Climate Mitigation: Peatlands of the World

April 23, 2026, 12:00 noon ET, (93 Registrants) Summary Report

Attendees (43)

GWI Board and U.N. Volunteers: President, V.P. Advocacy, V.P. Membership, U.N. Volunteers for New York and Vienna

CFUW Board: President, V.P. Advocacy, V.P. International Affairs, V.P. Membership, Chair Environment and Climate Change Sub-Committee

NFAs: Austria, Canada, Egypt, India, Netherlands, Paraguay, Spain, USA

CFUW Clubs: Edmonton, Kanata, Ottawa, Lethbridge, Montreal, Montreal Lakeshore, Nelson and District, Nepean, North Delta/Surrey, St Catherines, St. John's, Stratford, Toronto, Vancouver, Windsor, Wolfville

Question 1: Are there peatlands/bogs in your country?

Austria: Only 10% remain

Canada: 25% of the world's peatlands, with 25% of these in Northern Ontario + others such as Burns Bog in B.C. and Wainfleet Bog in the Niagara area.

World's 2nd largest peatland, 3.2 billion tons of carbon near the Ring of Fire

Egypt: No large peatlands

Ireland: About 16% of Ireland, but 82% have been damaged

India: Peatlands in the Himalayan Region, north-east and in the coastal and south-east regions covering about 89 square Kms

Netherlands: Peatlands cover 7% of the country, but are heavily degraded

Paraguay: Shares the world's largest tropical peatlands complex with Bolivia and Brazil

Scotland: 20% of the country, but 80% are degraded

Spain: 30.000 hectares (2.47 acres per) of wetlands and salt marshes in the SW threatened by agriculture

U.S. Peatlands in Maine, Massachusetts (750,000 acres), and New York State, which includes the Adirondack area with 70,000 acres of peatlands

Question 2 a) Is anything being done to protect them?

Austria: The LIFE AMooRe (Austrian Moor Restoration) project is a 10-year, €44 million initiative aimed at restoring degraded peatlands across Austria to combat climate change and biodiversity loss by implementing re-wetting and protection measures to transform peatlands back into active carbon sinks.

Canada: Formation of the Burns Bog Society in B.C.

India: In the 1980's, a freshwater lake, bordered by a swamp and located in the centre of Pune, was threatened by development. A local hydrobiologist created an open-air lab showcasing this biodiverse, balanced ecosystem that attracted children, teachers, and others. The resulting citizen coalition contacted the media and the Prime Minister, and the development was cancelled.

As part of the country's sustainable climate action, India is currently engaged in an Indo-German extensive mapping and assessment project.

Ireland: In the 1990's, the Netherlands supported research in Ireland related to Peatlands

In 1992, legislation was passed, including stiff fines, to stop the cutting of peat for commercial reasons. This included needing to find alternate employment for 100's of displaced workers.

Paraguay: There is a Montessori program in the Bahai Negra area, which includes hands-on environmental programs for students

Scotland: The largest "blanket bog" in Europe was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2024. It is 190.00 hectares or 400,000 million tonnes of carbon.

A strong coalition of agencies has restored 50,000 hectares of degraded peatland and has a goal to restore an additional 200,000 hectares by 2030

Spain: Farmers are being paid 100,000 Euros per hectare (hectare = 2.46 acres) to grow less H2O-needy crops

Question 2 b) If so, is it having an effect?

Canada: In St. John's, Newfoundland, there is Wetlands Protection Legislation, which has limited negative development in this area.

There is also a large Ecological Reserve that protects other areas in the province. Until recently, the 36 Conservation Authorities in Ontario played a significant role in identifying and advocating for Wetlands because of their significance for biodiversity and water quality. In some areas, they created walkways and educational programming. However, with the planned amalgamation of these bodies into 9, these supports are at risk. In the prairie provinces, crops that require irrigation are being planted too close to peatlands, which has a negative impact on their drainage.

India: Ongoing pressure from agriculture and urbanization. However, the citizen coalition created in Pune in the 80's has prevented development threats to other wetlands in that area.

Ireland: The smaller wetland areas are not being preserved. Also, many of the peatlands need to be cleaned up

Question 3: What more could your NFA/GWI do?

- Lobby School Authorities to make climate/ environmental studies compulsory in primary grades and prepare curriculum materials to support the subject.
- Build relevant hands-on science projects in the above curriculum
- Share Paraguay's Montessori program model with Montessori and Waldorf schools in your country.
- Lobby to have climate/environmental studies included in teacher-training programs
- Stress the economic value of tourism to peatlands and other wetlands, especially if they are near heritage sites, have rare flora or fauna. Or is it a migratory resting-place for specific birds
- Contact relevant government ministries, asking them to carry out environmental assessments prior to approval of new farming, housing, or industrial initiatives near or on peatlands or wetlands
- Financial penalties for individuals/companies negatively impacting peatlands/wetlands
- Approach vendors who sell peat for commercial purposes, advising them of the\negative climate impacts of this trade and about carbon-neutral alternatives.
- Approach the major climate-action lobbyists, suggesting that they pool their financial resources to create larger "consistent-message" campaigns with a focus on the relationship between CO2/methane production, climate change, and various wetlands.
- Ensure that any campaign includes a concrete example of climate change damages
- The EU is co-funding project research related to peatland restoration
- Reduce the use of AI because of the extreme demands for water and electricity

- Carry out rigorous environmental assessments prior to any decision to develop land near or in a peatland/wetland, including the building of wind or solar farms.