



"People and Wetlands: The Vital Link"
**7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971),
San José, Costa Rica, 10-18 May 1999**

**Technical Session III:
Involving people at all levels in the conservation and wise use of wetlands
Paper 1**

**Participatory processes to involve local communities and indigenous
people in the management of wetlands¹**

Background

1. Community involvement and participation in management decision-making for Ramsar and other wetland sites have been recognised as essential throughout the history of the Ramsar Convention, but very little guidance on this topic is available to the Contracting Parties. At the Third Meeting of the Conference of Contracting Parties (COP) held in Regina (Canada) in 1987, the benefits of wetlands for people were first given special emphasis as a rationale for the protection of wetlands. At this meeting the term "wise use" was defined as "*the sustainable utilisation of wetlands for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem*", and a specific Recommendation (3.3) pointed the way towards greater community involvement in wetland management.
2. At the Montreux Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 1990, this was further amplified in the Appendix to Recommendation 4.10 (*Guidelines for the implementation of the wise use concept*). The recommendation includes provisions for:

the establishment, implementation and, as necessary, periodic revision of management plans which involve local people and take account of their requirements.
3. The emphasis was upon increasing awareness of decision-makers and the public of the benefits and values of wetlands, training of appropriate staff in the implementation of wetland policies, and reviewing traditional techniques of wise use. In other words, local people were seen as a source of information and knowledge for the decision-makers and staff to manage the resource wisely. Following this meeting, the Wise Use Project was set up to provide examples of wise use of wetlands.
4. The Wise Use Project reported to the Kushiro Meeting of the Contracting Parties in 1993 and in the Annex to Resolution 5.6 (*Additional guidance for the implementation of the wise use concept*) suggested that the Contracting Parties:

¹ See also Proposal No. 8, in Ramsar COP7 DOC. 15.8, containing the proposed draft resolution on this matter.

might establish procedures which guarantee that local communities are involved in the decision-making process related to wetland use, and provide local communities with sufficient knowledge of planned activities to ensure their meaningful participation in this decision-making process.

5. Under the section on integrated management planning, it was also suggested that:

a management authority charged with the implementation of the management process should be appointed; ... strong cooperation and participation from governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as from local people, needs to be achieved.

6. Further to the adoption of expanded guidelines for the implementation of the wise use of wetlands by the Montreux Conference in 1990, the Wise Use Working Group recommended that:

At local level, countries ... establish procedures to guarantee that local populations are involved in the decision-making process related to wetland use and to provide local populations with sufficient knowledge of planned activities to assure their meaningful participation in this decision-making process. There should be working groups or advisory boards representing users, NGOs and local authorities.

General wise use legislation for wetlands should consider ... the institution of a system of management agreements between relevant government agencies, landowners and land users to provide positive management measures by the latter when this is required for the maintenance of the ecosystem.

Legislation for the conservation and wise use of specific wetland sites (e.g. Ramsar sites, ecologically sensitive areas, areas with a high degree of biodiversity, sites containing endemic species, wetland nature reserves) should consider:

- *the division of those wetlands into different zones with particular regulations,*
- *the encouragement of traditional and other ecological and sustainable activities in these areas through incentives and advice,*
- *the establishment of a management system in each area which should have legal support and of a management body to oversee the implementation and to ensure that regulations are observed;*
- *the association of populations living in or close to the area with its management, through appropriate representation.*

7. In general, the Group recognised that:

wetland management should be adapted to specific circumstances, sensible to local cultures and respectful of traditional uses. Management ... needs to be adapted to suit local conditions.

8. The Working Group's conclusions were adopted in Resolution 5.6 by the Conference at its meeting in Kushiro, Japan, in 1993.
9. The evolution of the idea of local community involvement in wetland management is clear from the wording of the above reports and decisions and can be easily followed in the Ramsar Convention Manual (Ramsar Bureau, 1997). At the beginning, there was a recognition of the interests and traditional uses which local communities have in wetlands throughout the world. This developed further to recognising the need to consult local people so that decision-makers and resource managers can take their interests into account. Finally, it became clear that local people need to be actively involved in the decision-making and management processes along with other interest groups.
10. Based on these important precedents, Recommendation 6.3 of the Brisbane Conference (1996) called upon the Contracting Parties *"to make specific efforts to encourage active and informed participation of local and indigenous people at Ramsar listed sites and other wetlands and their catchments, and their direct involvement, through appropriate mechanisms, in wetland management."*
11. The Parties assigned the Bureau of the Convention (secretariat), working with IUCN-The World Conservation Union, the World Wide Fund for Nature, Caddo Lake Institute (USA) and Kushiro International Wetlands Center (Japan), the task of developing guidelines to assist the Contracting Parties in such efforts.

The Project in Response to Recommendation 6.3

12. In response to Ramsar's Recommendation 6.3, a project was set up by the IUCN Social Policy Group (SPG) in close coordination with a steering committee composed of representatives from the aforementioned organizations, plus the US NGO Ramsar Committee, which became actively involved in the process. The project began in May 1997 when the first of three workshops was held as part of the information gathering and knowledge sharing process. This first workshop, in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, considered case studies from North America and the Neotropics region. At this same workshop the Steering Committee, through the Ramsar Bureau and the networks of its respective participants, distributed an announcement to Contracting Parties and NGOs involved in wetland management soliciting further case study proposals. Out of 60 proposals received, the project steering committee selected 21 case studies covering the seven Ramsar regions, to which were added two case studies from a previous IUCN project on ecosystems management (see attached list). These case studies represent a balanced variety of wetland ecosystem types, conservation issues, and forms of local involvement. In September 1997, the case study authors were sent detailed guidelines on topics to address in the case studies. SPG provided comments on first drafts, and authors submitted final drafts before the end of the year.
13. Following a request for support for this project from the Ramsar Convention Administrative Authorities, financial support was forthcoming from the Governments of Australia, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

14. From the case study material, SPG synthesised the lessons learned and policy recommendations to produce a first draft of criteria and guidelines for local and indigenous people's involvement in wetland management. This draft was circulated to all the case study authors, the steering committee and wetland management experts in February 1998, and two further technical workshops were organized in order to discuss case study findings and review the draft guidelines. The second workshop was held at the Kushiro International Wetlands Centre, Hokkaido, Japan, 2-4 March 1998, and involved case study authors from Asia and Oceania. The third technical workshop was held in conjunction with the American Wetlands Conference, Arlington, Virginia, USA, 16-17 April 1998, and involved case study authors from Africa, Europe, and Latin America and Caribbean. The technical discussions at these workshops, along with comments received from external reviewers, were incorporated into a subsequent draft of the guidelines, and a draft decision document was produced. These were reviewed by members of the steering committee in June, and then distributed for a much wider review by indigenous people's organizations, practitioners of participatory natural resource management, and wetland experts. The present draft decision and annexed guidelines reflect the inputs of over 100 organizations and individuals around the world. They were endorsed by the 21st meeting of the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee for transmission to the 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

26 October 1998 - Ramsar Convention Bureau

CASE STUDY SITES FOR THE PROJECT RESPONDING TO RECOMMENDATION 6.3

Key: RS = Ramsar Site, PA = Protected Area, † = IUCN ecosystems management case study

<i>Name of site</i>	<i>Country(ies)</i>	<i>Wetland type</i>	<i>RS?</i>	<i>PA?</i>	<i>Socio-economic and demographic context</i>	<i>Type of community involvement</i>	<i>Conservation issues</i>	<i>Author/contact information</i>
AFRICA								
Waza Logone	Cameroon	Sahelian floodplain	No	Yes	Subsistence farming, poverty, natural increase and migration	Management committees	Encroachment on Waza Park for natural resources, grazing. Floodplain degradation, ecosystem restoration	Roger Kouokom, IUCN's Waza Logone Project
Rio Grande de Buba	Guinea-Bissau	Estuary	No	No	Poor community, subsistence fishing and farming	Fund that is collectively managed, and rules for fisheries access/mgt	Forest degradation, over fishing	Philippe Tous, Assistant Technique, Rio Grande de Buba, IUCN-Guinea Bissau
Diawling National Park	Mauritania	Delta, estuary, & mangroves	Yes	Yes	Poor communities of Black Moors, Wolofs, fishing, mat making	Communities involved in water management, surveillance	Wetland was virtually destroyed by the Diama barrage. Reconstruction underway.	Olivier Hamerlynck, IUCN-Mauritania
Djoudj National Park	Senegal	Delta	Yes	Yes	Wetland surrounded by major irrigation works; subsistence herding & agriculture	Participation in water and resource management; Management Committee	Ecosystem restoration. Illicit resource collection and deprecations affecting ecosystem	Amadou Matar Diouf, IUCN-Senegal
Tanga	Tanzania	Reefs & mangroves	No	No	Poor subsistence fishing communities	Pilot villages, needs identification, collaborative management agreement	Dynamite fishing, over exploitation of fisheries, mangrove cutting for salt production	Chris Horrill, IUCN-Tanga project
ASIA								
Yellow River Delta	China	Delta, intertidal mud flats	No	Yes	Densely populated, farming, oil drilling	Farms are part of the administration of the reserve. Townships consulted	Migratory bird stop over; oil pollution, over-extraction of resources by villagers	Yan Chenggao, Dept. of Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forestry, & Yuan Jun, Wetlands International
Keoladeo National Park †	India	Wetlands, marshes, semi-arid forests	Yes	Yes	Locals use park for hunting, firewood collection, etc.	Community participation in the process of implementation	Very high density of biodiversity; World Heritage site; Conflict between park and locals	Biksham Gujja, Wetlands Programme, WWF-International
Kampung Kuantan	Malaysia	Mangrove	No	No	Villagers involved in tourism cooperative	Boat rides and exhibit center for tourism	Management problems with ecotourism and environmental pollution	Jamil bin Hamzah, Dir. of Programme, Wetlands International-Asia Pacific
Yatsu Tidal Flat	Japan	Tidal mud flat	Yes	Yes	Upper income, densely settled urban area	Education, research	Last mud flat in Tokyo Bay; industrial pollutants and urban runoff	Akihito Hasegawa, Yatsu Tidalflat Nature Observation Center & Sadayosi Tobai, WWF-Japan

EASTERN EUROPE								
Morava River floodplains	Slovakia	wetlands, oxbows, wet meadows, etc.	Yes	Yes	Farming, new development initiatives; locals have close relation to land	Cooperation of NGOs, state administration, farmers in preparation of management plan	Decline in farming (mowing & cattle) is leading to declines in biodiversity	Jan Seffer, Daphne Foundation, Slovakia
Dubna wetland	Russia	Swamps, bogs and forests	No	Yes	Close to Moscow, rural farming area	Project conducts education / communications activities; new phase to begin	Major crane nesting ground, illegal hunting, drainage, and possible pumping for Moscow	Smirnova Lena, Homeland of the Crane Programme, Biodiversity Conservation Centre
WESTERN EUROPE								
Le Cesine	Italy	Brackish lakes behind dunes	Yes	Yes	Upper income	Opposition turned to support through education & income generation	Tourism development along coast	Neida Finistauri, consultant to WWF-Italy and MedWet initiative
Pevensey Levels	UK	Wet grasslands, former tidal marshes	No	No	Densely settled, farming	Local advisory council set up for management of wetland	Habitat of Fen Raft spider. Threats: upstream pumping, agriculture	David Gasca-Tucker and Mike Acreman, Institute of Hydrology
Solway, Firth of Forth, Moray Firth	Scotland, UK	Coastal estuaries	Yes	Yes	Urban areas, farming.	Forums bringing together different stakeholders	Construction, urban fill, seawalls, dams, etc. threaten fish, seals, dolphin, and mud flat nesting	Stephen Atkins, Scottish Natural Heritage
NEOTROPICS (LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN)								
Baia do Castelo	Brazil	Floodplain, seasonal and permanent lakes	No	No	Small cattle farms, subsistence fishing, and tourism	Locals involved in research of the lake-river system	State of conservation basically good; natural fish kills	Debora Calheiros, EMBRAPA-CPAP, Corumba, Brazil
El Balsar	Peru	Artificial wetland	No	Yes	Indigenous fishing communities	Community led initiative; the fisherman's association manages	Cultivation of reeds (<i>scirpus californicus</i>) for boat building; threat of urbanization and tourism	Victor Pulido, Dept. of Biology, University Inca Garcilaso de la Vega
NORTH AMERICA								
Grand Codroy Estuary	Canada	Estuary	Yes	Yes	Agriculture (hay fields and crops)	Good steward agreements with local landowners; educational activities	Critical habitat for several bird species; also supports bear, moose, beaver, red fox, etc.	Mike Cahill, Chief of Conservation and Habitat, Dept. of Forest Reserves Newfoundland
Caddo Lake	USA	Cypress swamps, lake and catchment	Yes	Yes	Rural, small town, underdeveloped, agribusiness, forestry, oil & gas, sport fishing	NGO network providing scientific and educational monitoring, (obs site)	Need for locally appropriate environmental quality and management standards. Toxics loading by agriculture, oil & gas.	Dwight Shellman, Caddo Lake Institute
Coastal wetlands	Mexico	Deltas, estuaries, lagoons, mangroves	No	No	1,000 people in area, fishing, hunting, etc.	Extensive efforts at education and local involvement	Wetlands have ecological, economic and social importance. Threat from agricultural runoff.	Carlos Valdez & Elena Chavarria, Pronatura, Guaymas, Sonora
Sian Ka'an †	Mexico	Coastal wetlands, reefs, forests	No	Yes	Fishermen, fishing for spiny lobster, coconut palmeries, livestock	Resource-use rights to communities; zoning activities	Over cutting of trees, opening of land to grazing, overfishing	Arturo Lopez Ornat, State Government of Quintana Roo

OCEANIA								
Tonda Wildlife Management Area	Papua New Guinea	Freshwater floodplains & mangroves	Yes	Yes	Indigenous people, customary ownership	WWF assisting indigenous owners to develop management strategy	Area split between PNG and Indonesia; illustrates complexity of cross-border management	Paul Chatterton, consultant to WWF-Australia
Lake Tegano	Solomon Islands	Brackish lake on coral atoll	No	No	Indigenous people, customary ownership, fishing, hunting	Working with indigenous owners towards establishing ecologically sustainable management	Under consideration as a World Heritage site	Elspeth Wingham, consultant, & Ben Devi, Ministry of Commerce and Tourism
Djelk wetlands	Australia	Large freshwater floodplain	Yes	Yes	Indigenous people	Aboriginal freehold; they have exclusive use rights	Control of weed infestations, tourism, mining, etc.	Max Finlayson, Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist