

1 acre

of wetlands can hold up to 1.5 million gallons of rain or melting snow, preventing that water from flooding nearby communities¹

1 great whale

will absorb an average of 33 tons of carbon dioxide during its lifetime, and keep it sequestered on the ocean floor long after its death²

11,000 gallons

of stormwater can be absorbed by just one mature, 100-foot tree³

► Zebras, elephants, and wildebeests in Amboseli, Kenya.



Photo: Jen Prejack / © IFAW

One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent.

The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate changes and contributing to sustainable development.

One Health High Level Expert Panel, an advisory panel to the One Health Quadripartite made up of the FAO, WHO, WOA, and UNEP

As an example, destroying native forests and grasslands not only kills animals and plants, it has serious long-term impacts on people around the world by increasing the levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. Increased greenhouse gas levels in turn increase Earth’s surface temperatures. This global heating then triggers extreme weather events like abnormal heat waves, cold snaps, wildfires, storms, and flooding. And without natural buffers like forests and wetlands, weather events are more likely to destroy homes, habitats, and food and water sources for all species, including human beings.

why is One Health important?

Adopting One Health principles is more important now than ever before, because conventional, siloed approaches have not protected us against serious threats, including pandemics, climate change, and nature loss.

what is One Health?

One Health, as a concept, is simple and straightforward: it means recognizing that the health and well-being of humans, animals, plants, and our shared environment are all connected, and that harming one can also harm the others.

Nature does more than protect against climate change and its impacts. Biodiversity – the full mix of life on the planet– is absolutely necessary for human existence. It is the foundation of ecosystems – the natural systems that produce clean air, drinkable water, a healthy climate, medicines, and food. It is the Earth’s life support system. A One Health approach



Photo: © Scott Portelli



Photo: Harri Baktiantoro / © IFAW

60%

of emerging infectious diseases that are reported globally come from animals, both wild and domestic⁴

▶ Sea turtle swimming through the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland.

▶ Mungil climbing in the trees on Dalwood-Wylie Island.

- 1 Ayres. Why Are Wetlands Critical? Think Flood Control, Clean Water. <https://www.ayresassociates.com/why-are-wetlands-critical-think-flood-control-clean-water/>
- 2 Letter to Rules re: Protecting Biodiversity to Prevent Future Disasters. https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeXvr5xm3-Vjws4-iyBO-6qyre_MXazFATqs6MLn_xurDaSQ/viewform
- 3 Water & Forests, Educational in Nature. https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd5269813.pdf
- 4 One Health, World Health Organisation. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/one-health>

▶ see how at [ifaw.org](https://www.ifaw.org)



#HealthforAll

recognizes that we need to protect and conserve animals, plants, and ecosystems in order to keep that life support system functioning.

Balanced natural systems also provide a natural barrier against many diseases, including diseases that can turn into pandemics. Most new diseases, including those that become pandemics, start out in animals and “spill over” into people as a result of human actions. The animals themselves are often not diseased, but the pathogens can create disease when they cross over to other species.

By destroying natural habitats and engaging in wildlife trade we create unnatural opportunities for humans to come into direct contact with wildlife, and provide ideal conditions for “spillover” to take place. For example, trade practices along wildlife supply chains, from wild harvest or captive production systems through various human-animal interfaces including locations for temporary holding, transport, processing, inspection, sale and slaughter (including at markets), shipment and trans-shipment can all elevate the risk of pathogen spillover. Pandemic prevention strategies based on One Health are needed immediately to identify and prevent activities that elevate the chances of spillovers in order to protect human health worldwide.

how do we implement One Health in practice?

A One Health approach requires bringing experts in health, veterinary science, and

conservation, among others together at the decision-making table to work together toward solutions that benefit people, animals, and the places they call home.

The 196 government members of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will negotiate a new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework at its 15th Conference of Parties meeting (CoP15). This framework is already two years late because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be deeply ironic and unfortunate, therefore, if governments fail to take this opportunity to embed a One Health approach. To facilitate a One Health approach as part of a Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, governments must take a number of key steps that reduce human-wildlife interactions, restore biodiversity and limit the opportunities for spillover:

Conserve and restore habitats – at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030, in well-managed, connected networks of protected and conserved areas that respect the rights of indigenous peoples.

Protect and recover species – ending human induced extinctions, recovering threatened species and maintaining the abundance of other wild populations.

Eliminate over-exploitation of wildlife – this must include eliminating illegal and unsustainable exploitation, trade and use of wildlife, including any activities that risk pathogen spillover.