

Lungs of our shores: restoring coastal wetlands

Did you know that we are missing more than one-third of our wetlands, if you look at the world's coastlines today compared to the year 1970?

These missing wetlands were part of our planet's life support system, and big pressures are still facing the wetlands that remain. Mangroves, marshes, seagrasses, and coral reefs generate wealth for our communities and treasures for our cultural traditions. Now, they need our help.

Restoring an ecosystem means removing the pressures that caused the damage in the first place, like dredging or pollution, and supporting the ecosystem as its native inhabitants recover.

Restoring coastal wetlands is part of our fight against ocean acidification and its harmful impacts on marine life and resources. In the open ocean, our CO₂ emissions drive the change in seawater. In coastal zones, the seawater is responding not just to our emissions but also to rapid changes in biological activity.

Most marine life breathes out CO₂, just like we do: this is called respiration. The opposite is photosynthesis and carbon fixation: that's when plants and other photosynthesizers take in the CO₂ (and produce oxygen). Coastal wetlands are champions at carbon fixation and storage.

For instance, seagrass beds store 18 per cent of oceanic carbon, at a pace 35 times faster than rainforests.

When respiration makes more CO₂ than is drawn down by photosynthesis, the CO₂ level rises. Agricultural run-off, sewage discharge, and other nutrient pollution means more coastal respiration ... and stronger acidification.

Remember the missing wetlands? Let's bring them back into the game.

Help give voice to this Pacific Conversation – learn more about **coastal restoration in the Pacific islands**.

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#ResilientPacific**



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