Making wetlands conservation a priority in development of Qinghai province, China

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Qinghai province consists of four types of wetlands which include river, lake, marsh and artificial wetlands. 5.65 million hectares of marsh wetlands account for 69.32% of total wetland area. It is regarded as one of the world's most influential ecological regulating areas. In 2014, the State Forestry Bureau commissioned the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to make an assessment of the three Wetlands of International Importance, namely the Niaodao Ramsar Site ("Bird island" of Qinghai Lake), Zhaling Lake Ramsar Site and Eling Lake Ramsar Site. The research found that these three wetlands are worth 24.796 billion Yuan in ecosystem value (USD 3.5 billion).

According to another wetlands survey conducted in April 2015, Qinghai province ranked first in wetlands areas, which increased to 8.14 million hectares from 5.56 million hectares in 2003, an increase of nearly 50%, accounting for 15.19% of the total area of China wetlands.

During his meeting with media, Ma Jianhai, the director of the Wetlands Conservation and Management Center of the Forestry Department of Qinghai province, said that the second survey of China’s wetlands resources provides scientific basis for effective protection of wetlands ecosystem and diverse species in the future. With the participation of 387 experts and scholars, this survey is by far the largest scientific wetlands survey in Qinghai’s history. In accordance with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the adopted method was the combination of 3S technology with field investigation and use of the latest satellite remote sensing data. It took three years to thoroughly investigate provincial wetlands resources that include areas of lake, marsh, artificial wetlands (with size no less than 8 hectares) and river wetlands (with width more than 10 meters and length more than 5,000 meters).

The Qinghai Lake has now an expanded area thanks to government conservation and management efforts. The
water level of Qinghai Lake is on the rise, so is the number of fish. Also thousands of swans flew in and stayed at the site for winter.

2016 was the first year of China’s “13th Five Year Plan” and also an important year for Qinghai’s wetlands conservation efforts. The number of national wetlands parks in Qinghai has increased from one in 2013 to nineteen; conservation area now covers 325,100 hectares, second only to Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia.

The newly approved four National Wetlands Parks are Da’ri Yellow River National Wetlands Park, Gui’nan Mang’chu National Wetlands Park, Gan’de Ban’ma Rentuo National Wetlands Park of Sanjiangyuan region and Gang’cha Sha’liu river National Wetlands Park.

In 2016, the Forestry Department of Qinghai province has allocated 43.8 million Yuan (USD 6 million) for wetlands conservation and restoration projects. In 2016 in total 15 wetlands projects were completed. Gyaring Lake Ramsar Site and Ngoring Lake Ramsar Site, and the Qinghai Lake National Natural Conservation Area, have been listed in the “13th Five year plan” for national wetlands conservation’s central budget allocated for wetlands conservation projects.

After two years the overall conservation and restoration of Muli Jiangcang (Muli Jiangcang is the valley where all these Ramsar Sites are situated) has been accomplished, with 16.42 million yuan of ecological restoration fund allocated.

Important events for wetlands conservation in Qinghai province:

- In May 2013, the fourth meeting of the 12th session of the standing committee of the people's congress of Qinghai province examined and approved the Wetlands Conservation Ordinance of Qinghai province, which was a big step for Qinghai province’s wetlands legislation work.
- In 2014, the WWF Xining office and Beijing Forestry University Natural Conservation Area Institute jointly drafted the Wetlands Monitoring Work Plan of Qinghai province and the Wetlands Monitoring Technical Regulations of Qinghai province.
- In 2016 Wetlands Conservation and Management Center together with Qinghai Normal University drafted the Marking Standards of Important Wetlands in Qinghai province, respectively for Ramsar Sites, national wetlands parks and wetlands-centered conservation area.
- In 2016 Wetlands Conservation and Management
Center and Qinghai Normal University jointly drafted the Identification General Principles for Important Wetlands of Qinghai province.