Wetlands

* Wetlands serve several justifications
  + Aesthetic – they are home to beautiful wildlife
  + Utilitarian – fur bearing animals, wild rice, fish, shellfish
* Wetlands in the US are rapidly disappearing
* Nine million acres were wiped out between 1950 and 1970
* 6% of the world’s land is wetlands
* Wetlands are a versatile biome
* Water levels in wetlands are fluctuating
  + As water changes, the ecosystem adapts
    - Life-forms and food chains alter
  + Water levels in wetlands affect water distribution
* Offer buffer zones against flooding
* Clearing land reduced the soil nitrification and altered wetlands
* Legal issues regarding wetland sustainability:
  + Housing industries pose threat to wetlands sustainability laws
  + Legal loopholes take advantage of changing dynamics throughout the year
* Managing wetlands proves difficult
  + Dams affect water distribution too much
  + Further analysis of water and wetlands is needed before any conclusion

Summary:

Wetlands serve many utilitarian, aesthetic and ecological purposes. From the wildlife to the water shed, wetlands are apparently crucial. Wetlands reduce the severity of floods by absorbing excess water. As they are destroyed and used for soil or housing purposes, their ability to affect the environment is drastically hindered and the effects of reducing the wetlands is unknown. Their role in the storage, recycling and transport of water through the ecosystem has yet to be strictly defined, and as they slowly disappear from the global environment, their ability to exercise crucial jobs we don’t understand becomes critically hindered. More research is needed if we are to understand how to aim our policies and environmental projects.

My thoughts:

I think that it’s silly that we continue to meddle in things we seriously do not understand. We raze the forests and wonder why the CO2 levels spike, we remove wetlands and complain about flooding, and yet we continue to raze and remove resources to our detriment. It’s quite fascinating from a sociological perspective. I think that we should refrain from interfering with the wetlands and allow for researchers to determine what ways, if any, we should be permitted to interfere with the wildlife and ecosystem as a whole. As elegant and simple as it may sound, it’s an impossible strategy, given our nature.

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| **So what?**  As we continue exploit our environment, we create unforeseen hazards. Wetland destruction affects the watershed in ways we simply don’t understand. | **Says who?**  This article was written by A. Kusler, William J. Mitsch and Joseph S. Larson and published by Scientific American in 1994. |
| **Now what?**  Now we must engage the wetlands and research ways to reduce our impact on the hydrologic cycle through wetland removal. If we can strive to understand wetlands, we can develop scientific and industrial policies to protect them from over-exploitation. | **What it reminds me of:**  This article reminds me how little of our world we truly understand, and the consequences we face as we, ignorant beings, develop technologies beyond our own understanding. |