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# Types and distribution of tropical peatlands and their current degradation status

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Peatlands of the Tropics are highly diverse and occur from the coast to alpine altitudes. Natural tropical peatlands are covered by peat swamp forests, wet grasslands, Papyrus reeds, mangroves, salt-marshes, and specific high altitude afro-alpine or páramo vegetation. The total area of tropical peatland is estimated to be 30-45 million ha (10-12% of the total global peatland resource), constituting one of the largest near-surface pools of terrestrial organic carbon (Solomon et al. 2007; Page and Rieley 1998; Sorensen 1993).
Although the exact extent of peatland in large and partially remote areas is unclear (e.g. western Amazon Basin, Pantanal, Congo Basin, Sudd, Okavango Delta, Ganges Delta), a wealth of information is available to locate the majority of peatlands across the Tropics (cf. Barthelmes et al. 2015). We present an overview of tropical peatland types and their distribution based on biogeographic and terrestrial ecoregions and geospatial data collated in the Global Peatland Database.
The current degradation status of tropical peatlands is addressed in case studies from East Africa, the Ganges Delta and the Guyana shield. Furthermore, we highlight regions where vast areas of undisturbed tropical peatlands (may) occur, and that need protection against land reclamation that involves drainage (e.g. Congo Basin, Zambia floodplains, western Amazon Basin, coastal lowlands of Papua New Guinea).

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