

WETLAND BASICS

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A basic presentation on the
importance of wetlands prepared by
the Mondri Wetlands Project



WHAT IS A WETLAND?

To be a wetland, a piece of land must have:

- waterlogged soils
- water loving plants
- high water table

wetland is a family name given to many different wetland types:

seeps & springs	(top of catchment)
marshes	
floodplains	
lakes and pans	
swamps	
estuaries	
coral reefs	(bottom of catchment)
river banks	(Linking all together)

WETLANDS CAN BE WET AT DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE YEAR!

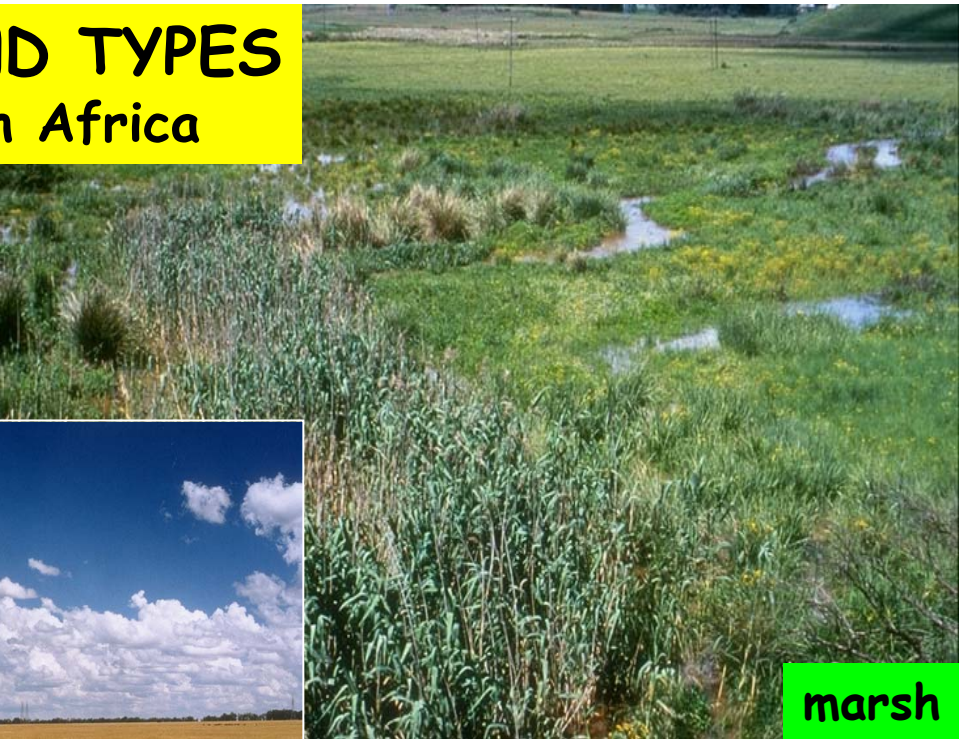
- Temporary wet (1-4 months)
- Seasonally wet (5 - 11 months)
- Permanently wet (>11 months)



WETLAND TYPES in South Africa



seep



marsh



GRASSLAND

SEASONAL WETLAND



wet grassland



marsh

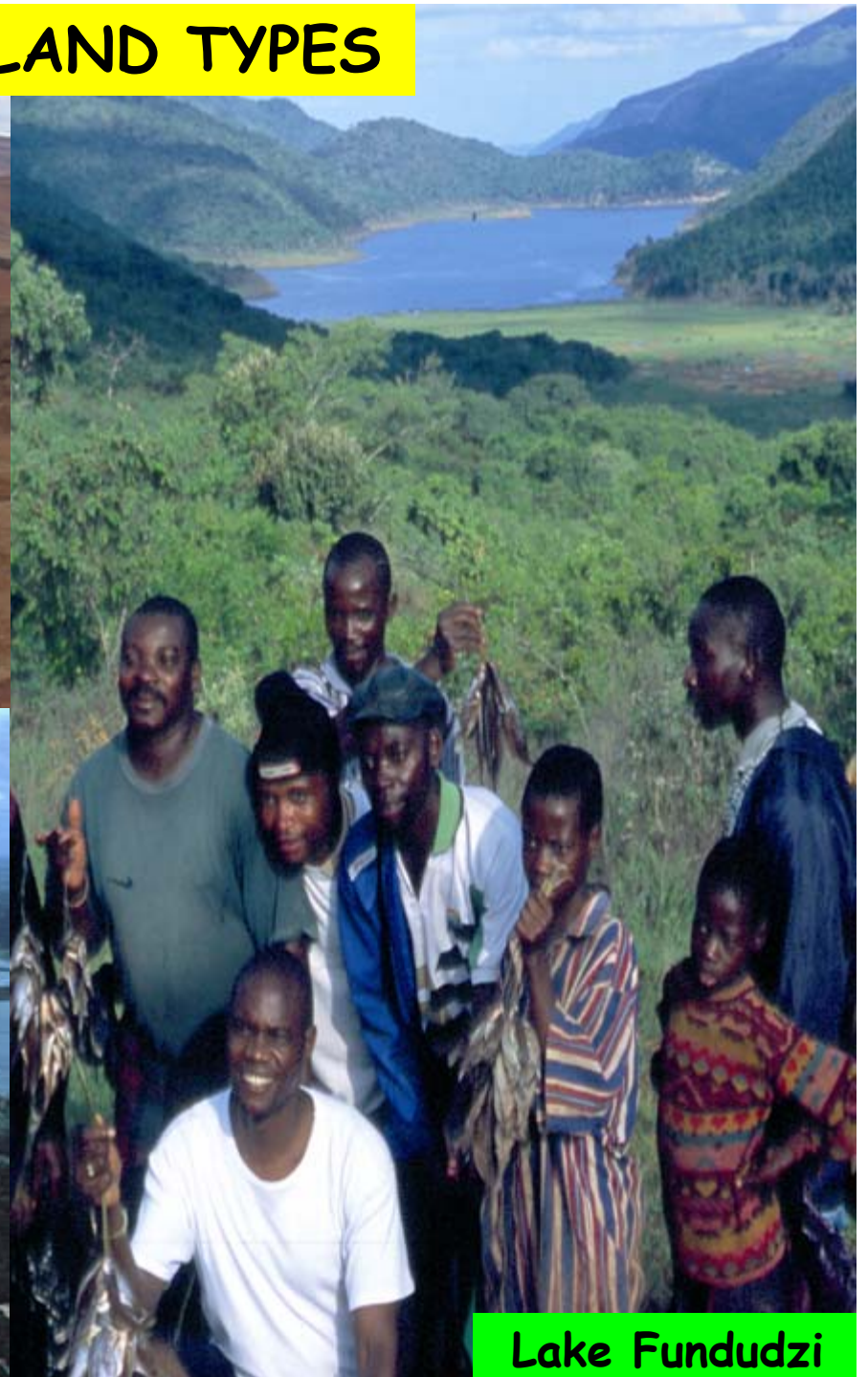
WETLAND TYPES



floodplain



Estuarine system



Lake Fundudzi

WHY IS A WETLAND IMPORTANT?

WETLANDS PROTECT SOUTH AFRICA'S
SCARCEST RESOURCE
WATER

They: **purify** water

store water ensuring supply in **droughts**

prevent **floods**

recharge **ground water**

control **erosion**

WETLANDS ARE ALSO IMPORTANT FOR:

livestock grazing

waterfowl hunting

fishing

biodiversity

recreation

wetland plants for houses and handicraft

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

BAD LAND MANAGEMENT HAS DESTROYED 50% OF OUR WETLANDS

- **drainage** of wetlands for pastures & crops
- **overgrazing** = erosion
- incorrect **burning** = erosion
- **timber** production
- incorrect siting of **dams**
- **pollution**
- **mining**
- **urban development**
- **lack of wetland workers**

All these impacts alter the water flow and water quality which kills the wetland

TYPICAL WETLAND IMPACTS



Gully erosion in a wetland, caused by:



overgrazing



fire



Cattle trampling



roads

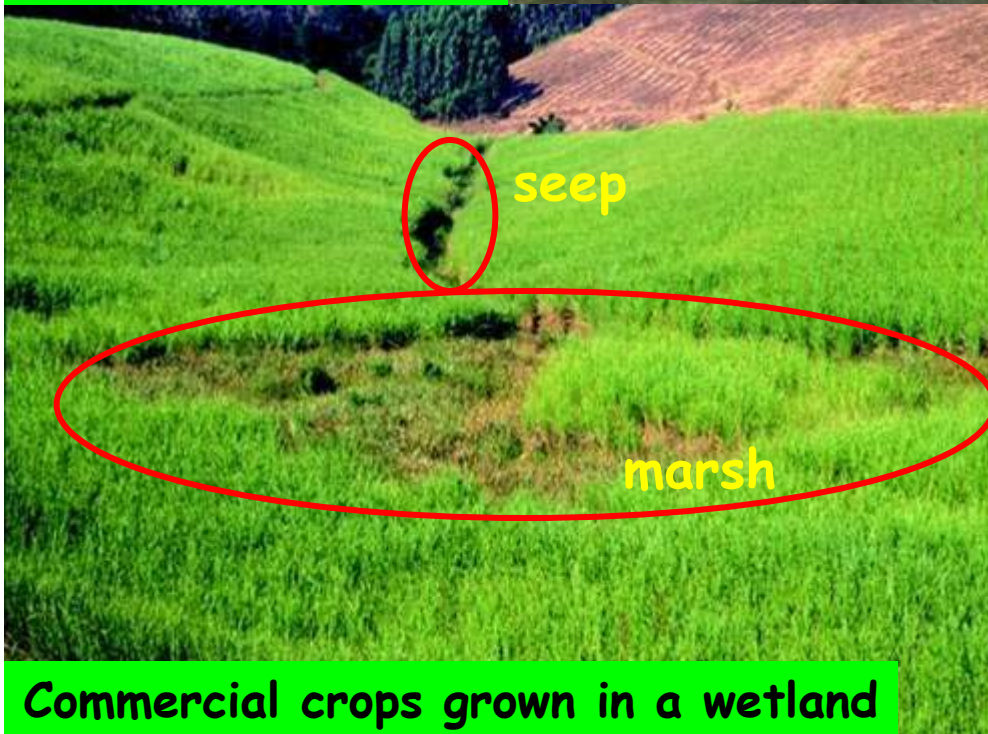
WETLAND IMPACTS



A drained wetland,



Plantation forestry in a wetland



Commercial crops grown in a wetland



Unsustainable subsistence farming in a wetland

CONTINUED WETLAND DESTRUCTION.....

- **less pure water**
- **less reliable water supplies**
- **increased flooding**
- **lower agricultural productivity**
- **more endangered species**

WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

OUR WETLANDS CAN BE USED
BUT
WE MUST MANAGE THEM WISELY

To do this a wetland manager must:

- assess the **condition** of the wetland
- identify the **impacts**
- **rehabilitate** these impacts
- develop and implement a wetland **management plan**