



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

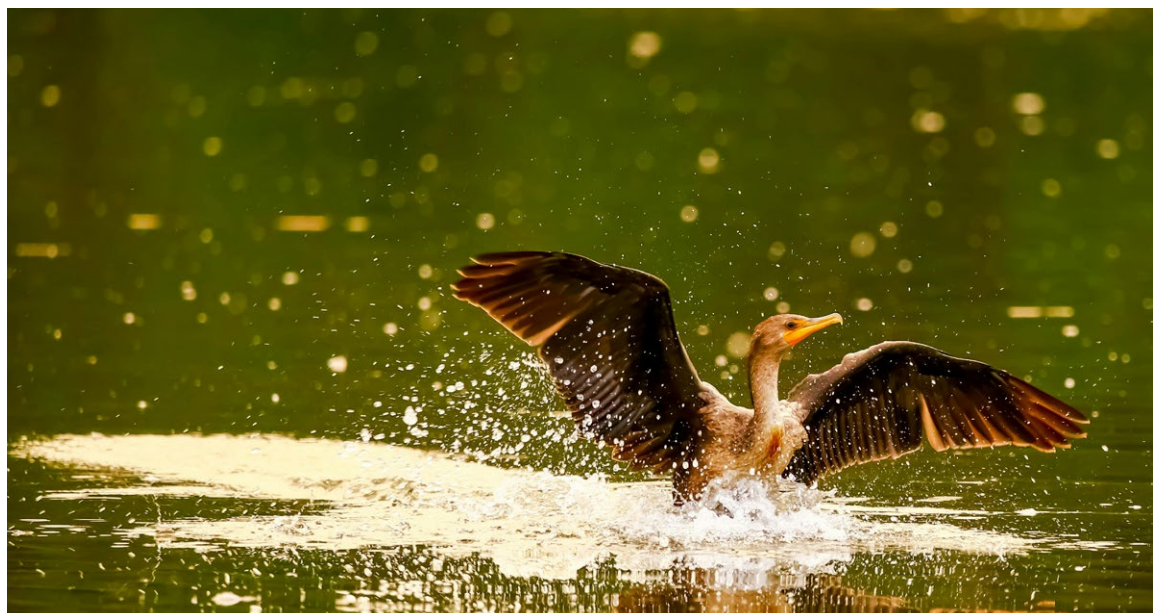
Purpose

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 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).



Background

This Briefing Note was 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".

Key messages

- **Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are an area-based conservation mechanism** that Contracting Parties and other stakeholders can use to identify and formally recognize geographic areas for in-situ conservation of biological diversity that are not already formally designated protected areas. In the context of wetlands, OECMs provide an important opportunity to further enhance in-situ conservation of wetland biological diversity and the wise use of wetlands.
- **The identification and recognition of OECMs provide a mechanism complementary to protected areas to deliver progress against the goals of the Convention on Wetlands** (including those set out in its Strategic Plan), Target 3 (the 30x30 target) and other targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), and inter-linked targets and objectives under other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and other international processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals, with a wetlands focus.
- **Wetlands that fulfil the identification criteria specified in Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8 can be recognized as OECMs.** The recognition and delineation (of the location and size) of OECMs must follow appropriate consultations, be based on free, prior and informed consent (especially when being designated within the territories of the Indigenous Peoples and local communities), use the best available scientific information as well as Indigenous and local knowledge, and be documented transparently by providing the necessary evaluation of their effectiveness, functionality and relevance in the context of Target 3 of the KM-GBF.
- **For Wetlands of International Importance to be recognized as a wetland OECM, these must not already be included within the national protected area network.** In addition, there needs to be evidence that the governance and management of the site achieve (or are expected to achieve) in-situ conservation of important biodiversity values for the long term, and the site governance and management arrangements address equity considerations.
- **To ensure that the OECM mechanism is used effectively for wetlands, it is essential that sites are selected with a focus on in-situ wetland biodiversity conservation outcomes.** Resources (human, financial and technical) would need to be made available to ensure long-term management effectiveness of the recognized sites. Systems for assessing the management effectiveness of wetland OECMs would need to be developed and implemented in collaboration with site managers.
- **Integrated conservation planning and management at broader geographic scales, using both OECMs and protected areas, can help conserve wetlands,** their associated biodiversity and the ecosystem services that benefit people, especially through improving the protection of wetlands and water resources which are physically or functionally linked. The opportunities and benefits of using both OECMs and protected areas in an integrated way in wetland landscapes and seascapes should be maximized.



Harvesting Water Hyacinth Plants, Vietnam
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Introduction

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are geographically defined areas that deliver effective, long-term in-situ biodiversity conservation outcomes, regardless of their management objective(s). They provide a mechanism complementary to protected areas, which can be used to achieve area-based conservation goals. The key distinction between protected areas and OECMs, is that the former have biodiversity conservation as a primary objective, while the latter are identified and defined purely by their effectiveness in conserving biodiversity, irrespective of their objectives (Dudley et al. 2018; IUCN, 2019). Therefore, OECMs may additionally be recognized as areas where conservation is a secondary objective, or where it is achieved even though it is not an objective (i.e. through delivering ancillary conservation outcomes).

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), adopted at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15), sets ambitious global area-based conservation targets, with Target 3 urging the conservation and effective management of at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services by 2030, through protected areas and OECMs, while also recognizing the role of Indigenous and traditional territories (also referred to as “30x30”). The increasing understanding of, and emphasis on, the opportunities provided by recognized OECMs has continued since the adoption of the CBD’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity Conservation 2011-2020, wherein the term was initially included in the then Aichi Biodiversity Target 11¹. Subsequently, the definition², guiding principles, common characteristics and criteria for identifying OECMs were adopted through Convention on Biological Diversity Decision 14/8³ at the 14th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in 2018.

The Standing Committee of the Convention on Wetlands, at its 57th meeting in 2019 (Decision SC57-27), recognized the importance of OECMs for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, advising the Secretariat to support National Focal Points to the Convention in communicating the importance of wetlands and the relevance of the Convention’s work to biodiversity, including inter alia, the opportunities of sharing knowledge and data available on Wetlands of International Importance (also known as Ramsar Sites) and OECMs to address efforts outside protected areas.

The Convention on Wetlands Technical Note on Responses to the “Global Wetland Outlook: State of the World’s Wetlands and their Services to People” of 2018 outlined the opportunity of recognizing wetlands as OECMs to complement the contribution of Wetlands of International Importance and other wetland protected areas to Aichi Biodiversity Target 11.

The Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, while setting the future priorities for the implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention for 2023-25 (Resolution XIV.14), recommended the development of guidance on OECMs as a complementary opportunity for promoting wetland conservation and wise use (while also recognizing the mandate set under Target 9 of the Convention on Wetlands 4th Strategic Plan 2016-2024, 2022 update), and tasked the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) to deliver this. The STRP has produced this Briefing Note in response, working in close collaboration with colleagues in the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Specialist Group on OECMs, and with contributions from Birdlife International and IUCN (International Organization Partners of the Convention on Wetlands), the Nature Conservancy, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN and other experts. It brings together and considers the existing work on the topic, providing specific guidance to Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands on the identification, conservation and effective management of wetlands as OECMs. Additionally, it explains how OECMs fit alongside protected areas as mechanisms to jointly achieve the KM-GBF Target 3 on 30x30 (and other relevant targets),⁴ and other national and international goals and targets in a wetlands context.

1 Aichi Target 11: By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes. (NB. emphasis added in bold).

2 An OECM is “a geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values”.

3 Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>.

4 CBD sets out that this “target calls for the expansion and enhancement of protected and conserved areas, (i.e. areas that

Wetlands as OECMs – to deliver in-situ conservation and wise use

There is a long history of managing defined geographic areas of landscapes and, more recently, seascapes for a range of ecological, cultural, political and socio-economic objectives.⁵ Protected areas⁶ have long been the cornerstone of biodiversity conservation (Watson et al. 2014), playing a vital role in maintaining key habitats, providing refugia, allowing for species migration and movement, ensuring the maintenance of natural processes across the landscape, and securing human well-being through their range of intrinsic, instrumental and relational values.

Yet, it is recognized that many areas outside the global network of protected areas also contribute to biodiversity conservation, whether or not they are being explicitly managed for it. This is particularly true for wetlands within a landscape/seascape, which are often extensively physically and functionally connected (e.g., through their hydrology and dependent and mobile biodiversity (e.g., fish, birds, invertebrates)). Often wetland areas under formal protection (i.e. through protected areas) are surrounded by unprotected areas. This can result in piecemeal and disconnected conservation approaches resulting in only partial conservation successes, and sub-optimal ecological character and wise use of wetlands. With the international community raising the ambition for area-based conservation (such as through Target 3 of the KM-GBF), the need for and the opportunity to use new complementary conservation mechanisms has become imperative (TNC, 2022).

OECMs provide an important opportunity to help stakeholders deliver this for wetlands. Figure 1 provides a simple summary of options for using OECMs and/or protected areas to deliver in-situ conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Protected areas and OECMs can be seen as complementary mechanisms to deliver wetland conservation and wise use at wider geographic and functionally linked scales e.g., at river catchment/basin scale, whole ecosystem-scale, inter-connected areas for migratory species and along linear features. The delivery of effective wetland (and wider water and landscape/seascape) management at scale for such hydrological and ecological objectives also creates enabling conditions for wetlands to deliver a wider range and better quality of ecosystem services.

Identifying areas as OECMs is a relatively new area-based conservation approach, which in a wetlands context, provides an important and much needed opportunity to increase the global area of wetlands under effective conservation and wise use (see Box 1), in line with the agreed international biodiversity, climate and sustainable development goals and targets. The OECM mechanism is designed to enable the identification, reporting, monitoring and strengthening of conservation efforts outside of protected areas. There are also many interconnected opportunities, through the identification and role of OECMs, to help deliver against other GBF targets, such as Target 2 on the restoration of degraded ecosystems and Target 4 on halting species extinction and protecting genetic diversity.

Another important element is that OECMs promote equitable partnerships for conservation by enabling a diverse range of stakeholders to be recognized and supported for their contributions to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services. This is especially important in some wetlands, such as in coastal wetlands e.g., intertidal wetlands, which are essential for a wide range of stakeholders and a large global human population who live and work in such wetlands and are dependent on these wetland coastal resources and ecosystem services for their livelihoods (Convention on Wetlands Resolution XIII.20). Also notably, a diverse range of area types can be recognized as OECMs, such as sacred sites, territories managed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs), biodiversity parks, historical wreck sites and others.

are managed with the aim of achieving positive outcomes for biodiversity).” The target outlines three approaches that may be used to achieve this aim (see <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/3>).

5 For an overview of area based conservation, see Chapters 3 and 4 of Dudley & Stolton (2020).

6 A “protected area” is defined in Article 2 of the Convention of Biological Diversity as “a geographically defined area, which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives”. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/convention/text>.

Box 1: The wise-use of wetlands under the Convention on Wetlands

The Convention on Wetlands provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including inland, coastal and marine, and human-made wetlands. Under the “three pillars” of the Convention on Wetlands, the Contracting Parties commit to: work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance and ensure their effective management; and cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.

The Convention defines wise use of wetlands as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. Ecological character is “the combination of ecosystem components, processes and services that characterize the wetland at a given point in time”.

The wetland wise use concept stands out as the longest-established example among intergovernmental processes of applying ecosystem approaches for the conservation and sustainable development of natural resources. Wise use acknowledges the critical linkages that exist between people and the sustainable development of natural resources and encourages stakeholder engagement and transparency in negotiating conservation-development trade-offs between different sectors and stakeholders and determining equitable outcomes for conservation.

Figure 1

Options for using OECMs and/or protected areas for Wetlands of International Importance or other important wetlands to deliver wetland conservation (and sustainable development, climate security, etc.) goals and contribute to the wise use of wetlands within a defined geographic area.

A wetland delivering in situ biodiversity conservation designated as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)			A wetland delivering in situ biodiversity conservation that is not a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)		
may either be:			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	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.	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.

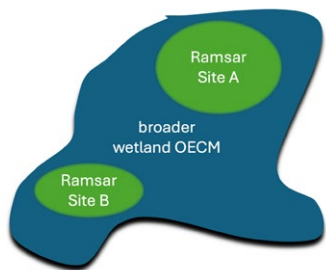
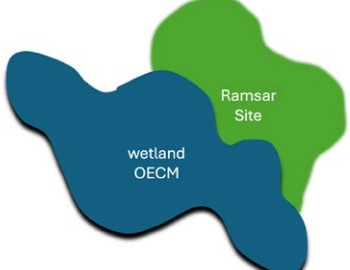
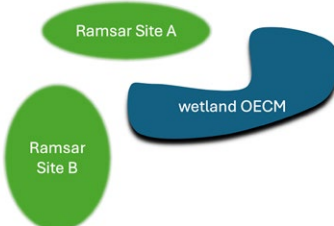
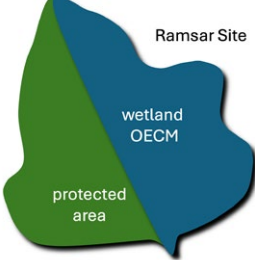
Wetlands would have to meet the identification criteria set out in Annex III B⁷ of CBD Decision 14/8 (see Table 1) to be recognized and officially reported as an OECM to the World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM), guided by the IUCN WCPA site-level tool for identifying OECMs. In cases where such wetlands are located within the territories of IPLCs, OECMs can be used to enable recognition that such governed ecosystems are also equally contributing to meeting the KM-GBF conservation goals and targets. In this way OECMs can encapsulate a broad array of rights-based approaches to conservation, making conservation more inclusive and equitable, respectful of human rights and considerate of the diversity of worldviews and legitimate management and governance approaches. Recognizing and reporting suitable managed and equitably governed wetlands as OECMs can also enable gap-filling in area-based conservation coverage, by including important other areas such as physically and functionally linked ecological corridors within and between networks of protected and conserved areas.

7 Annex III B of the Convention on Biological Diversity Decision 14/8. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>.

Figure 2 provides four examples of how protected areas and OECMs might operate together in any given location in the context of delivering in-situ conservation and wise use of wetlands, including the role of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

Figure 2

Examples of the potential geographic relationship between protected areas and OECMs to conserve wetlands in the landscape/seascape, including through Wetlands of International Importance.

<p>Scenario 1: Ramsar Site(s) nested within a broader wetland OECM</p>	<p>Scenario 2: Ramsar Site and wetland OECM adjacent to each other</p>
	
<p>Summary of scenario 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i). The Ramsar Site(s) could be either a protected area or an OECM. ii). The broader wetland OECM enables broader ecosystem scale protection (e.g. river basin / catchment area), to complement (and fully surround) existing Ramsar Site(s), towards delivery of the in situ conservation and wise use of wetland biodiversity, improved hydrological management etc. iii). There could also be other nationally designated wetland protected areas and/or wetland OECMs located in the landscape / seascape, which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use (in any manner of linked ways). iv). Other area-based protections, including Indigenous and community conserved areas, may also be located in the landscape/seascape which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use. These areas could be recognised as OECMs. 	<p>Summary of scenario 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i). The Ramsar Site could be either a protected area or an OECM. ii). The wetland OECM and the Ramsar Site join together with a partial common border to complement and mutually support delivery of the in situ conservation and wise use of wetland biodiversity, improved hydrological management etc. iii). There could also be other nationally designated wetland protected areas and/or wetland OECMs located in the landscape / seascape, which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use (in any manner of linked ways). iv). Other area-based protections, including Indigenous and community conserved areas, may also be located in the landscape / seascape which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use. These areas could be recognised as OECMs.
<p>Scenario 3: Ramsar Site(s) and wetland OECM geographically separated from each other</p>	<p>Scenario 4: Ramsar Site formed partly as a protected area and partly as an OECM</p>
	
<p>Summary of scenario 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i). The Ramsar Site(s) could be either a protected area or an OECM. ii). The wetland OECM and the Ramsar Site(s) are geographically isolated but could be contributing to the in situ conservation and wise use of functionally-linked wetland biodiversity and hydrology etc. iii). There could also be other nationally designated wetland protected areas and/or wetland OECMs located in the landscape / seascape, which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use (in any manner of linked ways). iv). Other area-based protections, including Indigenous and community conserved areas, may also be located in the landscape / seascape which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use. These areas could be recognised as OECMs. 	<p>Summary of scenario 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i). The Ramsar Site is formed partly as a protected area and partly as an OECM. ii). The protected area and wetland OECM are joined together by a common partial border. These mutually support delivery of the in situ conservation and wise use of wetland biodiversity, improved hydrological management etc. iii). There could also be other nationally designated wetland protected areas and/or wetland OECMs located in the landscape / seascape, which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use (in any manner of linked ways). iv). Other area-based protections, including Indigenous and community conserved areas, may also be located in the landscape / seascape which contribute to the in situ wetland conservation and wise use. These areas could be recognised as OECMs.

Identifying wetland OECMs

Wetland OECMs are able to deliver effective conservation by maintaining the ecological character and wise use in a number of settings. These could include:

- areas that meet the definition of a protected area but where the governing authority does not want to designate them as protected areas due to the existing socio-political situation or other circumstances;
- wetlands where the long-term in-situ biodiversity conservation is a secondary management objective, a by-product of management interventions not intended primarily to conserve wetlands;
- wetlands managed for objectives other than biodiversity conservation but which can still deliver long-term in-situ conservation outcomes, thus providing ancillary conservation e.g., reservoirs and water impoundment structures built to meet water requirements for agriculture and drinking water supply may also serve as habitats for wetland-dependent species such as migratory waterbirds and fish; or
- the protection of sacred and/or heritage sites containing wetlands, which also provide in-situ conservation of wetlands and/or wetland-dependent taxa.

CBD Decision 14/8 Annex III B outlines four criteria (and ten sub-criteria) adopted by Contracting Parties to the CBD for the identification of OECMs (see Table 1). Annex 1 presents these CBD criteria and sub-criteria, with additional information and guidance to contextualize their application for wetland OECMs.

Table 1. Criteria for identification of OECMs (from Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8) considered in a wetland-specific context.

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ⁸	
Criterion A.1 Not a protected area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The area is not currently recognized or reported as a protected area or part of a protected area; it may have been established for another function.
Criterion B.1 Geographically defined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Size and area are described, including in three dimensions where necessary. ■ Boundaries are geographically delineated.
Criterion B.2 Legitimate governance authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance has legitimate authority - and is appropriate for achieving in-situ conservation of biodiversity within the area. ■ Governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities is self-identified in accordance with national legislation and applicable international obligations. ■ Governance reflects the equity considerations⁹ adopted in the Convention. ■ Governance may be by a single authority and/or organization or through collaboration among relevant authorities and provides the ability to address threats collectively.
Criterion B.3 Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the conservation of biological diversity. ■ Relevant authorities and stakeholders are identified and involved in management. ■ A management system is in place that contributes to sustaining the <i>in-situ</i> conservation of biodiversity. ■ Management is consistent with the ecosystem approach with the ability to adapt to achieve expected biodiversity conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and including the ability to manage a new threat.

⁸ Reproduced from Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>.

⁹ Paragraph 9 of Annex II to CBD Decision 14/8 enlists three equity dimensions: recognition (the acknowledgement of and respect for the rights and the diversity of identities, values and institutions of right holders and stakeholders), procedure (the inclusiveness of rule and decision-making) and distribution (the costs and benefits resulting from the management of protected areas is equitably shared among different actors).

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs⁸

Criterion C.1 Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The area achieves, or is expected to achieve, positive and sustained outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. ■ Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated ones are addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems. ■ Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, are in place to recognize and respond to new threats. ■ To the extent relevant and possible, management inside and outside the other effective area-based conservation measure is integrated.
Criterion C.2 Sustained over long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The other effective area-based conservation measures are in place for the long term or are likely to be. ■ “Sustained” pertains to continuity of governance and management and “long term” pertains to the biodiversity outcome.
Criterion C.3 In-situ conservation of biological diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures is expected to include the identification of the range of biodiversity attributes for which the site is considered important (i.e. communities of rare, threatened or endangered species, representative natural ecosystems, range restricted species, key biodiversity areas, areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services, areas for ecological connectivity).
Criterion C.4 Information and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identification of other effective area-based conservation measures should, to the extent possible, document the known biodiversity attributes, as well as, where relevant, cultural and/or spiritual values, of the area and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness. ■ A monitoring system informs management on the effectiveness of measures with respect to biodiversity, including the health of ecosystems. ■ Processes should be in place to evaluate the effectiveness of governance and management, including with respect to equity. ■ General data of the area such as boundaries, aim and governance are available information.
Criterion D.1 Ecosystem functions and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ecosystem functions and services are supported, including those of importance to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, for other effective area-based conservation measures concerning their territories, taking into account interactions and trade-offs among ecosystem functions and services, with a view to ensuring positive biodiversity outcomes and equity. ■ Management to enhance one particular ecosystem function or service does not impact negatively on the sites overall biological diversity.
Criterion D.2 Cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic and other locally relevant values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance and management measures identify, respect and uphold the cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values of the area, where such values exist. ■ Governance and management measures respect and uphold the knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity.

The CBD¹⁰ and IUCN guidelines (IUCN-WCPA Task Force on OECMs, 2019) suggest that these CBD criteria, while applicable across all ecosystems (currently or potentially important for biodiversity), are to be applied on a case-to-case basis and in a flexible way. Furthermore, the CBD Decision also places certain expectations on the identification process, by suggesting that the recognition of OECMs and delineation of their location and size:

- a. follows appropriate consultation with relevant governance authorities, landowners, rights holders, stakeholders and the public;
- b. when within the territories of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, should be on the basis of self-identification and with their free, prior and informed consent,

¹⁰ See Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8 from 2018. Available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>.

and consistent with national policies, regulations and circumstances, and applicable international obligations;

- c. uses the best available scientific information, and Indigenous and local knowledge, used in line with international obligations and frameworks, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- d. is documented in a transparent manner for providing relevant evaluation of the effectiveness, functionality and relevance in the context of Target 3 of the KM-GBF.

The CBD criteria are to be applied sequentially for identifying an OECM. Primarily, the sites need to be outside protected area networks, and there is reasonable likelihood that the site supports, in this case, important wetland biodiversity values. Other criteria can be subsequently tested. The IUCN WCPA's site-level tool (Jonas et al. 2023) for identifying OECMs can be used to assess whether a managed wetland meets the OECM identification criteria and can then be recognized and reported as such. The assessment tool comprises the following three steps:

Step 1 - Screening: Basic information is used to determine whether a site is a potential OECM. This is done by confirming that the site is not a protected area (Criterion 1¹¹, CBD Criterion A.1)) and there is a reasonable likelihood that the site supports important biodiversity values¹² (Criterion 2, CBD Criterion C.3);

Step 2 - Consent: This involves seeking confirmation from the governing authority, IPLCs and other rights-holders for proceeding with full assessment of a candidate site for suitability for recognition as OECM. The site is to be considered as a candidate OECM only if consent has been received from the governing and managing entities; and

Step 3 - Full assessment: Candidate sites (meeting the filters set in Step 1 and 2) undergo a full assessment containing the following six criteria (with response recorded either as “yes”, “uncertain / partial”, or “no”:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Criterion 3: | The site is a geographically defined area (CBD Criterion B.1) |
| Criterion 4: | The site is confirmed to support important biodiversity values (CBD Criterion C.3); |
| Criterion 5: | Institutions or mechanisms exist to govern and manage the site (CBD Criteria B.2, C.4); |
| Criterion 6: | Governance and management of the site achieve or are expected to achieve the in-situ conservation of important biodiversity values (CBD Criteria B.4, C.1); |
| Criterion 7: | In-situ conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long term (CBD Criterion C.2); and |
| Criterion 8: | Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations (CBD Criterion B.3). |

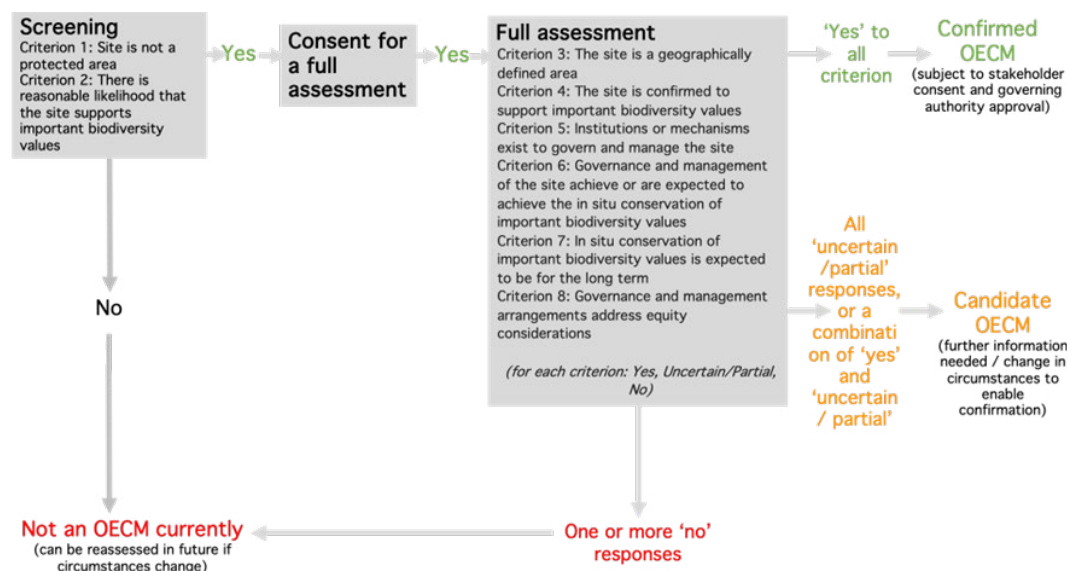
A site with a “yes” response to the six criteria is a confirmed OECM (which can then be recognized and reported as an OECM subject to stakeholder consent and approval), while those with a combination of “yes” and “uncertain/partial” responses, or with all “uncertain/partial” responses, remains a candidate OECM, which can be firmed up on the basis of additional information or changes in circumstances against any of the above-mentioned criteria. A site with one or more “no” responses is unsuitable to be recognized as an OECM. This can, however, be reassessed in the future if the situation against the criteria for which no response has been received has changed.

Figure 3 provides further details on the key steps and considerations required to establish a geographically defined area as an OECM, based on the criteria set out in the IUCN site screening tool.

11 The criteria in this section are those listed in Jonas et al. (2023) – the IUCN site-level tool for identifying OECMs. Provided alongside these are the corresponding criteria recommended by the CBD, which are referred to with a letter prefix.

12 Meets at least one of the following: (a) Rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems; (b) Natural ecosystems that are under-represented in protected area networks; (c) High level of ecological integrity or intactness; (d) Significant populations/extent of endemic or range-restricted species or ecosystems; (e) Important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas; and, (f) Importance for ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a larger area.

Figure 3
Flow chart highlighting the steps for screening sites as potential OECMs (based on the IUCN site-level tool for identifying OECMs).



Case Studies - identifying wetlands as potential OECMs in national assessments

Several countries have undertaken national assessments to identify potential OECMs and have encouragingly included wetlands in such assessments. A country level assessment by South Africa to determine the type and potential extent of OECMs was published in 2020, wherein several wetlands lying within different governance arrangements have been identified as potential OECM sites (Marnewick et al. 2021). In 2022, the Government of India introduced criteria and guidelines for identifying OECMs and included wetlands as one of the three primary categories (Government of India, 2022). A stocktaking report on OECMs in China published in 2024 (Zhang et al. 2024) proposed a potential OECM “hierarchy” in relation to China’s spatial planning system, especially their “Ecological Red Lines” concept, which encompasses over 20 potential OECM categories. The 19 case studies featured in the report include wetlands within varied governance arrangements, for example Chenghai Wetland in Yunnan Province (managed by Chenghai Wetland Administration of Yongsheng County), Yunqiao Wetland in Chengdu, Sichuan (managed by the Department of Ecology and Environment in Pidu District, Chengdu). Relevant also are the IUCN video of the South African OECM wetland case study,¹³ and case studies in Moberg et al. (2024).

Wetlands of International Importance as OECMs

The Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands designate wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance “to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits/services”. These sites qualify under at least one of the nine Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria.¹⁴ A mapping of the CBD Criterion C.3 (In-situ conservation of biological diversity) with the Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria is in Table 2 below.

¹³ IUCN YouTube channel: Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeLh83jnh9U&t=91s>.

¹⁴ The nine designation criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance are grouped into two. Group A criteria address sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types. Group B criteria address sites with international importance in conserving global biological diversity. Available at: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ramsarsites_criteria_eng.pdf.

Table 2. Mapping¹⁵ of the Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria against the CBD OECM Criterion C.3 (from Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8) in establishing areas important for the in-situ conservation of biological diversity.

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>

In countries wherein Wetlands of International Importance are placed within the national protected area network through a specific policy mandate, legal arrangement(s) or otherwise - these cannot also be recognized and reported as OECMs, as per CBD Criterion A.1. In cases where Wetlands of International Importance are not designated as a protected area or recognized as an OECM, they cannot feasibly be counted towards achieving the Target 3 (the 30x30 target) of the KM-GBF.

¹⁵ The mapping is indicative and not necessarily comprehensive. It is possible that other Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria overlap with the CBD OECM criteria.

Contracting Parties are expected to manage their Wetlands of International Importance so as to maintain their ecological character and retain their essential functions and values for future generations.

Article 3.1 of the Convention on Wetlands specifies that “Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List” as well as promoting the wise use of all the wetlands in their territory (thus aligned with CBD Criteria B.4, C.1, C.2 and C.3). Resolution V.7 and Resolution VIII.14 call for management plans for all Wetlands of International Importance, with appropriate support and funds for implementation and training of staff, and including a monitoring programme with indicators on the Site’s ecological character (thus aligned with CBD Criteria C.3, C.4, D.1 and D.2, when the detailed guidelines for management planning for wetlands are considered).

According to Article 3.2 of the Convention on Wetlands, “Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.” Contracting Parties commit to inform the Secretariat of such changes (alignment with CBD Criterion C.4).

In countries/cases wherein the Wetlands of International Importance are not included within the national protected area network and wherein institutions exist to manage and govern the site (CBD Criterion B.2, C.4), for these sites to be considered as OECMs, they would need to provide evidence for the following:

- Governance and management of the site achieve or are expected to achieve the in-situ conservation of important biodiversity values (CBD Criteria B.4, C.1);
- In-situ conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long term (CBD Criterion C.2); and
- Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations (CBD Criterion B.3).

To facilitate a seamless evaluation of Wetlands of International Importance as potential OECMs, especially those not currently formally protected within the national protected area network, it may be useful to create an additional section in the existing Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) format wherein the information needed for OECM evaluation (*sensu* IUCN-WCPA site-level tool for identification of OECMs) is included. The information on documenting important biodiversity values is largely already captured in the current format.



Great Blue Heron © Ganesh photography

Governing and managing wetlands OECMs

The OECM criteria demand specific considerations for how the identified and recognized sites are governed and managed. The Convention on Wetlands has a well-developed site management toolkit which can be deployed to address these considerations¹⁶. At the core are the guidelines on management planning for Wetlands of International Importance and other wetlands (Resolution VIII.14), which call for a participatory and inclusive management process, adaptability to address existing and emerging threats, and integrating site management within broad-scale environmental management planning, including river basin and coastal zone management. A mapping of the various Resolutions and tools of the Convention on Wetlands with the suggested management and governance characteristics of OECMs is presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Mapping of the Resolutions and tools of the Convention on Wetlands with the suggested management and governance characteristics of OECMs as set out by the CBD.

OECM recommendations (of the CBD ¹⁷) for site management and governance	Available guidance and tools of the Convention on Wetlands
Management and Governance Principles	
(a) Consistency with the ecosystem approach with the ability to adapt to achieve expected biodiversity conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and including the ability to manage a new threat.	<p>Wise use entails the application of ecosystem approaches for the maintenance of wetland ecological character.¹⁸</p> <p>Within the context of ecosystem approaches, planning processes for promoting the delivery of wetland ecosystem services are to be formulated and implemented in the context of the maintenance or enhancement, as appropriate, of wetland ecological character at appropriate spatial and temporal scales.</p> <p>Resolution VII.10: Wetland Risk Assessment Framework describes a framework for assessing existing and emerging risks to wetland ecological character.</p>
(b) Reflecting the equity considerations adopted in the Convention.	<p>Application of equity considerations in various aspects of wise use are discussed in related resolutions such as: An Integrated Framework for the Convention on Wetlands water-related guidance (Resolution IX.1 Annex C), Principles for the planning and management of urban and peri-urban wetlands (Resolution XI.11), An Integrated Framework for linking wetland conservation and wise use with poverty eradication (Resolution XI.13), and</p> <p>Wetland issues in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) (Resolution VIII.4). Guidance on gender equality is available at https://www.ramsar.org/document/gender-equality-and-sustainability-worlds-wetlands</p>

16 The Wetlands of International Importance Management Toolkit. Available at <https://www.ramsar.org/resources/capacity-building-tools/ramsar-sites-management-toolkit>.

17 Drawn from Sections A and B of Annex II of CBD Decision 14/8.

18 For detailed guidance on wetlands wise use, refer to Convention on Wetlands Handbook 1: Wise Use of wetlands. Available at <https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/hbk4-01.pdf>.

OECD recommendations (of the CBD ¹⁷) for site management and governance	Available guidance and tools of the Convention on Wetlands
(c) To the extent relevant and possible, management inside and outside the other effective area-based conservation measure is integrated.	<p>Wetlands of International Importance management guidelines (Resolution VIII.14) recommend that the management plans should be integrated into the public development planning system at local, regional or national level. The integration of site management plans into spatial and economic planning at the appropriate level will ensure implementation, public participation and local ownership.</p> <p>The guidelines also recognize that site-based management planning should be one element of a multi-scalar approach to wise use planning and management and should be linked with broad-scale landscape and ecosystem planning, including at the integrated river basin and coastal zone scales, because policy and planning decisions at these scales will affect the conservation and wise use of wetland sites.</p>
(d) Cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values of the area, where such values exist are identified, respected and upheld.	<p>The significance of recognizing multiple values in planning and decision-making for wetlands is well-recognized within the Convention on Wetlands and articulated in Policy Brief 2 (Convention on Wetlands, 2017) (integrating multiple wetland values in decision-making). Key recommendations are: a) Policy-makers and practitioners (such as site managers) should recognize the multiple values of wetlands, and reflect them in their decisions, policies and actions; b) Assessments of the multiple values of wetlands must include a recognition and consideration of a range of different value systems; c) Multiple wetland values need to inform collaborative, cross-sectoral efforts. The different sectors engaged in wetland governance should communicate and collaborate to ensure that these multiple wetland values are recognized, and d) Assessments of the multiple values of wetlands should follow credible, legitimate and relevant processes if they are to be accepted and have an impact on policy.</p> <p>The significance and actions for taking into account cultural values of wetlands in planning and decision making are discussed in Resolution VII.8 (1999) on Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and Resolutions VIII.19 (2002) and IX.21 (2005) on integrating cultural values in wetland management.</p>
(e) Knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity are respected and upheld.	<p>The wetland management guidance acknowledges the value of all forms of knowledge, all practices (with particular emphasis on practices of IPLCs), and local institutions, and recommends their incorporation and strengthening. Additional guidance is also contained in Resolution VIII.36: Participatory Environmental Management (PEM) as a tool for management and wise use of wetlands.</p>

OECM recommendations (of the CBD ¹⁷) for site management and governance	Available guidance and tools of the Convention on Wetlands
Management and Governance Outcomes	
(a) Ecosystem functions and services are supported, including those of importance to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, for other effective area-based conservation measures concerning their territories, taking into account interactions and trade-offs among ecosystem functions and services, with a view to ensuring positive biodiversity outcomes and equity.	The Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands adopted as Annex A to Resolution IX.1 (A Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character) recognizes that societal choice is inherent in advancing human well-being and poverty alleviation, which depends on the maintenance of ecosystem benefits/services. Pressures to follow sustainable development precepts, and to maintain environmental, economic and social sustainability in land use decisions, encourage “trade-offs” between individual and collective interests. Furthermore, within the context of ecosystem approaches, planning processes for promoting the delivery of wetland ecosystem services are to be formulated and implemented in the context of the maintenance or enhancement, as appropriate, of wetland ecological character at appropriate spatial and temporal scales. Further guidance is also included in Resolution X.18 (The application of response options from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) within the Convention on Wetlands Wise Use Toolkit) and Resolution XIII.15 (Cultural values and practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and their contribution to climate-change mitigation and adaptation in wetlands).
Management and Governance Process	
(a) Relevant authorities and stakeholders are identified and involved in management.	The Convention recommends that the wetland management, and particularly the planning process, should be as inclusive as possible. Legitimate stakeholders, particularly Indigenous Peoples and local communities, should be strongly encouraged to take an active role in planning and in the joint management of sites. The guidelines also recommend that if necessary, appropriate incentives to ensure full stakeholder participation should be identified and applied. Further guidance on involving Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the participatory management of wetlands is contained in the guidelines adopted by the Convention on Wetlands Resolution VII.8: Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities’ and indigenous people’s participation in the management of wetlands.
(b) Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated ones are addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems. Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, are in place to recognize and respond to new threats.	The Convention has developed this conceptual framework for wetland risk assessment to assist its Contracting Parties with predicting and assessing change in ecological character of Wetlands of International Importance and other wetlands. This Framework provides guidance on how to go about predicting and assessing change in the ecological character of wetlands and promotes, in particular, the usefulness of early warning systems. The Wetland Risk Assessment Framework (Resolution VII.10) is an integral component of the management planning processes for wetlands.

OECD recommendations (of the CBD ¹⁷) for site management and governance	Available guidance and tools of the Convention on Wetlands
<p>(c) A monitoring system informs management on the effectiveness of measures with respect to biodiversity, including the health of ecosystems.</p> <p>Identification of other effective area-based conservation measures should, to the extent possible, document the known biodiversity attributes, as well as, where relevant, cultural and/or spiritual values, of the area and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness.</p>	<p>Resolution IX.1 Annex E: An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring (IF-WIAM) and Wetlands of International Importance Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (Resolution XII.15) provide guidance on designing wetlands monitoring systems, including management effectiveness evaluation systems. However, given the focus of assessing conservation outcomes in OECMs, there is a case for working on upgrading these tools, such as using the approach set out in the IUCN Green List Standard¹⁹ (of Protected and Conserved Areas).</p>



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¹⁹ IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas: <https://iucn.org/resources/conservation-tool/iucn-green-list-protected-and-conserved-areas> and <https://iucngreenlist.org/>.

Recommendations

Identification and recognition of managed wetlands as OECMs provides a unique and significant opportunity for in-situ biodiversity conservation and wise use of wetlands, and complements the existing protected areas network by recognizing the role of diverse governance and management arrangements towards this objective.

To ensure the benefits of recognizing wetlands as OECMs are achieved, it is important that the:

1. Selection of managed wetlands as OECMs is undertaken carefully and rigorously, on a site-by-site basis, and with a focus on identifying sites (in addition to protected areas) with a reasonable likelihood of supporting important biodiversity values and achieving positive and sustained in-situ biodiversity conservation outcomes. Otherwise, there is a risk that low biodiversity value sites may be recognized in order to increase the geographic area counted and reported towards the 30x30 target (Target 3) under the KM-GBF, whilst the sites really needing protection remain exposed to threats and unprotected. Site selection should also consider the current and likely future risks induced by climate change on the important biodiversity values of the site and take into account the necessary risk reduction measures in the site management arrangements.
2. Recognizing wetland OECMs is followed by necessary financial and other resourcing investments into ensuring long-term management effectiveness and governance equity, so that the conservation of in-situ wetland biodiversity is sustained over the long term.
3. Systems for assessing the effectiveness of OECMs in wetlands are developed and deployed to generate evidence of positive outcomes for in-situ biodiversity conservation. The R-METT tool may need to be expanded to cover the OECM recognition and management aspects, including using approaches set out in the IUCN Green List Standard. This will require guidelines to be informed by principles of procedural equity and tailored to different types of managed area.
4. Recognition of wetland OECMs must strengthen existing local governance and management arrangements rather than displacing or substantially altering the existing ones.
5. To provide scope for Wetlands of International Importance to be recognized as OECMs (in situations where sites are not included in national protected area systems), the RIS format may need to be revised in order to include additional data fields, which would enable the reporting of relevant evidence under the OECM site selection criteria.
6. Funding for identifying, reporting and managing wetland OECMs is made available to prevent these costs from becoming a barrier or burden for under-resourced stakeholders.
7. Recognition, effective management and equitable governance of wetland OECMs must be incorporated in national policies. Their role and importance should also be recognized in multilateral agreements and processes beyond those solely related to biodiversity (e.g., the CBD, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on Wetlands), including the Sustainable Development Goals, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and others, given the importance for in-situ biodiversity conservation and the multiple benefit opportunities e.g., ecosystem services these areas can provide to society.

OECMs are a relatively recent development, and the full range of implications is yet to be assessed. It is therefore recommended that the Secretariat and the National Focal Points of the Convention on Wetlands closely liaise with their counterparts of the Convention on Biological Diversity through appropriate mechanisms to share experiences and lessons, and further evolve supporting tools and guidance for their effective implementation.

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

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion A: Area is not currently recognized as a protected area		
Criterion A.1 Not a protected area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is not currently recognized or reported as a protected area or part of a protected area; it may have been established for another function. 	<p>Wetland(s) located outside any formally notified protected area network.</p> <p>Part of wetland is outside a protected area, where the wetland spans beyond any existing notified protected area.</p> <p>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.</p>
Criterion B: Area is governed and managed		
Criterion B.1 Geographically defined space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boundaries are geographically delineated. Size and area are described, including in three dimensions where necessary. 	<p>Managed wetland boundary is known, mapped (and defined on the basis of wetland indicators, customary boundaries, or administrative limits) and agreed with the governance authority or actor (e.g., Indigenous Peoples and local communities), as relevant.</p> <p>The wetland size and configuration is appropriate for maintaining and managing its important wetland biodiversity values (also refer to Criterion C.3, C.1 and B.4).</p>

²⁰ Reproduced from Annex III B of CBD Decision 14/8.

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion B.2 Legitimate governance authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance has legitimate authority - and is appropriate for achieving in-situ conservation of biodiversity within the area. ■ Governance by Indigenous Peoples and local communities is self-identified in accordance with national legislation and applicable international obligations. ■ Governance may be by a single authority and/or organization or through collaboration among relevant authorities and provides the ability to address threats collectively. ■ Governance reflects the equity considerations²¹ adopted in the Convention. 	<p>Mandate to govern and manage the wetland is held by any of the following with due legitimacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One or more governance authority ■ Indigenous Peoples and local communities ■ Private entity (individual, group or organisation) ■ A shared governance arrangement including two or more entities involved on the basis of a collective agreement or division of roles and responsibilities e.g., from those entities referenced above. <p>Governance arrangement has the ability to address the human-induced threats on the wetland's ecological character.</p> <p>For sites with more than one governing authority, there is a demonstrated (including potential for) governance and management approach to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ efforts to address equity (recognition, procedure and distribution) through policies, mechanisms or actions, or other means; and ■ a reasonable likelihood of increasingly equitable outcomes in the future.

21 CBD Decision 14/8 paragraph 8 enlists three equity dimensions: recognition (the acknowledgement of and respect for the rights and the diversity of identities, values and institutions of right holders and stakeholders), procedure (the inclusiveness of rule and decision-making) and distribution (the costs and benefits resulting from the management of protected areas is equitably shared among different actors).

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion B.3 Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained outcomes for the conservation of biological diversity. ■ Relevant authorities and stakeholders are identified and involved in management. ■ A management system is in place that contributes to sustaining the <i>in-situ</i> conservation of biodiversity. ■ Management is consistent with the ecosystem approach with the ability to adapt to achieve expected biodiversity conservation outcomes, including long-term outcomes, and including the ability to manage a new threat. 	<p>A site where existing governance and management arrangements ensure wetland wise use²² and maintenance of ecological character.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In a wetland where mitigation of human-induced adverse pressure on ecological character is constrained by limited capacity or resources, there is a reasonable likelihood that these additional resources will be available within a time frame that will allow effective management.</p> <p>A wetland with no human-induced pressures identified but where capacity or a mechanism exists to identify and respond to possible future threats on the ecological character of the wetland(s).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>A wetland where full or partial ecological restoration is planned or ongoing, and there is evidence (or a reasonable expectation) of a long-term positive conservation outcome.</p> <p>A wetland where management measures have an overall net positive impact on biodiversity.</p>

²² Wise use of wetlands is defined by the Convention on Wetlands as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development".

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion C: Achieves sustained and effective contribution to in-situ conservation of biodiversity		
Criterion C.1 Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The area achieves, or is expected to achieve, positive and sustained outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. ■ Threats, existing or reasonably anticipated ones are addressed effectively by preventing, significantly reducing or eliminating them, and by restoring degraded ecosystems. ■ Mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and regulations, are in place to recognize and respond to new threats. ■ To the extent relevant and possible, management inside and outside the other effective area-based conservation measure is integrated. 	<p>Wetland management is in place and sufficient for in-situ conservation of biodiversity.</p> <p>Wetland management recognizes human-induced threats to ecological character, and includes measures for preventing, reducing or managing these threats.</p> <p>Wetland management is structured in an adaptive management approach, which allows for evaluation of existing threats, as well as recognition of new and emerging threats.</p> <p>Wetland management is integrated with conservation and development planning at the river basin and coastal zone level, and the wider economic development planning for the region.</p>
Criterion C.2 Sustained over long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The other effective area-based conservation measures are in place for the long term or are likely to be. ■ “Sustained” pertains to continuity of governance and management and “long term” pertains to the biodiversity outcome. 	<p>The objectives for wetland management are set for long term, and mechanisms for sustained management continuity have been identified, or are already in place.</p> <p>Long-term refers to the idea that an OECM is expected to deliver in-situ conservation of biodiversity in perpetuity and not be temporary or time limited.</p>

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion C.3 In-situ conservation of biological diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognition of other effective area-based conservation measures is expected to include the identification of the range of biodiversity attributes for which the site is considered important (i.e. communities of rare, threatened or endangered species, representative natural ecosystems, range restricted species, key biodiversity areas, areas providing critical ecosystem functions and services, areas for ecological connectivity). 	<p>Available information indicates reasonable likelihood that the wetland supports at least one of the following important biodiversity values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems (b) natural ecosystems that are under-represented in protected area networks (c) high level of ecological integrity or intactness (d) significant populations/extent of endemic or range-restricted species or ecosystems (e) important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas (f) importance for ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in larger areas <p>The wetland meets one of the Wetlands of International Importance designation criteria for designation as a Wetland of International Importance</p> <p>Wetland is already recognized under an international biodiversity designation or system (e.g., Key Biodiversity Area, Important Bird Area, UNESCO Man and Biosphere site, and others)</p> <p>Wetland is recognized as a nationally important biodiversity site (considering nationally rare, endemic, representative species or ecological communities, and others)</p>

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion C.4 Information and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Identification of other effective area-based conservation measures should, to the extent possible, document the known biodiversity attributes, as well as, where relevant, cultural and/or spiritual values, of the area and the governance and management in place as a baseline for assessing effectiveness. ■ A monitoring system informs management on the effectiveness of measures with respect to biodiversity, including the health of ecosystems. ■ Processes should be in place to evaluate the effectiveness of governance and management, including with respect to equity. ■ General data of the area such as boundaries, aim and governance are available information. 	<p>A monitoring system is in place (or is planned), which is capable of evaluating the status of, and trends in, the biodiversity of the wetland(s), as a part of monitoring to assess ecological character and any changes in it.</p> <p>A system for Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) is in place (or planned), using tools and standards such as the R-METT, the IUCN Green List Standard, or others adopted under the KM-GBF monitoring framework etc.</p>
Criterion D: Associated ecosystem functions and services and cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values		
Criterion D.1 Ecosystem functions and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ecosystem functions and services are supported, including those of importance to indigenous peoples and local communities, for other effective area-based conservation measures concerning their territories, taking into account interactions and trade-offs among ecosystem functions and services, with a view to ensuring positive biodiversity outcomes and equity. ■ Management to enhance one particular ecosystem function or service does not impact negatively on the sites overall biological diversity. 	<p>Wetland management proactively supports ecosystem functions and services, including those of importance to Indigenous Peoples and local communities.</p> <p>Wetland management takes into account tradeoffs involving ecosystem functions and services, and addresses these while ensuring long-term positive outcomes for the site's biological diversity.</p> <p>Wetland management, where targeted at one or a number of ecosystem services, does not lead to diminution of the site's biological diversity.</p>

CBD Criteria for identifying OECMs ²⁰		Wetland specific context: what makes a likely candidate wetland OECM site
Criterion D.2 Cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic and other locally relevant values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governance and management measures identify, respect and uphold the cultural, spiritual, socioeconomic, and other locally relevant values of the area, where such values exist. ■ Governance and management measures respect and uphold the knowledge, practices and institutions that are fundamental for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity. 	<p>Governance and management arrangements for the wetland site include an assessment of multiple values (Convention on Wetlands, 2017), and include measures to safeguard these values while also ensuring long-term positive outcomes for the site's biological diversity.</p> <p>Governance and management arrangements take into account multiple knowledge systems e.g., Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) (including those held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities) in describing wetlands biodiversity and related conservation practices, and safeguard these within the Conceptual Framework for maintenance of ecological character (Resolution IX.1 Annex A).</p>

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Declaration of Interest

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The Convention on Wetlands



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