

Farming destroying Brazil's wetlands

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A new study says deforestation is destroying Brazil's vast Pantanal wetlands.

Conservation International says increased grazing and agriculture has destroyed 17 percent of the native vegetation in the Pantanal, considered the world's largest wetland.

At the current rate, the Pantanal's original vegetation would disappear in 45 years, researchers said.

The transformation of native pasture to farmland has destroyed almost 45 percent of the original vegetation in the Paraguay River Basin, which includes the Pantanal. The river basin covers approximately 231,500 square miles, 60 percent of it within Brazilian territory.

The Pantanal, which comprises 41 percent of the entire basin, is a Brazilian National Heritage site, a significant site of international relevance according to the RAMSAR Wetlands Areas Convention, and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Conservation International is calling for increased government regulation and better coordination of conservation efforts, as well as implementation of a broad environmental restoration program in devastated areas.

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