



Non-profit to administer grants program

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that \$99,400 has been awarded to the U.S. National Ramsar Committee to create a one-time small grants program. The program will be administered through the USNRC member organization, Environmental Concern Inc., a non-profit corporation dedicated to wetland education, restoration and horticulture since 1972.

"The grant funding will support the designation of future sites in the U.S., and the communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) activities at existing U.S. Wetlands of International Importance," said Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, Environmental Concern's president and USNRC secretary.

In 1971, nations of the world came together to sign The Convention on Wetlands Treaty (also known as the Ramsar Convention). This treaty provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and wetland resources.

There are currently 156 contracting parties to the convention with 1,676 wetland sites, totaling 150 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. The Ramsar Convention is a non-regulatory instrument. Its mission is the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution toward achieving sustainable development throughout the world.

So far, there are 22 sites in the U.S. designated as Wetlands of International Importance. Scattered throughout the nation from Hawaii to New Jersey, these important wetlands represent the rich diversity of wetlands from salt marshes that fringe the eastern and southern coasts to prairie potholes which dot the mid-west landscape. The Chesapeake Bay Complex, which represents wetlands associated with the Bay, is a designated Wetland of International Importance. Through this new grant program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with the U.S. National Ramsar Committee is hoping to introduce the nation to its current Wetlands of International Importance and encourage the designation of additional sites. For more information about U.S. Ramsar, visit www.ramsarcommittee.us/index.asp. For information about the grant application, e-mail dir.educatewetland.org.