaging with farmers and landowners is vital. For example, we are working with cattle farmers to introduce better ranching practices that minimise negative impacts on ecosystems, including fires.

As well as local and regional action, we are mobilising international support for the Pantanal through our fundraising and advocacy. In the Netherlands, thousands of cyclists raised money for our work in the Pantanal when Cycling 4 Climate chose to partner with us. And we are pushing for the EU to agree a Pantanal partnership to reduce pressures on its ecosystems and to help tackle fires and rehabilitate degraded areas.

We highlighted the plight of the Pantanal, and the work Wetlands International is doing in the region, at the COP16 biodiversity summit in Cali, Colombia. By sharing these efforts with a global audience, we aim to inspire and mobilise action for wetlands through initiatives like the Freshwater Challenge, as well as to meet global biodiversity goals. With wetlands holding 40% of the world's biodiversity, we urged governments to take bolder action to protect and restore wetlands within their biodiversity strategies and action plans. We are also pushing for countries to include conservation and restoration of wetland ecosystems in their climate mitigation and adaptation plans.

A wetland on fire is a powerful symbol of humanity's broken relationship with nature. But if we act now, we can fix it – with immense benefits for people, biodiversity and the climate.

 **Explore more:**
[Corredor Azur Programme](#)





Permeable Structures in Bedono Northern Java, Indonesia.

Mangrove restoration: from local pilots to global breakthrough

Mangroves are in the spotlight like never before. The Mangrove Breakthrough that we helped launch in late 2022 is mobilising efforts to secure the future of 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030. Around 35 countries have signed up, and many have made ambitious mangrove restoration commitments.

In the past, however, mangrove restoration efforts have often been ineffective. In particular, mass plantings of single species have a failure rate of around 80%. To address this, we have promoted the concept of community-based ecological mangrove restoration. This focuses on creating the right conditions for mangroves to regenerate on their own, with planting only used where mangrove seedlings are unable to settle naturally or to enrich species diversity. As well as ecological considerations – like hydrology, sediment dynamics and soil conditions – this means addressing socioeconomic issues so that local communities are invested in and benefit from mangrove restoration. Although initially slower than planting, community-based ecological mangrove restoration brings far greater benefits for people and nature in the long run.

One of the countries where we have piloted this approach over the last decade is Indonesia. In the village of Liagu, in North Kalimantan, we have developed a 14-hectare pilot site in an area of abandoned fishponds. Digging a zigzag of channels that mimics the natural flow pattern has enabled propagules to spread from neighbouring mangrove areas. The site is already acting as a model for restoration efforts across North and East Kalimantan, where a large-scale programme is under way to restore 33,000 hectares of degraded mangroves.

As well as rehabilitating abandoned fishponds, we have been working with fish farmers to restore mangroves within aquaculture systems. Making space for mangroves can benefit aquaculture systems by dampening waves and strengthening pond dykes. Farmers can collect wild fry from the mangroves to stock their ponds, while the mangroves roots improve water quality.


Now, we are upscaling these approaches across the country, in collaboration with partners from the Indonesian chapter of the Global Mangrove Alliance – part of a global coalition working to support

mangrove restoration and conservation, of which Wetlands International is a founding member. As well as organising field visits to our demonstration sites, we have trained more than 250 people from national and local government, academia, the private sector, NGOs and communities in community-based ecological mangrove restoration. We have also developed guidelines and landscape-level restoration planning tools to support others, and best practices are being integrated into major investments like the World Bank’s US\$500 million programme to restore 75,000 hectares.

This has had a major influence on the Indonesian government’s ambitious commitment to restore 600,000 hectares of degraded mangroves. Ecological mangrove restoration is now recognised in government policy and in the plans and training modules of the Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency. Both mangrove and peatland restoration are included in Indonesia’s national climate plan.

Indonesia is also seeking to accelerate mangrove restoration efforts globally through the Mangrove Alliance for Climate, which the country spearheads in partnership with the United Arab Emirates. The Alliance, which now includes 30 countries, promotes mangroves as nature-based climate solutions and seeks to strengthen cross-boundary cooperation and knowledge exchange.

With our many partners in Indonesia and beyond, Wetlands International is determined to harness this momentum and ensure that mangrove restoration initiatives deliver enduring benefits for communities and the environment.

 **Explore more:** [demonstrating-and-upscaling-ecological-mangrove-restoration-in-north-kalimantan-indonesia](#)



Local community use a refractometer to measure the salinity of the water, Indonesia.

African exchanges

While Africa is a hugely diverse continent, its people face many shared challenges. Climate change is bringing increasingly severe impacts, from extensive floods to prolonged droughts to tropical cyclones. Growing water stress, exacerbated by weak governance, undermines food security, development and people’s health and livelihoods. Environmental degradation threatens rural and coastal communities who remain highly dependent on natural resources.

Conserving, restoring and sustainably managing wetlands can help address many of these challenges, bringing environmental and socioeconomic benefits. And we are developing a range of approaches and good practices that can be replicated and adapted in different contexts.

Our 10-year Mangrove Capital Africa programme, funded by DOB Ecology, aims to support the conservation or restoration of 1 million hectares of African mangrove ecosystems by 2027 – and we expect some 2 million people to benefit from improved livelihoods and increased climate

resilience. We began by focusing on two sites – the Saloum Delta in Senegal and the Rufiji Delta in Tanzania – but have now expanded into other areas in a total of seven countries, using our tried-and-tested community-based ecological mangrove restoration methods.

Meanwhile, our Source to Sea initiative in East Africa is promoting an integrated approach to wetland conservation and water management from the lakes of the Rift Valley to the mangroves of the Indian Ocean coast. Working across three countries (Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania) and with multiple partners, the initiative emphasises the importance of a coordinated, landscape-wide approach. This covers everything from mapping out and addressing potential water conflicts to supporting climate-smart agriculture and working with pastoralists on rangeland management, and has generated valuable knowledge and experiences that are informing our work in other river basins.

In recent years, we have stepped up collaboration between our regional offices in East and West Africa. Several field visits and exchanges have been organised to facilitate learning, share ideas and discuss similar

experiences. We also regularly organise meetings that bring together staff from both regions, which also include visits to project sites. In December 2023, for example, staff from Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone visited Kenya during a regional meeting that brought together all the countries involved in the Mangrove Capital Africa programme to exchange updates on progress. Our staff and other participants from West Africa also took part in South-to-South learning exchange in Tanzania. Also last year, staff from East Africa travelled to Casamance and Saloum in Senegal to visit various mangrove-related livelihood projects.

This has led to a fruitful exchange of best practices. Energy-efficient cookstoves, for example, were first introduced in Lamu, Kenya, and their success is now being replicated in Senegal. By reducing the amount of fuelwood needed, the stoves help take pressure off mangroves and coastal forests as well as reducing indoor air pollution and saving families time and money.

Going in the other direction, we developed a successful model for village savings and loan associations in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau which we are now introducing in Kenya. These groups provide a source of capital for local entrepreneurs, especially women, to develop their own sustainable businesses. These include activities like oyster farming that depend on healthy mangrove ecosystems, giving communities an added incentive to conserve them.

In the coming years, we have a huge opportunity to work with African countries to replicate and upscale these solutions. Supported by initiatives like the Freshwater Challenge and the Mangrove Breakthrough, we can put wetland conservation and restoration at the heart of national climate, biodiversity and sustainable development planning.

Explore more: [Mangrove Capital Africa](#)



Monitoring of Mangrove restoration site in the Saloum Delta, Senegal.



Pupils learn to observe birds for the first time on a school excursion, Senegal.

Youth Engagement for Wetlands Conservation

The future of our wetlands lies in the hands of today's youth. Wetlands International has been actively engaging young people and empowering them to become advocates and leaders in wetland conservation and restoration.

In 2023, we organised a workshop focused on youth involvement, which was met with enthusiasm and led to further discussions during our Annual Meeting. Our collaboration with youth groups during COP28 amplified the demands for wetland conservation in global negotiations, and our participation in the Nature-based Future Challenge of Wageningen University & Research further underscored our commitment to youth engagement.

Building on these successes, in 2024 we conducted an internal survey and workshop to assess our youth engagement strategies. From this, we developed a new project, "Wetlands Futureproof: Mobilising Youth for Wetlands", which aims to formalise and expand our youth engagement efforts. We have since been working closely with

international partners, including the Ramsar Youth Working Group, to align our initiatives with global youth movements.

In 2025, we organised a webinar on World Wetlands Day in collaboration with various international youth organisations. We are also developing an in-person side event and a resolution for the Ramsar COP, alongside global partners, to ensure youth voices are heard in international wetland conservation policies. Additionally, we are involved in the next edition of the Nature-based Future Challenge and will organise a global webinar on nature-based solutions with Ramsar Africa, NL2120 and Wageningen University & Research.

Explore more: [Wetlands Futureproof: Mobilising Youth for Wetlands](#)



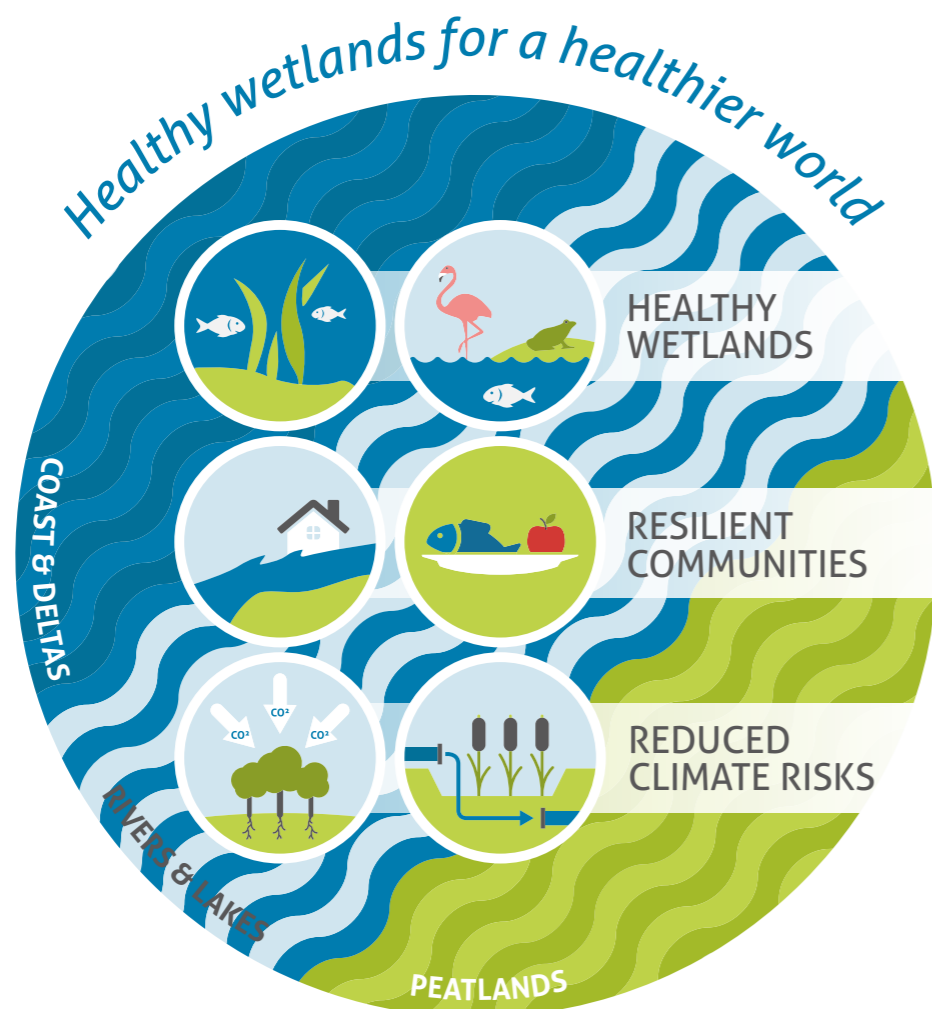
STRATEGIC INTENT 2020-2030

Over 2020-2030 Wetlands International aims to safeguard and restore tens of millions of hectares of wetlands, bringing multiple returns for nature and people. Our theory of change encapsulates the three main phases of our work: to inspire, mobilise and upscale. These are the key ingredients of our organisational strategy for the period 2020-2030.

For this period, we are orientating our work to achieve three, interconnected global impacts: healthy wetlands, resilient wetland communities, and reduced climate risks.

Our vision, targets and strategic interventions are organised in three streams: Coasts and Deltas, Rivers and Lakes, Peatlands.

We measure our progress across these three streams according to the following three interconnected global impacts and six outcomes.



Healthy Wetlands



Wetland habitats and functions safeguarded and restored

We aim to help conserve a selection of the most intact wetland ecosystems and restore others within a full range of wetland types across the world. We also aim to restore other freshwater systems, peatlands, deltas and coastal ecosystems for their intrinsic, cultural and ecosystem-service values. We will prioritise ecological networks that connect landscapes, such as flyways and swim-ways.



Wetland species recovered

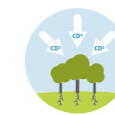
Building on our long track record for waterbird conservation, we will contribute to the conservation of wetland biodiversity by working on selected flagship species and groups of species linked to specific habitats.



Reduced societal conflict and displacement from wetlands

We will in particular strive to resolve situations where deterioration of wetlands - caused by upstream abstraction, climate change or population growth - contributes to loss of livelihoods, human displacement, conflict and migration. Where necessary, we will use peacebuilding and conflict resolution measures to address imbalanced power relations between stakeholders, building capacity for vulnerable and marginalised people to defend their rights to water and wetland resources.

Reduced Climate Risks



Wetland carbon stores secured and enhanced

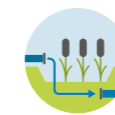
We aim to bring wetlands into activities to adapt to and mitigate climate change, which is otherwise a threat to the integrity of all wetlands. Improving the condition of peatlands, river systems and coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, salt marshes and seagrass beds will also reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases and return many to their role as carbon sinks.

Resilient Communities



Water and food secured for wetland communities

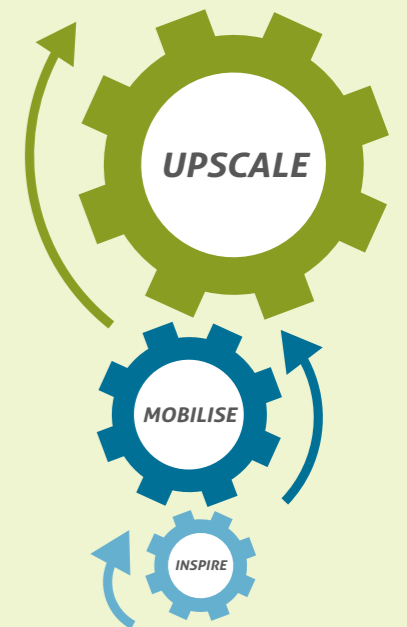
We aim to prevent further wetland loss and degradation that undermines the natural productivity and water storage capacities of peatlands, floodplains, mangrove forests, deltas and lakes. We aim to improve and diversify the livelihoods of people dependent on wetlands, and promote best practices in agriculture and aquaculture, integrating wetland values into the local economy.



Wetland Nature-based Solutions integrated into infrastructure developments

We aim to steer urban water infrastructure investment and land use planning towards using wetlands to meet challenges such as water insecurity and flooding that are conventionally addressed by civil engineering - an approach that often causes further loss and deterioration of wetlands.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



Inspire

- We translate science into policy and practice
- We demonstrate innovative solutions
- We show where the key wetlands are and how they are thriving or threatened

Mobilise

- We train practitioners and support decision makers
- We build alliances around compelling landscape visions and global goals

Upscale

- We create enabling policy and investment environments
- We unlock finance for wetlands



ACHIEVEMENTS

This section presents our 2024 achievements. These are organised along our three streams of work (Coasts and Deltas, Rivers and Lakes, and Peatlands) and in relation to the ambitions laid out in our Strategic Intent 2020-2030.

OUR SCORING SYSTEM



On track to exceed target (we will achieve the target before 2030)



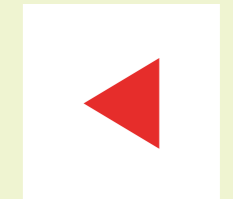
We expect to achieve the target by 2030



Substantial progress, but more time is needed to reach our target



So far, there is no significant overall progress



The situation is deteriorating and adaptive management is needed

Traditional fishing in Guinea-Bissau.



Young mangrove tree in the Saloum Delta, Senegal.

COASTS AND DELTAS

Goal: Safeguard and restore coastal wetland ecosystems as essential features of resilient and productive coastal landscapes.

Healthy wetlands

2030 TARGET: Safeguard 2 million hectares of high value coastal wetlands, including vital wildlife migration corridors

PROGRESS: We are achieving good progress across coastal landscapes and seascapes in Latin America, Africa and Asia and are on track towards reaching our goal..

We have been at the heart of efforts to mobilise the Mangrove Breakthrough, the global push to secure the future of 15 million hectares of mangroves by 2030. Dozens of governments, companies and NGOs are on board, core funding has been secured, and large-scale country-level programmes are being developed. The Global Mangrove Alliance (of which we are a partner) expanded to 85 members organised in 12 country chapters. We have coordinated national efforts in Indonesia, Philippines, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, where a strategy for mangrove conservation and restoration was recently endorsed by parliament. In these and other countries, we have directly restored 2,398 hectares – and our community-based ecological mangrove restoration approaches have been replicated across thousands of hectares elsewhere thanks to our training, policy advocacy and sharing of best practice guidelines.

We have helped strengthen protection for important mangrove areas. In Tanzania, the 596,900-hectare Rufiji Mafia Kilwa seascape was designated as a Man and Biosphere reserve by UNESCO, increasing protection from habitat degradation and resource overexploitation. We helped develop integrated management plans for protected areas and their buffer zones in the

Gran Mano landscape (Liberia, Sierra Leone) and Lamu (Kenya), and have supported efforts to win protection for over 75,000 hectares of mangroves in Panama.

We added more satellite data and functionality to the Global Mangrove Watch system, which now provides alerts of changes in mangrove cover in near real time. With our support, the Kenya Forest Service is using these alerts to respond efficiently to threats to mangroves.

We launched new best practice guidelines for restoring, creating and managing salt marshes and tidal flats, developed in collaboration with the Conservation Evidence Group at Cambridge University. Disseminated through the World Coastal Forum, the evidence-based guidelines support efforts to restore these coastal ecosystems, bringing multiple climate and biodiversity benefits. They are already being used in two sites on the Yellow Sea coast in China, which are on a crucial waterbird flyway. Also in China, we have been working with local authorities to restore feeding habitat and roosting for migratory waterbirds around aquaculture sites.

Resilient wetland communities

2030 TARGET: Integrate wetlands into 8 million hectares of coastal production systems
PROGRESS: We have made substantial progress, but it remains too early to demonstrate impact across thousands of hectares through agriculture and aquaculture reform.

Ensuring local communities benefit from conservation and restoration of coastal ecosystems is at the heart of our approach. In Guinea-Bissau, for example, our work to date has enhanced the livelihoods of over 10,000 people in 36 villages by promoting local entrepreneurship, savings and loans groups and mangrove-friendly economic activities.

While aquaculture can be a threat to mangroves and other coastal ecosystems, we have been pioneering different approaches. In Indonesia, we have introduced sustainable organic aquaculture systems across 464 hectares, boosting incomes by 300%. In the Philippines, we are piloting mangrove-friendly aquaculture at two sites and are working to replicate this approach nationally.



Fishermen in painted boat, Farim River, Guinea-Bissau.



Coastal Field School in Indonesia.

Reduced climate risks

2030 TARGET: Mainstream Building with Nature and promote blue carbon solutions, influencing €10 billion of investments in coastal infrastructure solutions.

PROGRESS: With large-scale coastal planning and development programmes in Indonesia and the Philippines and prospects for additional work in West Africa and India, we are in an early stage of introducing nature-based solutions across a multibillion-Euro investment portfolio.

Working with development banks, government agencies and the private sector, we shared experiences and lessons learned from the Building with Nature approach that we piloted in Demak, central Java and introduced knowledge from innovative pilot projects in the Netherlands. These are informing integrated coastal zone management and development programmes in, among others, Manila Bay (Philippines), Java (Indonesia) and the Mekong Delta (Vietnam), which help catalyse nature-based solutions across a multi-billion dollar investment portfolio.

We have also mobilised finance on a local level – for example by developing climate change action plans with county governments in Lamu and Tana, Kenya, and by establishing a partnership between the government and Tanzania Investment Bank to provide loans for communities in the Rufiji Delta.



Serra do Amolar, Pantanal is one of the most pristine areas of the Pantanal.

RIVERS AND LAKES

Goal: Catalyse investment to safeguard and restore rivers, lakes and their accompanying wetlands as part of wider freshwater systems; and to provide water security for people and nature, climate resilience, and sustainable and peaceful landscapes.

Healthy wetlands

2030 TARGET: Safeguard 10 million hectares of high-value river and lake wetlands in five basins.

PROGRESS: We helped mobilise the country-led Freshwater Challenge, are advancing a mapping tool to inform policies and investments, demonstrated restoration approaches and management planning. Yet, to reach our target we need advocate uptake at scale.

As an active core partner we helped mobilise the Freshwater Challenge, a country led initiative to restore 300,000km of degraded rivers and 350 million hectares of degraded wetlands by 2030. By the end of the year, 48 countries plus the EU had joined the Freshwater Challenge. Aiming to support delivery on global commitments, we have worked with governments and local partners to achieve impact on the ground. In Europe we helped ensure the inclusion of the river restoration targets in the Nature Restoration Regulation and developed the first ever mapping of Swimways of European Importance.

In many countries the presence and status of wetlands is still unknown. Our Wetlands Gap Maps initiative not only maps the presence and status of wetlands but also identifies the policy and funding gaps that need to be addressed. In Africa's Sahel region, we are developing the first-ever inventory of the region's wetlands. Similarly, our inventory in the Eastern Rift Valley has discovered new wetland locations in Ethiopia and Kenya. Such wetland mapping has already enhanced water management and reduced resource conflicts in Kenya and Mali.

We demonstrated successful integrated watershed restoration efforts. In Ethiopia's Central Rift Valley, we worked with local community-based organisations to restore 596 hectares. By constructing terraces and check dams and planting 88,000 trees, we reduced erosion, improved groundwater recharge, and supported the return of vegetation, wildlife and new water springs.

In Argentina, we enhanced the management plans for two Ramsar sites, the Iberá Wetlands (24,550 ha) and the mountainous Villavicencio Reserve (62,444 ha), as well as two sites in the Paraná Delta, the Victoria Multiple Use Reserve (432,500 ha) and the San Fernando Biosphere Reserve (88,624 ha). Additionally, in Peru and Argentina, we have improved the management of 430,841 hectares of Protected Areas. In Brazil we have contributed to updating the management plans of 5 reserves of the Amolar/Pantanal Protected Areas network, for a total of 66,398 hectares.

Resilient wetland communities

2030 TARGET: Safeguard and restore 60 million hectares of wetlands as integral elements of productive river and lake landscapes.

PROGRESS: Our approaches are giving results and land use is being influenced with important efforts made to create capacity and provide examples to be further scaled up at the landscape level. We expect to see the fruit of our efforts over a large scale with time.

In East Africa, we have strengthened wetland production systems through climate-smart agriculture, beekeeping, rangeland management and access to finance. In Ethiopia's Ziway Shalla watershed, for example, we supported over 500 smallholders to introduce water-efficient farming practices.

In Europe, we began large-scale wetland restoration projects in Ukraine / Slovakia, Belgium and Germany, and completed a dam removal scoping in Greece. We are leading a new research initiative to develop and showcase novel, integrated protection and restoration solutions for European natural lakes, beginning with demonstration sites at Lake Vico (Italy), Lake Bistret (Romania) and Lake Dümmer (Germany).

Through the EU-funded Spongeboost programme we are working with 10 partners to enhance the natural sponge functions of wetlands in seven European countries to mitigate floods and droughts. The €3 million programme is aligned with EU climate adaptation goals and will test and develop nature-based solutions that can be upscaled from local to European level. We are also scoping opportunities to adapt the concept in Africa.

We drew global attention to the impacts of lithium mining on wetlands – and the communities whose livelihoods depend on them – in the Andes at the COP16 biodiversity summit. As an essential element in electric car batteries, global demand for lithium is soaring. We are working with governments, supply chains and finance institutions to make lithium mining more responsible, advancing the energy transition while minimising threats to wetlands and the biodiversity and communities they support.

In Latin America, we are enhancing livestock and forestry practices in the Pantanal and Paraná Delta, reducing pressure on wetlands while promoting sustainable income-generating activities for 899 small producers. We strengthened the capacity of 880 land managers and users from both the private and public sectors to manage wetlands sustainably. In the High Andes of Argentina and Peru, we contributed to improved cattle management across 25,470 hectares.



Sphagnum moss at Flanders Moss in England.



Wetlands International delegation at CBD COP 16, Colombia, 2024.

Reduced climate risks

2030 TARGET: €500 million committed to nature-based solutions in freshwater wetlands, for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

PROGRESS: We are embedding wetlands into public and private policies as an enabling condition to allocate resources, but we yet have to see corresponding funding commitments and actions on the ground.

We are creating an enabling environment to unlock finance for wetland conservation and restoration. We are advocating for inclusion of wetlands in global frameworks such as CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD and their corresponding national plans. Several member countries are incorporating wetland protection and restoration into their national commitments and we are looking forward to start seeing impact on the ground. The Freshwater Challenge aims to be a bridge between policy and action, and focuses on resource mobilization and supporting delivery on national commitments.

We also promote Wetlands Partnerships between the EU and other countries, modelled after the successful Forest Partnerships, to channel EU funds towards wetlands. Discussions to establish the first partnerships are underway between Brazil, Colombia, and the EU.

Our Gap Map initiative seeks to channel climate and development funds more effectively toward priority wetlands in need of restoration. Also, we are developing a wetlands for resilience toolbox based on insights from our landscape programmes. This guidance aims to accelerate wetland recovery and guide governments and businesses in achieving global climate, biodiversity, and sustainable development goals.



Peatlands in Scotland as part of the LVMH - STELLA Peatlands Project

PEATLANDS

Goal: Help scale up the conservation and restoration of peatlands – ensuring that all remaining undrained peatlands stay intact, while 50 million hectares of drained peatlands are restored by 2050.

Healthy wetlands

2030 TARGET: Safeguard over 20 million hectares of high-value peatlands, including bringing five major peatland landscapes back into good ecological condition.

Our direct impact in landscapes is growing substantially. Through developing alliances, policy advocacy and gathering evidence, we are building the foundations for future indirect impact.

At a global level, we are setting the scene for a “Peatland Breakthrough” – a global call to action to safeguard and restore peatlands at scale. Healthy peatlands store 30% of terrestrial carbon, while drained and degraded peatlands cause up to 5% of global emissions. We are developing and testing peatland conservation and restoration approaches through various projects and partnerships, advising on good practices and sharing knowledge.

In many countries, the status of peatlands is still unknown as they are often covered by other land uses. Good quality maps are essential to planning conservation and restoration. In India, our first ever mapping and assessment of peatland carbon stocks has opened up dialogue with government and others towards including peatlands in national strategies and climate plans. In Europe, we played a key role in a collaborative effort to develop a European Wetland Map, to be launched on World Wetlands Day. These efforts are important building blocks towards an envisioned Global Peatland Watch, a digital platform to monitor changes and threats to the world’s peatlands.

In Argentina, we supported the government to add Peninsula Mitre to the list of wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention and we helped develop peatland management plans for the Provincial Reserve. In Panama we shared knowledge and raised awareness about peatlands. In Uganda, we developed a peatland programme for the Nile Equatorial Lakes Region and completed an assessment of transboundary wetlands in the upper Nile catchment, securing funding to begin preliminary work in Sango Bay.



We have introduced improved livestock grazing practices across 3,000 hectares of peatlands in Argentina and Peru.

Resilient communities

Enable community-based conservation and restoration of 10 million hectares of peatland.

We launched community-based peatland restoration in Peru and Mongolia and the new EU Nature Restoration Law could stimulate peatland restoration. Uptake at scale requires attention.

Through our High Andean wetlands programme, we have introduced improved livestock grazing practices across 3,000 hectares of peatlands in Argentina and Peru. In the same region, our Lake Chinchaycocha project is working closely with community-based organisations to improve land management practices, restore degraded areas and enhance biodiversity across 2,600 hectares. Similarly in Mongolia, we are working closely with local herders to develop a large-scale peatland restoration project covering 25,000 hectares.

We helped ensure that the new EU Nature Restoration Law, coming into force in 2025, includes a mandatory target on peatland restoration. When enforced this will make a massive difference for peatland restoration. We also influenced EU guidance on carbon certification, meaning that farmers and landowners will be able to receive financial incentives for restoring and sustainably managing peatlands.

in Scotland, in partnership with Caledonian Climate and support of LVMH, we successfully restored 33 hectares of peatlands in the highlands and produced a video to showcase how partnerships with private companies can support peatland restoration on private land.

Within our WaterLANDS project, we developed a framework for enhanced engagement with local communities and diverse stakeholders, which is key to upscale wetland restoration. We emphasise a co-creation approach to ensure peatland restoration supports resilient and empowered communities. We are working to untangle the risks and benefits of peatland restoration in highly modified landscapes to manage the trade-offs and overcome barriers that limit upscaling.

Reduced climate risks

Reduce the impact of peat-based industries in 10 million hectares of peatlands, with a focus on palm oil, pulp and timber.

We are co-creating and testing best practices and sustainable solutions in Indonesia, Malaysia and Europe. Uptake at scale by peat-based industries needs further effort.

When peatland soils are drained to make way for agriculture and plantations, plant matter starts to decompose and release huge amounts of carbon dioxide. Dried-out peatlands catch fire easily, causing further greenhouse gas emissions. We are seeking to engage peat-based industries and farmers in the Peatland Breakthrough to encourage them to avoid peatlands, reduce drainage and start rewetting.

With our knowledge and expertise we are advancing sustainable palm oil management through the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). In Indonesia and Malaysia we have been training plantation managers to reduce the impact of drainage on peatlands.

In Europe, we are getting ready to test and promote wet agriculture, or paludiculture, using crops that thrive in waterlogged conditions so that drainage is not needed. At four large demonstration sites we will develop solutions for productive use of rewetted peatlands that support EU climate and nature restoration objectives.

We are advocating for the inclusion of peatlands into the EU deforestation-free regulation, to ensure that commodities like palm oil and timber imported into the EU do not contribute to the loss of peatlands and other wetland ecosystems. We also advocate for a drastic reduction in the use of peat in horticulture in Europe, while in East Africa, we worked with communities to raise awareness of the negative consequences of peat extraction by tree nursery operators and small-scale coffee farmers.

Peatswamp Forest in Malaysia.



FEATURED PROJECTS



**Guinea-Bissau
Restoration work**

Coasts & Deltas



WaterLands

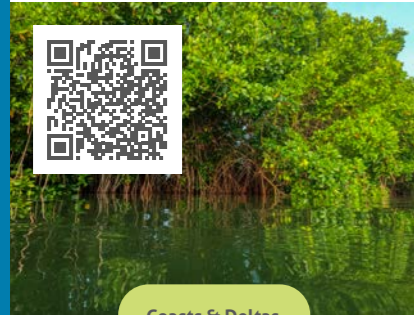


Peatlands

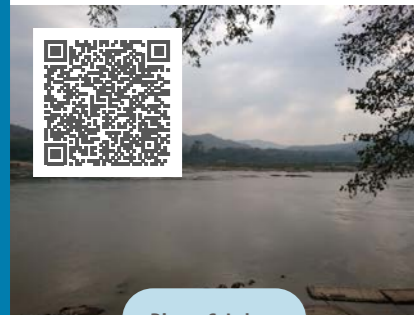


**Greenchoice
Mongolia**

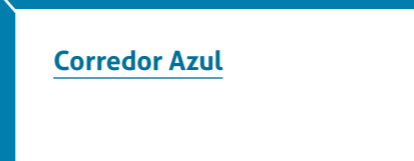
Peatlands



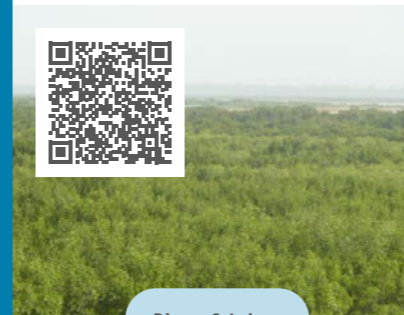
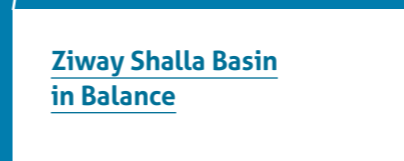
Coasts & Deltas



Rivers & Lakes



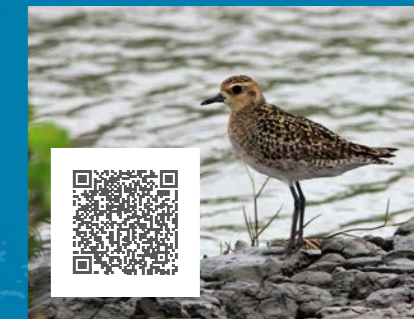
Rivers & Lakes



Rivers & Lakes



Peatlands



**Waterbird
programme East Asia**

Coasts & Deltas



Field visit during the Annual Meeting of 2024 with Program Leadership Team, Management Team and Heads of Office in Panama.

FUNCTIONING OF THE ORGANISATION

Our network

Wetlands International operates as a global network of offices with shared values and purpose, working on a joint strategy to safeguard and restore wetlands worldwide.

We have offices in 19 countries and we are active in more. Most national offices are legally independent entities with own boards and management, rooted in national context.

The Global Office, based in the Netherlands, facilitates collaboration across the network and provides leadership and support in representation, programme development, communications, global advocacy, fundraising and risk management. It nurtures the work and collaboration of the network and ensures alignment with our policies.

Governance

The Global Board, consisting of the Wetlands International CEO and all Heads of Office, is responsible for strategic decisions on positioning, priority setting and institutional issues, which are then adopted by the Global Management Team. The Global Board delegates operational decision-making to the Network Management Team, which has members drawn from Heads of Office and the Global Management Team.

The Programme Leadership Team drives programmatic development and prepare choices and decisions for the global leadership.

Wetlands International is a non-profit organisation with charitable status in the Netherlands and in countries where it operates. The organisation has two complementary forms of international governance: an Association of Members (governments and NGOs), and a foundation overseen by a Supervisory Council whose members also constitute the Board of the Association. In cases where Wetlands International offices have an independent legal status, they are governed by their own boards and the Wetlands International CEO is an ex-officio member.

Developing our global network organisation

After a year of management transitions, we have set a course towards the revision of our Strategic Intent and a Network Development Plan.

During 2024 we have:

- Completed a network-wide capacity self-assessment in all offices to help define organisational development plans for the coming years. Across our network of offices, we will continue to invest in leadership, governance, financial management and operations, programme development, knowledge management and impact monitoring. A Network Development Plan will be

completed in 2025 informed by the Strategic Intent revision process already taking place.

- Set up the Knowledge and Innovation team to facilitate monitoring, evaluation and learning, and consolidate a systematised, network-wide approach to holistic landscape restoration and corporate engagement.
- Set up a network-wide Resource Development team that will boost coordination across offices in programme and proposal development, donor stewardship and resource mobilisation. We have updated our corporate engagement policy to be adopted by all offices.

As we embark in 2025 on the revision of our current Strategic Intent, we will be looking into the challenging, rapidly changing context in which we operate and our theory of change. This will inform how we will work effectively as a network organisation and will form the basis of our Network Development Plan.



Annual Meeting of 2024 with Program Leadership Team, Supervisory Council, Management Team and Heads of Office in Panama.

Risk management

A risk register for the network is updated and discussed regularly in the Global Office Management Team and discussed at least once a year with the Supervisory Council. This year the geo-political realities have shifted faster than many years before and as such are marked as a key risk to Wetlands International's mission and organisation.

Some governments are backsliding on commitments, reversing positive policies and cutting budgets. Some businesses and finance institutions are stepping away from their environmental and social responsibilities while others are stepping up. Environmental and development NGOs are coming under unjustified attack. There is a real danger that many of the achievements we have fought so hard for may be undone, creating serious risks for people's livelihoods and security and causing long-term damage to our environment with the possibility of reaching tipping points. Early 2025 we have started to review our Strategic Intent. This participative process across the network involves external context analysis and stakeholder consultation as well as internal sense making and adaptive management. Halfway this year we will present the core elements of our new strategy in which we position our global network amidst these developments.

While the political landscape becomes less favorable for realising Wetlands International's overall vision and climate change is hitting harder, the need to protect and restore wetlands is even higher than ever before.

Annual Leadership Meeting 2024

The Wetlands International Annual Meeting took place in October 2024 in Boquete, Panama. Facilitated by the Presencing Institute, to reconnect and reimagine Wetlands International's future. The meeting reinforced our understanding of the power of our network organisation and how we depend on each other to reach our ambitious targets. We set out clear steps to support our growth and sustainability, including decisions around enhancing fundraising strategies, improving internal coordination and decentralising fundraising to regions. Participants came away with a renewed sense of purpose and unity and a belief in the strength of collective action to shape a sustainable future for wetlands and the communities they sustain.

Accountability

Integrity, transparency and accountability are core values, and we actively seek feedback on our performance. A dedicated [webpage](#) provides our annual reports and accounts, and information about key global policies including the

Conservation and Human Rights Framework, International NGO Accountability Charter, code of conduct, corporate engagement, anti-corruption, ethical, gender and partnership policies. Early 2025 our integrity policies and procedures have been updated.

Anti-corruption and whistle blowing

All staff are introduced to the anti-corruption policy in their induction and are encouraged to be vigilant and discuss any suspicious activities with their line manager, Head of Office or the CEO. External stakeholders can also approach Wetlands International with any grievances or complaints related to possible cases of fraud, discrimination or mismanagement. Next to clear internal procedures Wetlands International has appointed an independent external councillor for internal and external parties. The complaints procedure is available on the Wetlands International website. In 2024, no complaints were recorded.

THE TOP 5 RISKS AS PER DECEMBER 2024:

	Risk	Potential Impact	Mitigation measures
1	Changing geopolitical power balances affecting our work Multiple governments are backsliding on commitments to foster sustainable development, reversing positive policies and cutting budgets. Some businesses and finance institutions are stepping away from their environmental and social responsibilities.	Programme operations, their impacts and funding is greatly reduced as a result of policy changes, counteracting the programmatic goals and activities to realise these.	At the strategic and global network level, we review our Strategic Intent and have done an elaborate survey among stakeholders and experts. where necessary we will engage with donors, partners and key stakeholders to adjust ongoing programmatic objectives and impact pathways.
2	Effect of Artificial Intelligence on our operations (positive/negative). As a knowledge organisation this is expected have a significant impact on our work and realising our strategic goals.	Mixed. On the one hand it can bring benefits in efficiency and productivity. On the other hand it can negatively influence the relevance of our knowledge products.	In general we embrace and accommodate AI as a global development, and adapt our work. We have trained staff on the use of ChatGPT. Also giving substantial attention to the down sides of AI. Use of AI is taken up more actively, ao. in analysis of context and strategy, and in programme development and implementation such as the Global Mangrove Watch.
3	Scientific facts and knowledge about state of wetlands, their importance and drivers become more vulnerable vis a vis 'alternative facts' and interests.	Reduced sense of urgency for WI's mission and sciences-based solutions, potentially resulting in decline in funding options and eventually financial resources.	Invest in effectively communicating and tell the story about our impacts and communicate to other sectors beyond traditional target groups.
4	Political instability, conflict and war affects operations in specific countries.	Programme operations are slowed down or stopped, with risk to not being able to deliver on agreed goals, lose funding.	Maintain close contacts with Heads of Office, diplomatic networks and donors. Strengthen cooperation with local communities. Incorporate flexibility in project design.
5	Tight labour market slows recruitment and leads to gaps in staffing and stress for current staff.	Inability to implement current programmes correctly or to start new ones; over-work symptoms among staff.	Support offered to address vacancies. Greater use of external recruitment agencies; improve our marketing of vacancies.

GLOBAL OFFICE

TOTAL STAFF Male 23 / Female 28



51

NETWORK

TOTAL STAFF Male 152 / Female 144 / N/A 4



300

AVERAGE AGE (YEARS)

42



NATIONALITIES

45

AVERAGE AGE (YEARS)

47



NATIONALITIES

17



HEALTH

24%

Sick Leave

128

Absenteeism frequency



HIGHEST LEVEL EDUCATION

Phd 7
Master 32
Bachelor 9
Other 3

FTE

45⁵

Parttime 14
Fulltime 37

STAFF TURNOVER

6

Staff Left

12

New Staff



CONTRACT

34 Permanent
17 Fixed



INTEGRITY PROCEDURES

0 Internal
External

SOCIAL REPORT 2024

Network

Wetlands International is a diverse global network committed to the conservation and restoration of wetlands for people and nature. With offices across five continents, we bring together 300 dedicated professionals from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and expertise. Our strength lies in this diversity, enabling us to work effectively from local to global level. From Argentina to the Sahel, from South Asia to Europe, our teams are deeply embedded in their regions, allowing us to collaborate with communities, governments and partners to drive meaningful impact.

Our network is distinguished by its strong representation of women in leadership, a broad spectrum of academic expertise – including specialists with master’s and PhD qualifications – and a truly international composition, with staff from over 20 nationalities. This diversity enriches our collective knowledge and fosters innovative approaches to wetland conservation.

Global Office

In 2024, we had an active and productive year in the field of human resources. While 12 new employees joined our organisation, four employees departed to pursue new opportunities. We made significant progress on various key HR topics and successfully restructured several HR processes. The occupational health service, which was newly contracted in 2023, has proven to be highly effective. With the support of a new system, it has significantly

simplified follow-up procedures in all situations, allowing for swift and efficient responses when needed. We also introduced a new performance management system, which has already demonstrated its clarity and user-friendliness. Employees were actively involved in selecting this new approach, ensuring broad support and smooth implementation. Towards the end of the year, our focus shifted to updating the integrity policy, aligning international best practices with legal requirements. This enhanced process aims to strengthen confidence among staff, external stakeholders and the Wetlands International.

Network in the fair and transparent handling of potential complaints. The newly established Works Council is gradually finding its role in facilitating two-way communication between management and employees on important decision-making matters. At the end of 2024, we launched an employee survey, the results of which will be available in 2025, providing valuable insights for future reflection and improvement.



The first face-to-face Community of Practice in India, where colleagues from many offices joined to exchange expertise, best practices and learn from each other.

WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

- 1 Latin America & Caribbean - Argentina
- 2 Latin America & Caribbean - Brazil
- 3 Latin America & Caribbean - Panama
- 4 Global office
- 5 Europe Association
- 6 West Africa Coastal - Senegal
- 7 Guinea-Bissau
- 8 Sierra Leone
- 9 Sahel - Mali
- 10 Eastern Africa - Kenya
- 11 Ethiopia
- 12 Uganda
- 13 Tanzania
- 14 South Asia - India
- 15 Malaysia - Brunei
- 16 China
- 17 Philippines
- 18 Indonesia
- 19 Japan



Catch of the day, Sierra Leone.

THANK YOU

Conserving and restoring the world’s wetlands has never been more important, and we are hugely grateful to all of you have supported us this year. Our work is only possible with the support of our many partners, from national and local governments to knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector. Thanks too to all our Wetlands International Association members who provide vital financial support and collaborate closely in our programmes and policy advocacy.

We would also like to thank our financial supporters, including DOB Ecology, GreenChoice, Arcadia Foundation, Crankstart, Bezos Earth Fund and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), among others. Through our strategic collaborations, your support has significantly improved wetland conservation and restoration efforts, contributing to climate adaptation and sustainable livelihoods.

We are immensely grateful to COMON Foundation, Dutch Postcode Lottery, Effektive Spenden and Doneer Effectief for providing core support that has enabled us to strengthen our organisation, make strategic investments to respond to challenges and opportunities as they arise.

We also acknowledge the generous contributions of Flotilla Foundation, Mirova, Boskalis, Waterloo Foundation, Otterfonds, Arcadia Foundation and Turing Foundation. Your support was instrumental in launching guidance on community-based ecological restoration, conservation and management of mangroves, saltmarshes and tidal flats.

Additionally, we are deeply thankful for the backing of PEW Charitable Trust, Oceankind Trust, Foundation Nieuwe Waarde, the European Commission, the International Climate Initiative and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Your support has bolstered our efforts to elevate the role of wetlands in addressing global environmental challenges.

In 2024 we developed a vision for the Wetlands Impact Fund – an ambitious initiative to protect and restore 3 million hectares of vital wetland ecosystems. We look forward to discussing how you can get involved in this exciting initiative to drive impact at scale.

To all donors, members, partners, international and local actors, and the communities and traditional and Indigenous peoples we work with: **thank you.** Your commitment continues to drive momentum and hope for the future of wetlands and the people who depend on them.



Wetlands International team with the cheque of 109.343 euros received from Cycling 4 Climate and Running 4 Climate.



A team of researchers, in the pantanal Brazil, as part of the Aquarela Pantanal initiative.

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P.O. Box 471
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Community members in Guinea-Bissau work together to open channels, aiding natural water flow for natural mangrove regeneration.

wetlands.org

