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## **Register: March 14<sup>th</sup> Sikh Environment Day – Sikh Vatavaran Diwas 2012**

Sikhs will gather again to celebrate March 14<sup>th</sup> as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual [Sikh Environment Day](#). This day marks the Gurgaddi Diwas of Guru Har Rai Ji who is remembered for his deep sensitivity to *kudrat*, or nature.

Worldwide, Gurdwaras and schools will focus *kirtan* and *katha* on the environment, plant trees, hold children's activities, and make their own commitments to caring for nature. Sikh businesses are also invited to celebrate by taking steps to reduce their impact on the environment, and by sharing the message with others. A toolkit of great ideas is available on the EcoSikh website.

Sikh Environment Day has been supported by the Akal Takht and Sikh institutions across Punjab and the world. This year an estimated 700 institutions will join, and with your support, we can make the day a truly historic event, again in 2012. Please [register](#) today to assure that you receive materials in time.

## **EcoSikh Supports Punjab-Wide Alliance for the Environment**

This January, EcoSikh supported [Vatavaran Ate Samaj Bachhao Morcha](#) a Punjab-wide alliance of over fifty organizations committed to putting the environment on the election agenda. The alliance organizes public dialogues in cities in Punjab so voters can seek answers from candidates in the upcoming elections on January 30th.

The alliance seeks a clear stance on the environmental crisis in the state from political parties, and a comprehensive epidemiological mapping of the impact of chronic toxicity on human populations.

The group has also demanded from the Election Commission that the election manifesto be declared a legal document. If the party coming to power fails to implement at least 75 percent of its election promises, leaders should be debarred from contesting in the next elections.

## **Protecting Wetlands, a Sikh perspective**

As [World Wetlands Day](#) approaches on February 2, 2012, EcoSikh recognizes the role of wetlands for eco-tourism. Punjab is home three internationally recognized wetlands, protected under the [Ramsar Convention](#). Currently about .31 percent of the state is under natural and manmade wetlands, including the Harike Wetland, Kanjli Wetland, and Ropar Wetland.

Not only do wetlands play a vital role in groundwater recharge, and in providing rich ecological habitat for flora and fauna, they have religious and historical significance. Kanjli wetland near Kapurthala continues to protect freshwater availability in the Kali Bein, where Guru Nanak attained Divine Bliss. In addition the Ropar Wetland is the historic site where Maharaja Ranjit Singh signed a treaty with the British Lord Bentick to mark the political boundaries of Punjab in 1831.

Today these wetlands face threats from pollution, illegal development, and overfishing, but with a commitment to firm conservation measures, wetlands can continue to play a vital role in preserving water supply and the recreation and tourism economy in the region.

### **Did You Know? The Sikh Gurus and Punjab's native trees**

With mangos in Gurdwara Amb Sahib ripening again in January, we reflect on the historical connection between our Gurus and Punjab's native trees, including *bohr*, *pipli*, *garna*, *karir*, *phalahi*, *reru*, *luhura*, *tahli*, *imli*, *ritha*, *kalp*, *ber*, and *amb*.

Gurdwara Amb Sahib marks the area where the devotee Bhai Kuram was engaged in deep meditation, when he realized he did not fulfill his promise to the Guru to provide mangos for the *sangat*. Guru Har Rai Ji encouraged him to look at the tree he was meditating under to see the rare site of mangos in the wintery off-season of *Poh* (mid-December), which Bhai Kuram then offered as *parsad*.

Today, a number of indigenous mangos still grow in Punjab, such as those in the Inami Bagh in Hoshiarpur. Here exists a biodiversity heritage site and rare ecological treasure: ten acres of 165 mango trees and over 37 rare native varieties.

