

Natalia Islava, Central Methodist University  
PGC 2023 User: NatiLovesNature, Insta @natilovesnature  
nataliaislava@gmail.com  
DAY 12 Greener

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CyUiYy3LSE3/>



Missouri's wetlands hold their superpowers in ecological significance, serving as critical habitats for diverse plant and animal species. Approximately half of the state's plant species and over a quarter of its nesting and migratory birds find sanctuary in these ecosystems, making them important for biodiversity conservation.

Missouri has different types such as marshes, swamps, and oxbow lakes, wetlands function as natural filtration systems, adept at absorbing and easing pollutants, thereby contributing to water quality improvement. Plant life within wetlands plays a crucial role in this process by absorbing and repurposing such substances as nutrients. **(Source:<http://mdc.mo.gov/landwater-care/wetlandsmanagement/wetland-values>)**

However, these essential ecosystems confront challenges stemming from human caused activities, including deforestation and plastic pollution. Such disruptions compromise the ecological balance of wetlands, posing a potential threat to their integrity.

The consequences of losing wetlands include the displacement of numerous plant and animal species, disruptions to migratory pathways for waterfowl, and the loss of a system that cleans water for free and naturally.

We will lose natural buffers against flooding, and our water source for crops such as wild rice and bald cypress.

Three things we can do to Help:

**1. Reduce Plastic Pollution:**

- Promote and practice responsible waste disposal to prevent plastic pollution in and around wetlands. Implement and support community clean-up initiatives to remove plastic waste from these sensitive ecosystems.
- Advocate for the reduction of single-use plastics in daily life. Encourage the use of reusable alternatives, such as water bottles, bags, and containers, to minimize the introduction of plastic into wetland environments.

**2. Educational Outreach:**

- Implement educational programs on raising awareness about the impact of plastic pollution on wetlands. Work with schools, community groups, and local organizations to inform the public about the importance of these ecosystems and the dangers posed by plastic waste.
- Conduct workshops on sustainable practices, emphasizing the role individuals can play in reducing plastic consumption and properly disposing of plastic waste to protect wetlands.

**3. Policy Activism:**

- Advocate for stronger environmental regulations and policies at local and state levels to reduce plastic pollution. This may include bans on single-use plastics.
- Team up with policymakers and environmental agencies to establish and enforce regulations that address plastic waste in and around wetlands. Support projects that promote responsible manufacturing, consumption, and disposal of plastic products to prevent their effects on these ecosystems.

By focusing on reducing plastic pollution through less plastic use, education, and policy advocacy, we can help of Missouri's wetlands. These efforts not only address the threat of plastic pollution but also promote understanding of the importance of wetland ecosystems.