



MINISTRY OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT



THE WETLANDS MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT IN UGANDA

Who are we?

A Government Department located in the Directorate of Environment Affairs, Ministry of Water and Environment. Our mandate is to promote the conservation of Uganda's wetlands in order to sustain their ecological and socioeconomic functions for the present and future well being of the people. As such the Department exercises stewardship over the wetlands in Uganda. It has the delegated responsibility and authority to uphold the wetland related clauses in the Constitution (1995) and implement the National Wetlands Policy (1995).

What are our key functions?

The Wetlands Management Department comprises of two Divisions namely: Policy and Enforcement and Assessment, Information and Management. Its key functions include:

- initiate, formulate and review national policies and strategies for wetland management;
- initiate and review legislation and plans for wetland management;
- set standards, develop and disseminate guidelines for wetland management;
- mobilize support and resources for wetlands management nationally;
- coordinate and supervise national projects for wetland management;
- coordinate and harmonize the wetland management activities carried out by the various Local Governments;
- monitor and inspect the activities of the Local Governments to ensure compliance with the national policies, standards and plans;
- design, develop and maintain a national wetlands master plan and a national wetland information system;
- develop, test and promote a scientific knowledge base for optimal wetland management;
- provide technical advice and support supervision and training in areas of wetland management as may be required by Local Government;
- serve as the Administrative Authority and national focal point and coordinate the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands and other relevant international and regional agreements and protocols;
- provide administrative and technical support to the National Wetlands Advisory Group and the National Ramsar Committee.

Our Vision, purpose and mission for wetland management in Uganda

The Vision for wetlands management in Uganda is "Uganda's wetlands provide sustainable benefits to the population of Uganda as a whole mankind in general and the environment". This is in recognition of the purpose for wetland management that is "Uganda's wetlands managed and used more wisely".

The headline mission statement is to "ensure the conservation, wise use and protection of wetlands in Uganda through increased appreciation and effective management, as a means to achieving sustainable development throughout the country. It emphasizes the parallel and complementary concepts of The Department is guided by the Wetland Sector Strategic Framework (WSSP) 2011-2020, a ten year framework for wetland management in Uganda. The WSSP has five strategic objectives (1) To improve the productivity and service provision of wetlands (2) To strengthen the regulatory frameworks and equity in stewardship for effective management of wetlands (3) To improve institutional and technical capacity for sustainable wetland management at all levels (4) To strengthen public and stakeholder awareness and participation in wetland management, and (5) To mobilize national and international funds to support sustainable wetland conservation and management in Uganda.

How do we operate?

The Department uses a multipronged approach that includes participatory tools, networking, training, awareness raising and dissemination programmes, resource assessments, research and development, policy guidance and enforcement. The main objective is to bring wetland conversion process under control in the following manner:

- location: informed decisions where and where not to convert
- speed: improve use of already converted areas
- manner:
- protect vital functions,
- make uses beneficial, sustainable and equitable

ONGOING EFFORTS TO CONSERVE WETLANDS Establishment of the National Wetlands Information System (NWIS) to act as one stop data and Information Center for wetland management.

One of the key obligations of Wetlands Management Department is to survey, quantify and map all wetlands in Uganda in order to provide a knowledge base for wetlands management and decision making. The NWIS is a computer based system that is divided into two parts, the NWIS Access and NWIS-GIS. NWIS-Access uses Microsoft Access software as a database Management System (DBMS) and is divided into a 3 tier structure, the data input tier for entry, the data tier for data management and the search tier for search and reporting.

The NWIS-GIS uses the ArcGIS database technology (Geo database) and map interface (ArcMap) and is intended for wetland data analysis and map production only.

What has been done?

Wetland inventory was done in 1997 to collect information on spatial extents, flora, fauna, soil water, threats, management status and benefits or uses in these wetlands are collected.

So far, two mapping exercises were conducted, one in 1994, carried out in collaboration with the National Biomass Study Project, and the other in 2008 supported under a Belgian Technical Corporation Project. This data and all other spatial data available at Wetlands Management Department are currently stored in the NWIS. The NWIS was recently upgraded under a running project; the National Wetlands Management Project, to increase access to it by key Partners electronically. The Project also conducted detailed ecosystem assessments on selected sites along the Awoja and Doho Namatala.

What next?

Plans are underway to fast track the mapping of wetlands to obtain information on the current status of wetlands in the country – 2016 status. Installation of a Decision Support tool into the NWIS is planned to enhance decision making processes and planning.

How do I access the NWIS?

The data/information in NWIS can be accessed through a formal request submitted to the Wetlands Management Department, accompanied by a data sharing protocol.

Establishing a well equipped Environment Protection Force of the Wetlands Management Department



EPF Officer on the site

The Environmental Protection Force (EPF) launched in December 2011 is the first of its kind in Uganda, in the history of Natural Resources Management and conservation. Its main purpose is to ensure compliance with environmental and conservation laws. This is within the goal of maintaining a clean, healthy, safe and productive environment for all citizens as indicated in the National Constitution of Uganda.

The current EPF is hinged on a Force trained to assist people to comply with environmental laws through several awareness and education programmes.

Highlights of EPF's key functions

The approved number by Cabinet was 150, however currently a total of 136 Police men and women, headed by a Commandant, who is deputized, are allocated as follows (1) National Forest Authority - 46, (2) National Environment Management Authority - 25 (3) Wetlands Management Department - 25 (4) Stations in different parts of the country - 40. The EPF is answerable to the Police High Command and have received basic training in Environment and Natural Resources Management.

The key functions of the EPF include:

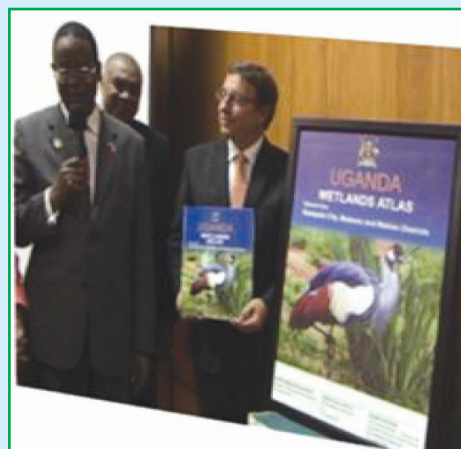
- Monitor and enforce compliance with environmental laws
- Provide timely and coordinated response to environmental law enforcement across all departments and tiers of government
- Undertake 24hours environmental surveillance
- Undertake detection and investigation of environmental crimes
- Arrest any person who is believed to have committed or is in the process of committing an offence as described in the National Environment Act or any other environmental law; and
- Prosecute environmental crimes subject to the directives of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)

In order to fulfill the above functions the main focus is on a number of crimes including but not limited to:

- Encroachment and degradation of wetlands, river banks, lakeshores forest reserves and other fragile ecosystems
- Illegal cutting of trees and trade in timber
- Pollution of land, air and water through un authorized waste disposal
- Noise pollution and smoking in public places
- Illegal mining and fishing
- Use of banned materials such as plastic bags; and
- Any other activities prohibited or regulated as per the law

National Wetlands Atlas (Ministry of Water and Environment launches the Uganda Wetland Atlas)

While it is true that a lot of information exists on wetlands, it is pertinent that this is relayed to different stakeholder groups through various media, especially given the increasing drivers of change affecting the wellbeing, benefits and existence of these valuable wetland resources. In this respect, the Ministry of Water and Environment Department



Prof. Ephraim Kamuntu Mr. Achim Steiner, Under Secretary General UN and Executive Director of UNEP launching the National Wetlands Atlas

launched a Wetland Atlas at a colorful ceremony in Serena Conference Center for the Districts of Mukono, Wakiso and Kampala.

The launch was presided over by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director United Nations Environment Programme Mr. Achim Steiner and hosted by the Minister of Water and Environment Professor Ephraim Kamuntu. Officials from the Ministry of Water and Environment, Line Ministries, Departments and Institutions, Private Sector, Civil Society and Development Partners attended.

The Atlas depicts a series of maps, aerial images, photographs and narrative on the state of wetlands in the aforementioned districts. It is a very important awareness and visual sensitization tool on the state of wetlands and will certainly inform Cabinet Directive to cancel titles in wetlands. This decision was arrived at by considering the massive pressure being exerted on wetland resources, through unplanned developments, settlements and other drivers of change such as pollution and unsustainable resource harvesting. It also goes a long way in complementing the on-going wetland restoration and demarcation exercises, being undertaken by the Wetlands Management Department.

Moving forward, the Ministry of Water will now go ahead to further study the challenges and opportunities identified in three urban areas of Wakiso, Mukono and Kampala, plus the corresponding interventions and implement them so as halt and also reverse the current trend of wetland degradation.

Demarcating and marking of wetland boundaries in the country

Background

The Ministry of Water and Environment through the Wetlands Management Department (WMD) has started the process of creating wetland reserves that are critical for urban water supply and waste water treatment as priority areas. According to the Wetland Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2020 (WSSP 2011-200) key wetlands will have their boundaries surveyed, demarcated and marked with pillars and beacons. The wetlands that have been prioritized for this exercise include those located in urban areas including cities, municipalities and townships. This exercise will late spill over to rural areas. The exercise started with Nakivubo and Kyetinda wetlands in Kampala City.

Why demarcate and mark wetland boundaries

The overall objective of the process is to clearly delineate and physically mark the boundaries of wetlands.

The specific objectives include:

- Protect the wetlands to ensure that they can continue to perform their ecological, hydrological and socio-economic functions;
- Define, physically mark and map the boundaries; of wetlands for the specialized functions they perform
- Provide the basis for enforcing compliance to the wetland policy related legislation and regulations;
- Mobilize stakeholder support and create awareness on the critical functions performed by the respective wetlands.

Is this the first time wetland boundaries are being marked

There were previous efforts to demarcate wetlands as follows:

In 2002 an attempt was made to Mark Nakivubo wetland and creates a wetland reserve there in. The wetland boundary was partially marked but the process was not completed due to financial and other constraints.

This process however provided the learning platform from which a Strategy for Wetland boundary demarcation has been developed. The strategy is currently the principle guiding tool for the exercise that is expected to spread countrywide.

The main lesson learnt from the process was the need for full stakeholder involvement and participation as a means for sustainability of the efforts. In addition, it was realized that the process requires substantial financial and technical input (in terms of personnel and specialized equipment) for meaningful success to be achieved. The Department at present has acquired some of these equipments to support this exercise.

What approach is currently being used to implement this exercise?

The approach is currently participatory, involving different stakeholder groups and their interests to ensure ownership and commitment. The tools for this process include, but not limited to field surveys, interviews, barazaas, meetings to mention but a few.

What is expected out of this process?

Increased Public and stakeholder awareness and knowledge on key wetland Ecosystem Services for both urban and rural settings. Each local Government or Urban Authority is expected to at least designate a wetland as area serve for specialized function.

What next after demarcation and boundary marking

- Develop and implement Framework Management plan and Community Based Management Plans to guide wise use interventions
- restore hotspot degraded wetland sections
- Continue with awareness campaigns
- Monitoring Compliance and enforcement

The National Wetland Management Project

Who is implementing it?

Implemented by the Government of Uganda through the Wetlands Management Department of the Ministry of Water and Environment with support from the Government of Japan through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Overall Goal

A model of conservation and wise use of wetlands is disseminated.

Purpose

A model of conservation and wise use of wetlands is established.

Key outputs

1. National Wetland Information System is upgraded and functional.
2. Scientific information on target wetland systems is available.
3. Wetland management plans are prepared.
4. Pilot activities for wise use of wetlands are implemented based on wetland management plans.
5. Wetland management officials' capacity is strengthened.

Where is the project located?

Two Wetland Systems in the Eastern Region



Who is participating in The Project?

The District Local Governments sharing the two system namely.

1. Awoja wetland system; Katakwi, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Kween, Kapchorwa, Sironko and Bulambuli, Kumi, Bukedea, Ngara and Soroti
2. Doho-Namatala; Mbale, Manafwa, Bududa, Tororo, Butaleja, Budaka, Kibuku and Pallisa

What has been achieved?

- Scientific studies have been completed
- 2 Framework Management plans have been developed
- 11 Community Based Wetland Management Plans have been developed
- Over 100 Sub-county Wetland Action Plans have been developed
- The National Wetland Information System has been upgraded and is now functional
- Technical staffs from the Wetlands Management Department and Local Governments have been trained in Uganda and Japan

Next steps

- Support Local Government to Implement selected wise use interventions
- Publishing and disseminating lessons learnt
- Replication of successful interventions in other regions of the country

Where can you find us?

The Wetlands Management Department is located in Luzira along Kabalega Crescent Plot 3 -7, Luzira.

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