



# Big win: Protecting Wetland and Peatland Ecosystems

*Wetlands and Peatlands are key ecosystems containing approximately 20% of global soil organic carbon stocks. Peat swamp forests have sequestered carbon for millennia, storing a globally significant reservoir below ground.*

But tropical peat fires are a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, producing transboundary “hazes,” causing significant impacts on human health, regional economies and ecosystems. Combined with contemporary agricultural practices on peatlands - land clearance, drainage and fertilization - especially where peat is burned – peatlands, and the carbon they store, are at risk.

Along with biodiversity losses driven by deforestation, the carbon stored in drained peatlands is rapidly lost through oxidation, dissolution and fire. Drained peatlands emit about 0.3 Gigatons of carbon per year. With future El-Niño events predicted to increase in frequency and severity and with fire prevalence now decoupled from drought, the situation could get worse.

Huge opportunities to mitigate climate change lie in protecting these lands. But they are often under threat from commercial and development interests. How can natural wetlands and infrastructure be used to climate proof different landscapes?

**Photo credit:** Fires burning in Indonesia’s forests. Photo by Rini Sulaiman/ Norwegian Embassy for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

## Call to action:

- Infrastructure for climate proofing different landscapes needs to be explored with best-bet options presented for implementation at scale.
- Partnerships to articulate and reconcile commercial and development interests with those of local communities will be required for successful delivery.



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