

# Tibet wetlands being protected

February 13 2006

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Tibet's wetlands are being protected from drying up, and leading the country in vegetation acreage, Chinese officials said.

The Tibet Autonomous Region's environmental protection bureau said 4.9 percent of the region is wetlands -- protecting groundwater, weakening effects of flooding and serving as a prime source of oxygen, the Xinhua news agency reports.

More than \$11 million was dedicated to preserving the Lhalu wetland in 2002 from overgrazing and poor urban planning that destroyed it.

The world's highest natural wetland, near Lhasa, China, it can produce 57,300 tons of oxygen per year -- but it is threatened by dried up rivers and loss of vegetation.

Since 2002, the wetland has been enclosed and a silt pond has been built to divert water where it is needed, Xinhua reported.

The government plans to focus attention on 15 other wetlands in Lhasa within five years.

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Citation: Tibet wetlands being protected (2006, February 13) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-02-tibet-wetlands.html>

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