

NWC – National Wetlands Committee Governance and participation for the future of wetlands in Brazil

Space for dialogue and articulation of national policies under the Ramsar Convention

What is the NWC and why does it matter?

The **National Wetlands Committee (NWC)** is the main articulator of the **Ramsar Convention** in Brazil, responsible for promoting resolutions for the conservation, sustainable use and strengthening of participatory governance mechanisms for wetland ecosystems in Brazil, vital for **climate balance, biodiversity and water security**.

Created in 2003, it has consolidated itself as a **tripartite governance space**, bringing together representatives of the government, civil society and the scientific community, in order to reflect the diversity of Brazilian sub-regions.

In 2019, the Committee was dissolved (Decree Nº. 9,759) and reinstated in the same year (Decree Nº. 10,141), but with low activity. In 2025, its composition and structures were reinstated, and it resumed its mission of bringing together government, civil society, and research institutions around effective public policies and a global commitment to wetlands.



What are wetlands?





They are transitional ecosystems located between terrestrial and aquatic environments, continental or coastal, natural or artificial, permanently or periodically flooded. Their waterlogged soils and species adapted to water variations form extremely rich habitats.

These environments harbor about **40% of the planet's biodiversity**, providing critical habitats for birds, fish, amphibians, and other species, many of them endemic or migratory. In addition to sustaining life, they store carbon, regulate floods and droughts, support **biodiversity, and guarantee water and food** for millions of people. By storing large amounts of carbon and regulating greenhouse gas emissions, wetlands are **fundamental ecosystems for meeting the goals** set by the Paris Agreement to address the climate crisis, which aims to limit global warming to **1.5°C**, relative to pre-industrial levels.

Examples of wetland ecosystems:

Pantanal, mangroves, floodplains, streams and peatlands.

They provide various functions and services:

-  They produce and purify the water we consume;
-  They store carbon and mitigate climate change;
-  They reduce floods and droughts;
-  They guarantee food and livelihoods.

Brazil and the Ramsar Convention

Brazil has been a signatory since 1996 and hosts **27 Ramsar Sites**, totaling more than **25 million hectares** of protected wetlands. Ramsar Convention: **www.ramsar.org**



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The NWC trajectory

Timeline: from creation to reactivation



Main NWC Deliberations (2003–2021)

- Recognition of salt marshes and salt flats in mangroves (2005)
- "Pantanal Law" and integrity of the Upper Paraguay Basin (2010)
- Legal protection of wetlands (2010)
- Mangroves as Permanent Preservation Areas in the Forest Code (2011)
- Criteria for the designation of Ramsar Sites (2012)
- Planning for water use in the Upper Paraguay Basin (2012)
- Definition and classification of Brazilian wetlands (2015)
- Impacts of the Fundão dam rupture (MG) (2017)
- Draft Law on Management and Protection of the Pantanal Biome (2018)
- Conservation of dam-free sub-basins (2018)
- Prohibition of grain cultivation and forestry in the Pantanal floodplain (2018)
- Pasture management in the Pantanal biome (2021)



The future of wetlands in Brazil

With the NWC reactivated, Brazil resumes a **strategic agenda** to integrate wetlands into **climate, biodiversity** and **water management policies**.

The Committee is now the main space for articulation between **government, civil society**, research institutions and the private sector, connecting the country to the **Ramsar Convention** and **national climate adaptation and mitigation plans**.

Wetlands at the center of climate action
NWC reactivated, Brazil in leadership, civil society strengthened. A commitment for the present and the future.



[Access the NWC website](#)

Reactivation and the role of civil society



Mupan - Women in Action in the Pantanal and Wetlands International Brazil have contributed to strengthening public policies focused on wetlands, articulating technical knowledge, social mobilization, and experiences in pilot territories. Within the scope of the **Corredor Azul Programme**, they collaborated in the reactivation of the National Wetlands Committee (NWC), promoting dialogue between civil society and the Executive and Legislative branches, and reinforcing participatory governance for the conservation and sustainable use of these essential ecosystems.

The organizations also develop **solid technical and scientific production** in partnership with research institutions, integrating scientific and traditional knowledge in the application of the Ramsar Convention guidelines and the legal frameworks of the wetlands of the Paraguay-Paraná system. Their actions include the valuation of ecosystem services, the development of management tools to address extreme events, and theoretical contributions to ecological restoration in wetlands.

Discover some of these initiatives and technical-scientific productions

*Corredor Azul
Programme*



*AquaREla
Pantanal*



*Pantanal Recovery:
A Practical Guide to
Ecological Restoration*



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