



International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem/Mangrove Day

Every year on July 26, the world at large celebrates World Mangrove Day. Unlike other international days, there is no annual theme for this observance. The aims of World Mangrove Day are:

- To raise awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems as a unique, special and vulnerable ecosystem; and
- To promote solutions for their sustainable management, conservation and uses.

One might ask, why should we celebrate mangroves?

Mangrove forests are unique in that one acre of mangroves can absorb up to five times more carbon than an acre of terrestrial forest! This is because tropical mangroves store most of their carbon in the soil through their extensive root systems. The destruction of mangrove forests therefore emits comparatively large amounts of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. If that is not enough to peak your interest let's read on some more. Mangroves are rare, spectacular and prolific ecosystems on the boundary between land and sea. These extraordinary ecosystems contribute to the wellbeing, food security, and protection of coastal communities worldwide. They support a rich biodiversity and provide a valuable nursery habitat for fish and crustaceans. Mangroves also act as a form of natural coastal defense against storm surges, tsunamis, rising sea levels and erosion. Nothing is scarier than having waves crashing into our shores with no mechanism in place to break that force. Yet mangroves are disappearing three to five times faster than overall global forest losses, with serious ecological and socio-economic impacts.

Let us zero in on Guyana

There are three main species of mangroves in Guyana, *Avicennia germinans* (black mangrove), *Rhizophora mangle* (red mangrove), and *Laguncularia racemosa* (white mangrove).

- Mangroves contribute substantially to sea defense in Guyana by damping wave action and reducing wave energy;
- Mangroves also help prevent erosion by stabilizing sediments with their tangled root systems;
- Mangroves play an important role in the fight against climate change by trapping and storing carbon;
- In addition to this, mangroves provide a habitat for many fishes and bird species, their roots often serving as a safe zone which allows juvenile fishes and other marine animals to grow;
- Mangroves protect other ecosystems – seagrass beds and coral reefs by filtering pollutants and trapping sediments from inland. In the same way, they protect water quality;
- The leaves of the mangroves have been used in tea, medicine, and livestock feed;

During the period of January 14-15, 2020 EPA conducted a workshop entitled "**Berbice Restoration of Wellington Park Mangrove Reserve Sub- Regional Project**", under the North Brazil Shelf, Large Marine Ecosystem Project, at its Whim Office. This project was focused on the restoration of a coastal wetland area (mangrove area) by means of an Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) approach. The EBM approach places significant emphasis on community's involvement in the maintenance and management of their community. Ten members of the Wellington Park community were trained to collect water, soil, vegetation, invertebrate and vertebrate samples. The aim is to have a cadre of trained residents who can be re-engaged in the future and assist with the restoration project. The EPA believes that this is one step in promoting community involvement in the management of their environment.

You can learn more about Guyana's unique mangrove ecosystems by watching Reel Guyana's documentary on the Barima/Mora passage.

References

<https://www.careourearth.com/world-mangrove-day/>

<https://www.mangrovealliance.org/why-care-about-mangroves-on-earth-day/>

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/gy/gy-nr-05-en.pdf>

<https://www.epaguyana.org/epa/news/202-enforcement-action-environmental-authorisation>

<https://www.mangrovealliance.org/save-our-mangroves-now/>

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.