

2 February 2010 – World Wetlands Day

Local swamp an international treasure

One man's swamp is another's treasure trove.

While some people may think of wetlands as salty, sand fly infested swamps, NQ Dry Tropics is encouraging coastal residents from Balgal Beach to Bowen to take a closer look at the value of their local wetland today in honor of World Wetlands Day.

World Wetlands Day marks the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, the world's first treaty aimed at international conservation of natural resources, held in the Iranian city of Ramsar.

NQ Dry Tropics Operations Manager Scott Crawford said Queensland has just five Ramsar wetlands, which are wetlands considered to be of international importance.

"Here in Townsville, we are incredibly lucky to have a Ramsar wetland, the Bowling Green Bay wetland, in our backyard.

"At NQ Dry Tropics, we are working with our partners to protect our local wetlands which are important to our community because they supply drinking water and sustain iconic fish populations like barramundi and mangrove jack.

"We are currently looking at ways to reduce invasive weeds which are a particular threat to wetlands because they can overtake the local waterways, removing the oxygen native plants and animals need to survive. So if you love your fish, you should love your local wetland."

As a Ramsar wetland, Bowling Green Bay wetland is in good company with Australia's other sites including places like Kakadu National Park and Kerang Wetlands.

"It's really important that everyone understand how special it is to live near a Ramsar site because as locals, we all have a role to play in reducing our impact on wetlands," Mr Crawford said.

"Everyone can help keep wetlands healthy by reducing the amount of phosphate-based chemicals such as fertilisers and detergents that make their way into our wetlands.

"Remember that what goes down our drains and washes off our land, ends up in our local waterways. By keeping our wetlands healthy, we all win."

Wetlands include swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, fens, peat bogs, or bodies of water - whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary. There are even underground wetlands. For more information about local wetlands visit www.nqdrytropics.com.au

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