

# **Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands**

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**“Road to COP15”  
Youth Webinar Series**

# Launch of OECM Briefing Note

Briefing Note 14 prepared by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) of the Convention on Wetlands in accordance with Task 4.1 of the STRP Workplan 2023-2025 on ‘OECMs as an opportunity in promoting wetland conservation and wise use’.





# Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands

- Scene setting
- Area-based approaches
- Identifying wetland OECMs
- Managing and governing wetland OECMs
- Recognising Wetlands of International Importance / other areas as OECMs
- Integrating OECMs and protected areas for wetland conservation
- Key recommendations

Briefing Note 14


 Convention on Wetlands

## Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands

**Purpose**

The role and importance of Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) have been formally acknowledged internationally by Contracting Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through Decision 14/8 (which includes OECM identification criteria) and supplemented with international best practice best guidance from IUCN on identifying, recognizing, monitoring and reporting on OECMs, including an OECM site-selection tool.

This Briefing Note aims to assist Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands in the identification and use of OECMs as a mechanism to further the conservation and wise use of wetlands and contribute to commitments under the Convention (including its Strategic Plan), Target 3 (and other targets) of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), and in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international processes, e.g., the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Guidance on identifying, reporting, monitoring and strengthening the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including Wetlands of International Importance, as OECMs**

There is a long history of managing defined geographic areas of landscapes and seascapes for a range of ecological, cultural, political and socio-economic objectives. While protected areas have been the predominant area-based mechanism for biodiversity conservation, many areas outside the global network of protected areas also contribute to this goal, whether or not they are being explicitly managed for it. Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are designed to enable the identification, reporting, monitoring and strengthening of conservation efforts outside of protected areas. Identifying and recognizing managed wetlands as OECMs provides an opportunity to upscale overall efforts for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, and address wetlands-related commitments under the Convention on Wetlands (including in its Strategic Plan), and various targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) (especially Target 3) and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and processes. The criteria for identifying OECMs are in Annex III B of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Decision 14/8 and apply to wetlands. The three-step site-level tool of the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN WCPA) for identifying OECMs can be used to assess whether a wetland meets the OECM identification criteria and can then be recognized and reported as such under national reporting systems and to the World Database on Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (WD-OECM).





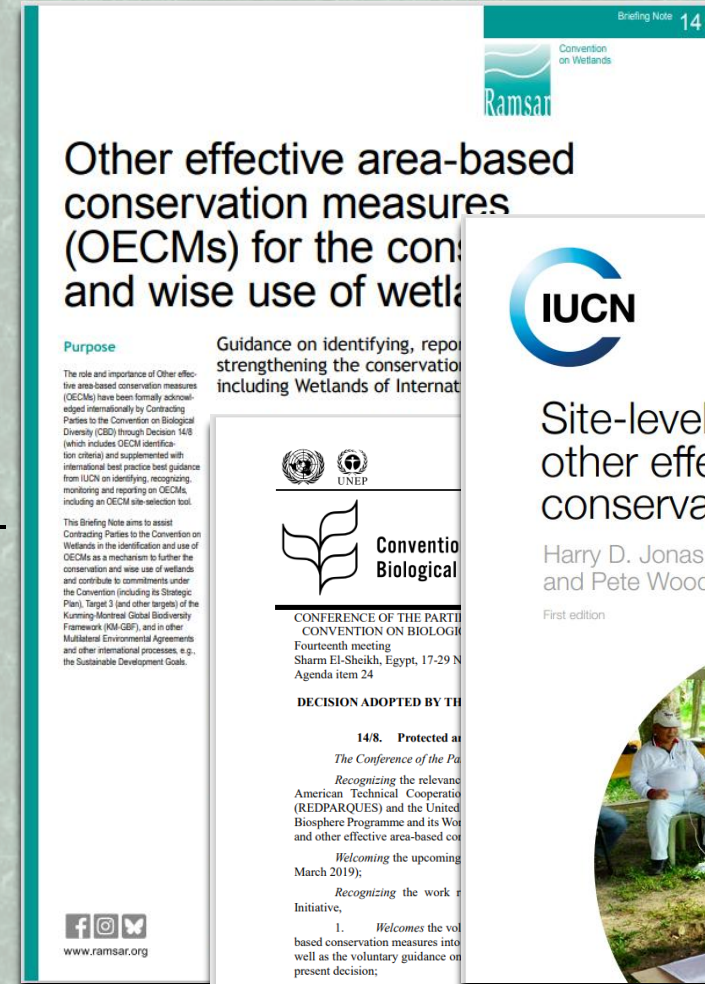
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# Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) for the conservation and wise use of wetlands

## Key messages

- 1) Area based approaches need to be enhanced to address the ongoing biodiversity crisis - including loss and decline in biodiversity in wetlands
- 2) Protected Areas and OECMs are complementary tools that can help Ramsar Contracting Parties and other stakeholders in applying area-based approaches for in-situ biodiversity conservation
- 3) A suite of tools and guidance exists within Ramsar Convention, CBD and IUCN OECM Working Group
- 4) Investments into recognising, managing, and monitoring OECMs and learning from implementation can help implementation





# Area based approaches

Area based approaches as a cornerstone for conservation of nature

- Range of protected area designation types (across countries)
- Including various management approaches/objectives
- Recognised that other geographic areas not designated as protected can also be important for (the protection of) biological diversity (ecosystems, species and genes) and recognition (and safeguarding) of the ecosystem services provided
- These areas importantly can recognise a of range of relevant governance and ownership types



# Why OECMs for the conservation and wise use of wetlands?



- Enable the identification, reporting, monitoring and strengthening of conservation efforts outside of protected areas
- Upscale overall efforts for the conservation and wise use of wetlands (though identifying and recognizing managed wetlands as OECMs)
- Establish synergies between protected areas and OECMs to deliver wetland conservation outcomes important for nature and people
- Deliver against wetland-related commitments under the Convention on Wetlands, various targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (especially Target 3) and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and processes
- Further build integrated Nature-based Solutions (NbS) within a landscape/seascape



# Wetland OECMs

- Wetland areas meeting PA definition but where governing authority does not wish to designate
- Where long-term in-situ conservation is a secondary management objective i.e. where management not primarily intended for wetland conservation
- Areas managed for objectives other than biodiversity conservation but still deliver long terms in-situ conservation wetland outcomes
- Protection of sacred or heritage sites also containing wetlands / wetland-dependent species



# CBD Criteria

- **Criterion A:** Area is not currently recognized as a protected area
- **Criterion B:** Area is governed and managed
- **Criterion C:** Achieves sustained and effective contribution to in-situ conservation of biodiversity
- **Criterion D:** Associated ecosystem functions and services and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values

**Annex 1 of BN provides wetland specific details against criteria**

**E.g. sub-criterion A.1 ‘Not a protected area’ (wetlands specific):**

- Wetland(s) located outside any formally notified protected area network.
- Part of wetland is outside a protected area, where the wetland spans beyond any existing notified protected area.
- Any wetland that meets the criteria of a protected area, yet the governance authority or actor (e.g., for Indigenous and traditional territories) prefers to recognize and report it as an OECM.

## Annex 1

CBD criteria and sub-criteria for the identification of OECMs (from Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8), with additional information/guidance to contextualize their application for wetland OECMs/in a wetland-specific context



# Governing and managing wetland OECMs

## **E.g. sub-criterion B.3 ‘Managed’ (wetlands specific):**

- A site where existing governance and management arrangements ensure wetland wise use and maintenance of ecological character.
- The wetland area has an appropriate management mechanism (e.g., a legal means, customary law or binding agreement with the landowner) to address adverse changes in wetland ecological character, and there is a reasonable expectation that the mechanism will be used when required.
- A wetland where full or partial ecological restoration has already resulted in maintenance or enhancement in the ecological character of the wetland(s), and these are expected to be sustained for the long term.



# Governing and managing wetland OECMs

## Criterion C.3 ‘In-situ conservation of biological diversity (wetlands specific):

- Table 2 provides interpretation of CBD definitions of in-situ conservation against the Ramsar Sites designation criteria

CBD OECM Criterion C.3	Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria
(a) Rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems	Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.
(b) Natural ecosystems that are under-represented in protected area networks	Criterion 1: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.
(c) High level of ecological integrity or intactness	
(d) Significant populations/extent of endemic or range-restricted species or ecosystems	Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.
(e) Important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas	<p>Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.</p> <p>Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird. Specific criteria based on fish</p> <p>Criterion 8: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.</p> <p>Criterion 9: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.</p>
(f) Importance for ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a larger area	<p>Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.</p> <p>Criterion 7: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.</p>



# Governing and managing wetland OECMs

## Governance and Management principles

- Consistent with ecosystem approach
- Reflecting the equity considerations adopted in the Convention.
- Integrate management inside and outside OECMs
- Respect and uphold cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values of the area
- Respect and uphold knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the in situ biodiversity conservation

## Outcomes

- Support ecosystem functions and services, including those of importance to indigenous peoples and local communities

## Process

- Identify and involve relevant authorities and stakeholders.
- Address existing and reasonably anticipated threats,
- Put in place a monitoring system to inform management on effectiveness of measures
- Document known biodiversity attributes and cultural and/or spiritual values, and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness.

# When can Ramsar Sites or other wetlands be OECMs?

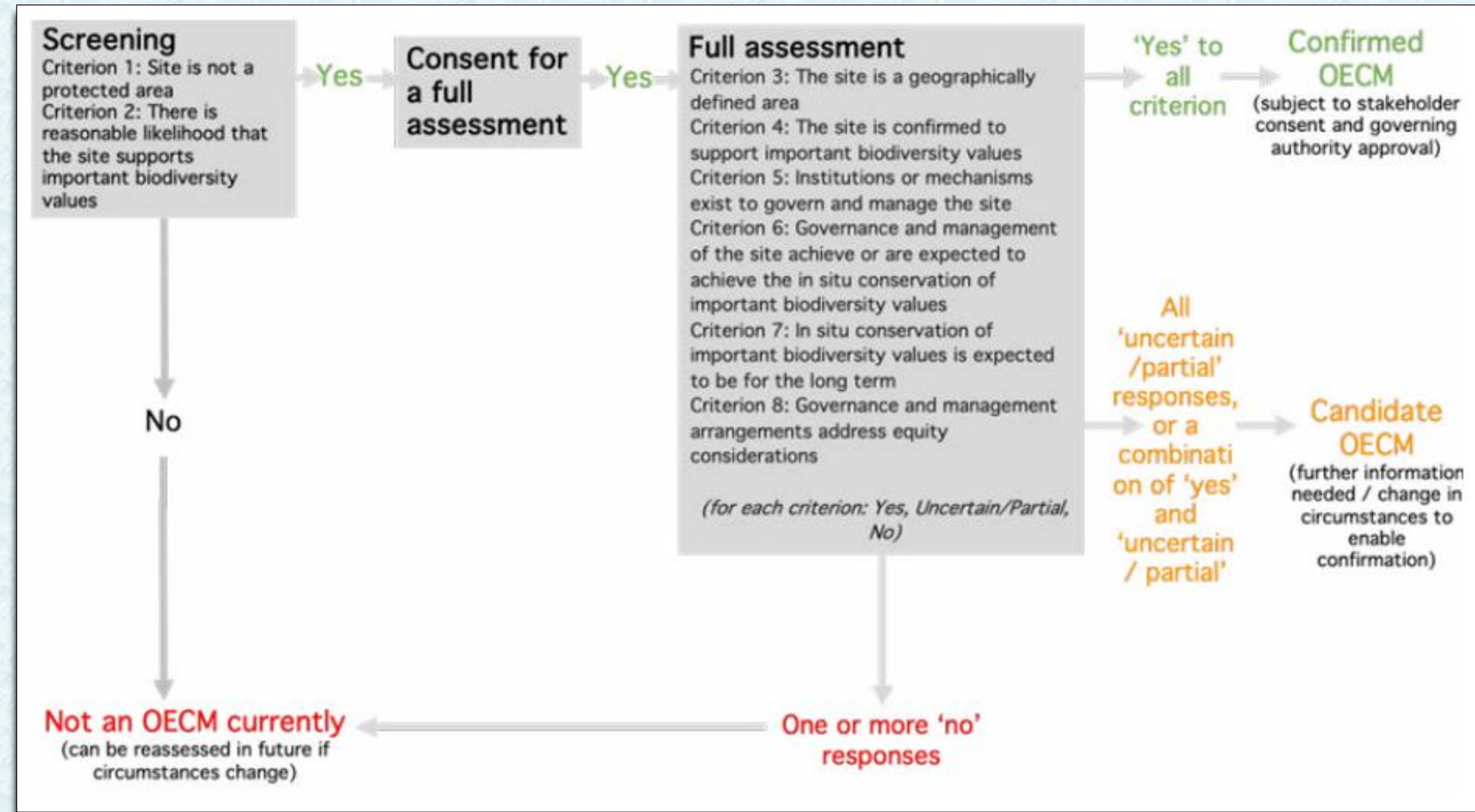


- Must not already be included within the national protected area network
- Evidence exists confirming:
  - Governance and management of the site achieves (or are expected to achieve) the in situ conservation of important biodiversity values
  - In situ conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long term
  - Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations



# When can Ramsar Sites or other wetlands be OECMs?

Use of the IUCN site-level tool for identifying (wetland) OECMs



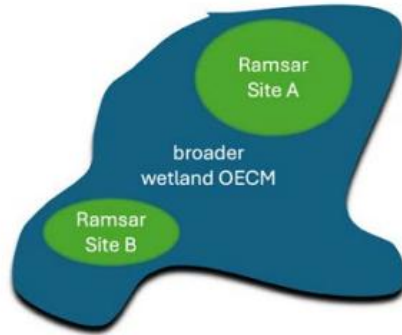
A wetland delivering in situ biodiversity conservation designated as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)		
may either be:		
officially designated nationally as a protected area and meets one or more of the international site designation criteria for Ramsar Sites	or	officially recognized nationally as an other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM) and meets one or more of the international site designation criteria for Ramsar Sites
protected through national legislation; effective management, equitable governance etc. in place.		meeting identification criteria through agreed screening methodology; effective management, equitable governance etc. in place.

A wetland delivering in situ biodiversity conservation that is not a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)		
may either be:		
officially designated nationally as a protected area (but does not meet any of the international site designation criteria for Ramsar Sites)	or	officially recognized nationally as an other effective area-based conservation measure (OECM) (but does not meet any of the international site designation criteria for Ramsar Sites)
protected through national legislation; effective management, equitable governance etc. in place.		meeting identification criteria through agreed screening methodology; effective management, equitable governance etc. in place.

Internationally-  
and nationally-  
important  
wetlands can  
be either  
protected areas  
or OECMs



**Scenario 1:**  
Ramsar Site(s) nested within a broader wetland OECM



1). Ecosystem-scale protection

**Examples of geographic relationships between protected areas and OECMs to achieve wetland conservation and wise use**

**Scenario 2:**  
Ramsar Site and wetland OECM adjacent to each other



2). Complementary e.g. improved hydrological management

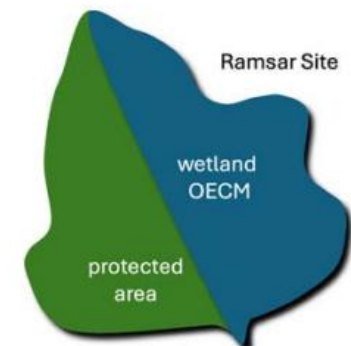
**Scenario 3:**  
Ramsar Site(s) and wetland OECM geographically separated from each other



3). Isolated but functionally-linked wetland biodiversity/hydrology

4). Mutually supportive mechanisms

**Scenario 4:**  
Ramsar Site formed partly as a protected area and partly as an OECM



# Key recommendations

- Careful site selection with a focus on biodiversity outcomes (for example alignment with KM-GBF Targets)
- Supporting investments into
  - Recognizing, reporting and managing wetlands OECMs
  - long-term effectiveness of governance and management. Strengthen existing local governance and management arrangements.
- Put in place systems for assessing management effectiveness of OECMs ( possible modification of R-METT tool)
- For Ramsar Sites likely to be designated as OECMs, the RIS may need to include additional data fields, which would create justification for the designation criteria.
- Incorporate OECMs in policies and multilateral agreements beyond those related to biodiversity
  - Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and others.



# CoP15 Draft Resolution (Doc.23.18)

- Highlights the important opportunity/role of OECMs in national wetland planning
- Recommends the value of integrating goals on the them in NBSAPs
- Highlights the role international financing mechanisms could help Contracting Parties to access funds to help identify and manage OECMs



15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties  
to the Convention on Wetlands

"Protecting wetlands for our common future"  
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23-31 July 2025

COP15 Doc.23.18

## Note from the Secretariat:

At its 64th meeting, the Standing Committee in Decision SC64-33 instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft resolution in document SC64 Doc.29.5 Rev.1 on *Achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)* to COP15 for its consideration, amended to take into account the inputs presented by the Committee.

## Draft resolution on achieving the equitable governance and effective conservation of wetlands as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

Submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Zimbabwe

1. NOTING WITH ALARM the ongoing loss and degradation of wetlands globally<sup>1</sup> and underlining that a substantial increase in and enhancement of the area of wetlands under equitable governance and effective conservation management is [important][critical] to address the loss and degradation of wetlands globally;
2. ACKNOWLEDGING that wetlands are important to address biodiversity loss, to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to support livelihoods, offering [an][a cost-effective] opportunity for social, economic and environmental benefits of return on investment from a range of public and private funding mechanisms as innovative approaches to addressing these challenges;
3. FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING [that the economic benefits of reversing wetland loss and degradation are greater than the cost of conserving and restoring these critical ecosystems<sup>2</sup> and] that there is an imperative need for increased funding, from all [available] sources, for wetland conservation and restoration;

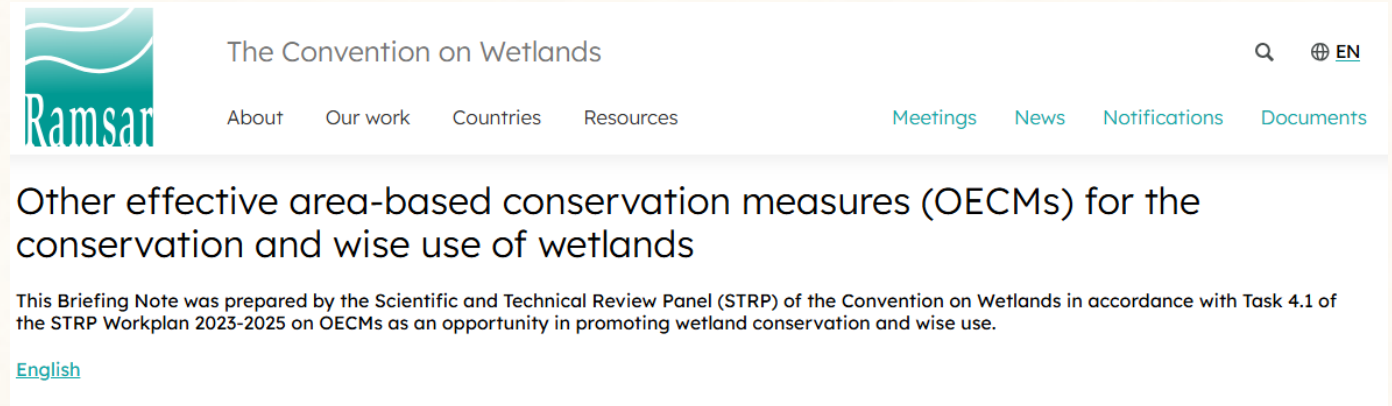
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# Access the Briefing Note on OECMs and wetlands

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<https://www.ramsar.org/document/other-effective-area-based-conservation-measures-oecms-conservation-wise-use-wetlands-0>