

Pledge of the United States of America

on the Occasion of the Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance

The United States Of American takes pleasure in-joining with the Government of Australia and many other contracting Parties here in making a national pledge-for the conservation and wise use of wetlands of international importance. The pledges and initiatives outlined here are only an indication of the importance of conservation and wise use of wetlands for the Government of the United States. This commitment for wetlands is reflected also in our government's strong support for Ramsar and its activities.

Consonant with the goals of the 25th Anniversary pledge for wetlands the United States has committed significant investment toward several important programs in wetlands conservation and management. The following report consists of three parts. First, direct pledges to Ramsar, second, NGO-related activities, and finally U.S. Government activities.

First, the 'U.S. Government historically has contributed significant funding over and above its core budget voluntary contribution. In the past two years, a program to commemorate the Ramsar 25th Anniverary -- called Wetlands for the Future -- has begun training Latin American wetlands managers. This fund, which currently contains \$500,000 US, will total \$750,000 when fully funded.

For the future United States makes a good faith pledge, dependent, of course upon Congressional appropriation, of an additional \$1 .0 Million over our core budget voluntary contribution, over the next six years, to be invested in the Ramsar Wetlands Conservation Fund. this pledge is designed to make a major contribution towards the

goals of a greatly enhanced Wetland Conservation Fund adopted in Resolution 5.8 at the Kushiro Conference of the parties

The United States has been working for almost a year to i-e-energize interest in Ramsar in the United States and to foster cooperation between NGO's and the U.S Government in wetlands conservation. This effort has resulted in a major conference entitled "Working Together for Wetlands" that will be held in late April in Washington. DC, and in the re-vitalization of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee.

One outstanding example of NGO activity in the United States is the Caddo Lake Institute's pledge **of more** than \$100,000, to its Ramsar-based initiatives. The League of Ramsar Wetland Educators, which is now creating master wetland teachers, is also teaching Ramsar principles and wetland monitoring skills at sites in the United States and in other countries. In addition, the Caddo Lake Institute will soon create the first U.S. regional academy **of** wetlands science education and the first U.S. regional Ramsar center, to be located adjacent to the Caddo Lake Ramsar site. the U.S. Government will continue to work with Caddo Lake Institute and other NGOs to expand NGO resources focused on advancement of Ramsar principles.

Third, U.S. Government's future activities in wetlands management and restoration are varied and numerous. A few illustrative examples,with specific pledges of future funds for their implementation, follow.

Internationally, the U.S. Agency for International Development plans to invest more than \$5 Million in 1996 alone to support the principles of the Ramsar Convention. This funding is targeted largely towards coastal zone and coral reef management and on the link between freshwater and coastal ecosystems. Activities include: community based coastal zone management; development of national systems of marine protected areas; training of wetlands in long-term monitoring of

wetland ecosystems, technology development and transfer to control water pollution; and the testing of watershed management approaches.. these activities will occur in more than a dozen countries around the world.

Domestically, the United States has also given priority to the restoration of the ecological character of its Ramsar sites. For example, at the Cheyenne Bottoms State Management Area, a partnership between the U.S. Fish&Wildlife Service, State of Kansas, Duck Unlimited, and other nongovernmental organizations, and the local community, is undertaking a major new effort to restore wetlands and manage water regimes. An additional \$4 million of Federal and State funds are pledged to complete this effort and restore the integrity of this site that is so important to migrant waterbirds and shorebirds.

Finally, it gives us great pleasure to include in the United States pledge, the Everglades Restoration Plan, an integrated and comprehensive initiative to restore the ecological character of the Florida Everglades, a Montreux Record Ramsar site. The U.S. Government's Everglades Restoration Plan integrates dozens of individual activities, funded through federal government appropriation, Florida state contributions, and funds generated by revenues from a tax on sugar grown in the watershed. the total funding for the initiative will be \$1.5 Billion (that is 1500 million) over the next seven years. This massive, cooperative, effort is designed to help restore a unique national treasure -- the United States's largest wetlands and its associated landscape -- in a way that recognizes the importance of a balance between the many human uses of the rich region and the long-term health of the ecosystem.

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