



SATELLITE-BASED WETLAND ATLAS OF INDIA RELEASED
To form the basis of a comprehensive wetland conservation strategy
9th June 2011

Wetlands, whether natural or man-made, coastal or inland, are of great ecological and economic significance in different states. They play a critical role in the water cycle, and are highly productive ecosystems that provide a wide range of ecosystem services, in addition to supporting significant recreational, social and cultural activities. However, wetlands today are under severe threat.

A National Wetland Atlas and State Wetland Atlases, prepared by the Space Applications Centre (SAC) of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Ahmedabad, were released on 8th June 2011 by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Environment and Forests.

Mr. Jairam Ramesh said: *“Wetlands are seriously threatened from various sources. Despite the ecological services wetlands provide, and regulatory mechanisms consistent with the Ramsar Convention, we have so far lacked a detailed mapping and inventory of wetlands. This comprehensive mapping will help us prioritize wetlands for protection.”*

This is the first time such atlases have been prepared on the basis of satellite imagery, in a systematic manner. The maps categorize wetlands into 19 different classes, and are being made available at a 1:50,000 scale resolution.

Excluding rivers, wetlands cover some 10 million hectares, or a little over 3% of the country's geographical area. Of this 10 million hectares, reservoirs account for about 2.5 million hectares, inter-tidal mud flats for 2.4 million hectares, tanks for 1.3 million hectares, lakes/ponds for 0.7 million hectares, mangroves for some 0.47 million hectares and corals for about 0.14 million hectares.

Yet, only 25 wetland sites in India are protected as Ramsar sites, under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (to which India is a signatory). These Atlases will now be used by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to designate critical wetlands to be protected under the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, notified in December 2010.