



Guidance: Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands

Dave Pritchard, Ramsar Culture Network 2016
With Mariam Ali and Thymio Papayannis

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
What are Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands?.....	2
What are the benefits of these inventories for wetland conservation?	3
Overview of the inventory process and method	4
Other experience and inputs that may help	7
STAGE 1: DESK STUDY	12
1.1 Screen existing studies	12
STAGE 2: CONSULTATION	13
2.1 Identify potential stakeholders	13
2.2 Contact and consult key stakeholders	14
STAGE 3: DOCUMENTATION	14
3.1 Describe the purpose and scope of the Inventory.....	14
3.3 Note any conservation implications of the cultural values/practices for the wetland(s) ..	17
3.4 Summarise the status of the cultural values/practices.....	17
3.5 Include supporting materials	18
STAGE 4: ACTION.....	19
4.1 Recommend any actions to integrate cultural values/practices more strongly in management, as appropriate	19
ANNEX 1: Typologies of cultural values and practices.....	21
ANNEX 2: Rapid Cultural Inventories - Summary Worksheet	26

INTRODUCTION

What are Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands?

Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands are a simple and practical way to identify, document and make available information about notable cultural values and practices associated with identified wetland areas. They can be undertaken at a variety of scales. The information they provide supports both the conservation of cultural heritage and the Ramsar Convention's aim of integrating cultural aspects in the management of Ramsar Sites and other wetlands.

In-depth research studies and comprehensive databases on the subject of culture and wetlands are extremely useful; but they are not covered in this guidance. The emphasis here on “rapid” inventories is on collating information that is readily available, and doing it in an uncomplicated way to produce fast and easy-to-use results. The quality and completeness of the data might be quite variable, but compilers should not be too worried about this: the important thing is to build a better picture of what is at stake, rapidly and cost-effectively; and to bring this to the attention of everyone in a position to influence its fate.

Definitions of “culture” vary according to the context. For Ramsar purposes it is interpreted as a property of human groups or societies which expresses aspects of their identity, shared values, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge systems, creativity and other practices. It conditions the ways in which people interact with each other and with their environment. Culture can be exhibited in both material and non-material ways, and it is constantly evolving.

Material examples would include protection and management of wetland habitats in ways designed to maintain a particular human social structure or uphold faith-based principles; use of wetland products for purposes that maintain cultural identities and represent place-specific skills; and heritage values associated with the co-evolution of particular societies and the ecosystems with which they have interacted. Non-material examples would include sense of belonging; sense of continuity; aesthetic inspirations; and ecological ethics.

Culture in many of these forms contributes directly to the maintenance of wetlands. It also represents a key suite of benefits provided by wetlands to people; and this is recognised in the widely-adopted concept of “cultural ecosystem services”¹, of both tangible and intangible kinds. The Ramsar Convention has in turn formally incorporated cultural ecosystem services within its definition of wetland “ecological character”², and Parties commit to maintaining this character (and hence the relevant cultural services) as part of their obligation to promote the wise use of wetlands³.

¹ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005). *Ecosystems and human well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press, Washington DC.

² Ramsar Convention (2005a). *A Conceptual Framework for the wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character*. Resolution IX.1 Annex A, Kampala, Uganda, November 2005. (See para 15).

³ Ramsar Convention (2005a) *op. cit.* (See para 22; and also Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention text itself).

What are the benefits of these inventories for wetland conservation?

Inventories help to make knowledge and information more *available* and more *useable* for supporting improved conservation and wise use of wetlands. Better integration of understanding about cultural factors with understanding about ecological factors leads to more effective wetland management, as well as improved safeguarding of cultural heritage. Better awareness also helps in building stronger public support for these aims.

Some of the most successful and resilient systems for the conservation and wise use of wetlands are those that benefit from a full and coherent integration of values and understandings about both the natural world and human culture. By taking such an approach, special knowledge can be drawn upon, contradictory imperatives avoided and public support enhanced.

Information on cultural values and practices relating to Ramsar Sites and other wetlands is currently not widely available in an organised and collated form, and this can hamper conservation efforts. Some information on these issues is included (mostly at the level of key words only) in the standard Ramsar Information Sheets compiled for sites that are listed under the Convention; some is documented for the purposes of other designations (such as World Heritage) where those cover wetland systems; and much else has been the subject of a variety of scattered individual research projects. Some exists only in oral traditions or local knowledge held by a few stakeholders - perhaps it is not written down, perhaps it is expressed in a minority language or is expressed in some other medium altogether, such as performed customs.

A diversity of knowledge systems about wetland culture is part of its richness: but if the *existence* of the knowledge is not known, or it is not *available* or *useable*, problems can result. First, the persistence of the knowledge itself, and the inherent value of the cultural aspects to which it refers, may be unwittingly damaged or lost, thus undermining cultural conservation efforts. Second, the role played by certain cultural values and practices in maintaining the ecological character of wetlands may be underestimated or overlooked, thus weakening wetland conservation efforts and potentially leading to conflict between different management objectives for the same area.

Inventories as described here will address these issues, and by stimulating practical action for better application of knowledge to conservation and management, they will contribute to improved ecological (and socio-ecological) outcomes.

Under Resolution VIII.19⁴ of the Conference of Contracting Parties, Ramsar Party governments are encouraged to compile and assess both material and non-material cultural elements related to wetlands and water, in particular when preparing or updating Ramsar Information Sheets for their Ramsar Sites; to promote the appreciation and revitalisation of these cultural values

⁴ Ramsar Convention (2002a). *Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites*. COP8 Resolution VIII.19, Valencia, Spain, November 2002.

among the public; to include relevant aspects of culture in the design and implementation of wetland management plans; and to recognise cultural values relating to wetlands in policies and legislation. Resolution IX.21⁵ reinforces this by adding reference to strategies and case studies, and by emphasising the contribution all these efforts make to developing “comprehensive and integrated approaches”.

The current Strategic Plan for the Convention (2016-2024)⁶ includes an aim (Target 10) of documenting and fully integrating the traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of the Convention. This is to be done with the effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, a subject on which the Parties adopted formal guidance in 1999⁷.

Organising information in a more systematic and accessible manner allows it to be more readily shared, validated, kept up to date and put to effective use.

Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands help in the application of relevant knowledge to support all of the agreed objectives described above, to the benefit of wetlands and the people who depend on them. In the process they also stimulate further investigation, research and dialogue to add to the depth and breadth of the knowledge itself, while growing awareness and involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in wetland conservation and wise use.

Overview of the inventory process and method

A simple step-wise approach is suggested, beginning with desk-studies and consultation, and then organising the information to be documented into five key categories, followed by recommendations for action. The Summary Worksheet in Annex 2 provides one form in which the results can usefully be recorded.

Rapid Cultural Inventories can be undertaken by wetland management authorities, Ramsar Regional Initiatives, International Organisation Partners, community groups, non-government organisations, researchers and other willing stakeholders. The Inventories are applicable at site, river basin, national and international levels, and responsibility can be taken by relevant organisations or individuals operating at any of these levels.

The scope of the values and practices covered can include those of either historical or contemporary interest (but ideally should cover both). Inventories should make use of (and ideally expand upon) any relevant information already recorded in Ramsar Information Sheets (where listed Ramsar Sites are concerned), as well as any existing studies and publications that

⁵ Ramsar Convention (2005b). *Taking into account the cultural values of wetlands*. COP9 Resolution IX.21, Kampala, Uganda, November 2005.

⁶ Ramsar Convention (2015a). *The Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016-2024*. COP12 Resolution XII.2, Punta del Este, Uruguay, June 2015.

⁷ Ramsar Convention (1999). *Guidelines for establishing and strengthening local communities' and indigenous people's participation in the management of wetlands*. COP7 Resolution VII.8, San José, Costa Rica, May 1999.

may be relevant. Consultation with local residents, site managers, statutory authorities, voluntary groups, heritage bodies, academics and other experts will supplement these sources.

The best results will be obtained by applying the approach set out in the simple scheme below, and by following this more or less consistently for any Rapid Inventory that is designed to contribute to the globally coordinated efforts of the Ramsar Convention on this (with the support of the Ramsar Culture Network⁸). The Summary Worksheet in Annex 2 of this guidance below provides one form in which the results can usefully be recorded. Please send completed worksheets to the Ramsar Secretariat (culture@ramsar.org). The information will be incorporated into Ramsar's global data on culture and wetlands.

Original source materials can form part of the compilation of information that goes to make up a given inventory. For applying the results to action, and for developing an overview at strategic levels, a basic degree of standardisation of the recorded information is advisable. Guidance on this is provided in the descriptions of the scheme's "stage 3" in the pages which follow.

Inventories following this approach may be initiated autonomously as a contribution to Ramsar's aims in this area. Anyone wishing to launch or adapt an initiative for this purpose is encouraged to coordinate with the Convention's Culture & Wetlands Team⁹ so that an overall picture is maintained, and so that opportunities may be identified for synergies between efforts by different groups that may be addressing similar areas or similar issues. (New collaborations and sources of assistance may be possible as a result).

Any potential contributors who may not yet have a defined starting-point but would be interested in engaging in some way, perhaps by making an input to work led by others, are similarly invited to contact the Team. A register of expressions of interest will be maintained, and the Culture Team will act as a "clearing-house" to put people in touch with each other.

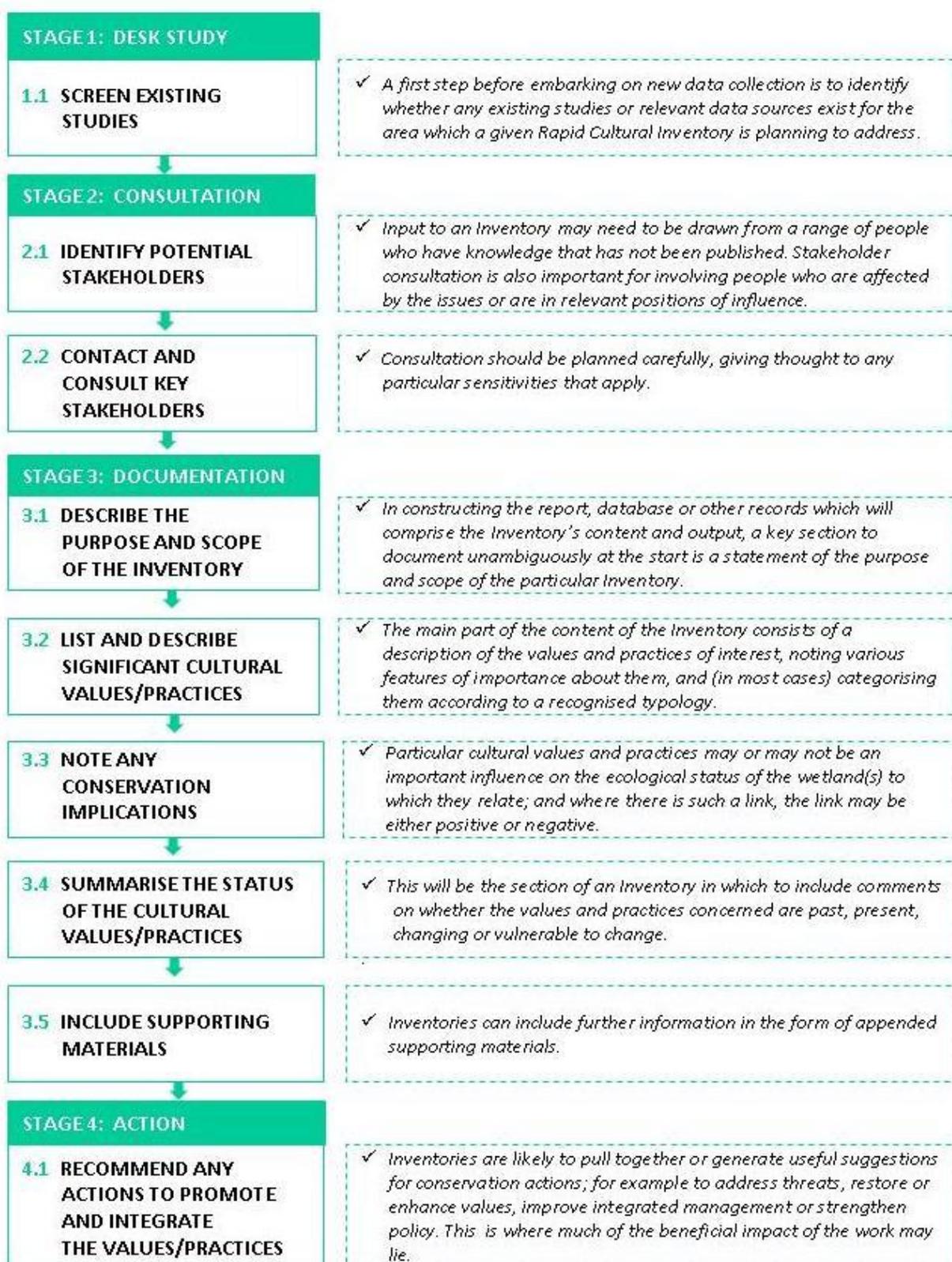
Advice and troubleshooting support for Inventories will also be available through the same channels, drawing where appropriate on the reservoir of expertise represented by the Ramsar Culture Network.

In certain priority areas (particularly for example in parts of the Africa, Asia and Americas Ramsar regions) the Team wishes to stimulate special efforts to improve coverage, and is seeking to allocate financial support to help with this. This support may be used for project development, capacity-building (eg inception workshops for project teams), data collection, data compilation or closely related purposes. Production of eventual completed inventory documentation will normally be a condition of such support, and only a percentage of the costs will be covered in this way (in other words, match-funding will be required). The aim is to minimise undue bureaucracy, and interest may be expressed in the first instance by addressing a simple email message to culture@ramsar.org.

⁸ See <http://www.ramsar.org/activity/ramsar-culture-network>.

⁹ See <http://www.ramsar.org/activities/rcn-contacts>. Email: culture@ramsar.org

Overview: Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands



Please send Rapid Cultural Inventory results, including Summary Tables (Annex 2) to the Ramsar Secretariat culture@ramsar.org

Other experience and inputs that may help

A variety of already-existing processes and products offer some *compiled data or advice on methods* that will constitute useful inputs to Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands, depending on the context. It is important to take these into account where relevant in planning new work. The Ramsar Culture Team will support this with an overview at global level.

Reference has been made above to the **Ramsar Information Sheets** which the national Administrative Authorities for the Convention compile when designating sites for the global Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites) and which they are expected to update not less than every six years thereafter¹⁰. Centrally (ie at global level) some sample analysis of information on cultural values and practices recorded in RISs up to the year 2000 was undertaken in that year, and that work is currently being revisited. This may make it possible to provide RIS-based information to compilers of Rapid Inventories at the outset of their work, as an input to it. This input will however be small, as only a minority of Ramsar Sites have information of this kind recorded in their RIS, and where it exists it has not necessarily been recorded by specialists in cultural matters.

The RIS nevertheless remains an important formal way of registering notable cultural features of the ecological character and ecosystem services of listed sites. All Inventories whose scope includes one or more Ramsar Sites should pay attention to what may have been recorded on culture in the relevant RISs, either by examining them locally (along with the background material that was used in compiling them), and/or drawing from whatever analysis the Ramsar Culture Team may be able to complete centrally in early 2016. For most sites, the RIS data are publicly available on-line via the searchable Ramsar Sites Information Service¹¹. Further specifics on the sections of the Information Sheet that are relevant are given in section 2 of Stage 3 in the scheme described below.

Data on cultural values and practices relating to **World Heritage Sites** are also provided publicly on-line by UNESCO¹², and many of these sites involve wetland areas. In some cases the relevant sites are also listed Ramsar Sites. Several analyses of these “designation overlaps” have been undertaken to date - approaches to this vary, and on-going additions to both lists require the picture to be periodically updated; but recent work on the subject of these overlaps is due to allow a good basis during 2016 for more completely identifying sites with relevant information that should contribute directly to Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands in the countries concerned.

¹⁰ The version of the RIS that is currently in effect (along with accompanying guidance) was adopted in Resolution XI.8 *Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates* at Ramsar COP11 (Bucharest, Romania, July 2012). Parties were urged to update RIS information at intervals of not less than six years in Resolution VI.13 *Submission of information on sites designated for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*, adopted at COP6 (Brisbane, Australia, March 1996).

¹¹ See <https://rsis.ramsar.org/>.

¹² See <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/> (English) and <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/> (French).

The World Heritage list includes other sites designated for cultural value (as opposed to natural value) that are not Ramsar designated but which nevertheless include wetland areas. Some are well known, or their wetland nature is evident from the site name; and a manual scan of the list for each country will identify several whose details can contribute to a Rapid Cultural Inventory. Using the automated World Heritage website search facility with the single word “wetland” (as at December 2015) returned 23 “cultural” or “mixed” sites from the global list¹³, and these will be another starting-point. The Ramsar Culture Team will examine this at the level of the summary information available on the global website; but national inventory projects should be able to expand the narratives for the sites concerned, and identify other sites that may be relevant in similar terms but which do not necessarily emerge from these crude cross-matching methods.

There are other World Heritage Sites which do not meet World Heritage criteria for cultural interest and are designated in the “natural” category instead, but which nevertheless are of interest for the cultural values and practices associated with them. Even though these interests may not be of global significance (or “outstanding universal value”, in the terms of the Convention), they should be captured for the Ramsar Rapid Cultural Inventories where the sites concerned are (or contain) wetlands. One way in which such information may have been acquired is through the site Conservation Outlook Assessments undertaken by IUCN¹⁴. These follow a standard framework which includes a checklist of the benefits to people provided by the site. This corresponds broadly to an identification of the ecosystem services provided by the site, and the checklist follows a very brief typology of cultural & spiritual values, health & recreational values and knowledge-related values. The assessment process essentially records just presence or absence of items in the checklist, but provides also for their significance and the scale at which they are manifest to be ranked on two three-point scales.

One of UNESCO’s five other culture-related Conventions is the Convention for Safeguarding **Intangible Cultural Heritage** (covering practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills). It provides for the drawing up of inventories of this heritage for inclusion in a global Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity¹⁵. A small number of the examples inscribed on this list have some relationship to wetlands: discovering the true extent of this would require some examination of the summary information published for each one (the mere titles do not always reveal the relevance), and doing so could provide another useful input to Ramsar’s cultural inventories.

National wetland inventories in general (ie not focusing particularly on cultural aspects) have been advocated in successive Ramsar COP Resolutions and Strategic Plans from COP4 (1990) onwards (initially for candidate Ramsar Sites, but from COP6 onwards for all wetlands). Some

¹³ This is the figure as divided between countries, so the handful of transboundary sites that feature in the total have been double-counted.

¹⁴ IUCN (2012). *IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessments - Guidelines for their application to natural World Heritage Sites*. Version 1.3, 17.08.2012. Available for download from https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/wcpa_worldheritage/about_world_heritage/worldheritageoutlook/.

¹⁵ See <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists> (English) <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/fr/listes> (French) and <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/es/listas> (Spanish).

inventory work has also been organised at the regional level, such as the Mediterranean Wetland Inventory organised by the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (MedWet). The latter's initial main guidance manual¹⁶ did not address cultural values, but subsequent development of the database included an optional data field for recording information about social, cultural and economic values¹⁷. A cultural values data form focused on four basic "heritage types"¹⁸; and a supporting publication on socioeconomic aspects was produced¹⁹. Any wetland inventories which have been undertaken according to the MedWet method may therefore incorporate relevant information, and the position on this should be researched for the countries concerned.

A number of specific publications contain information which will contribute to Rapid Cultural Inventories. One such is the book "**Culture and Wetlands in the Mediterranean**", published in 2011²⁰. Although it is organised thematically, it contains much in the way of specific site/area case examples which can be extracted and transferred into Inventories by those working in the relevant countries. Some other examples are highlighted in the book "**Wetland culture for children**", published in 2015²¹. An early form of a **national Rapid Cultural Inventory for Wetlands** (pre-dating the approach suggested in the present guidance, and with slightly different scope) was published **for Japan** by Wetlands International in 2012²². A similar publication on **Wetland Culture in East Asia** was produced in 2015²³.

Although written up as more of a narrative synthesis than an area-by-area inventory, and not specific to wetlands, a study by CODESRIA for the Network of **Marine Protected Areas in West Africa** (RAMPAO), completed in 2015, collated much useful information on indigenous knowledge, traditions and cultural practices relating to marine & coastal protected areas in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Senegal²⁴. It should be possible to extract relevant cases from this to contribute to inventories relating to these three countries. The accompanying methodological

¹⁶ Costa, L T, Farinha, J C, Hecker, N, Tomàs Vives, P (1996). *Mediterranean Wetland Inventory: a reference manual*. MedWet / Instituto da Conservação da Natureza / Wetlands International. Available in English and French from <http://medwet.org/2010/02/mediterranean-wetland-inventory-a-reference-manual/>.

¹⁷ Tomàs-Vives, P (2008). *Inventory, assessment and monitoring of Mediterranean wetlands: The Pan-Mediterranean Wetland Inventory module*. Published for MedWet by Tour du Valat. Available at http://www.medwet.org/codde/1_PanMed_Wetland_Inventory/PanMedWetlandInvent-Module.pdf.

¹⁸ See <http://medwet.org/implementing-a-simple/>. The heritage types listed are: cultural landscape; movable heritage; immovable heritage; and intangible heritage.

¹⁹ Benessaiah, N (1998). *Mediterranean wetlands socioeconomic aspects*. Medwet. Available in English, French or Arabic by contacting lily@medwet.org.

²⁰ Papayannis, T and Pritchard, D E (eds) (2011). *Culture and Wetlands in the Mediterranean: an evolving story*. Published by Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos, Athens. Available for download from <http://www.med-ina.org/PUBLICATIONS.aspx> or as hard copy on request from afoutri@med-ina.org.

²¹ Joo, H-J, Lineman, M, Do, Y and Kim, J Y (2015). *Wetland culture for children*. Park Publishers, for Pusan National University, Republic of Korea.

²² Tsujii, T and Sasagawa, K (eds) (2012). *33 Examples of the cultures and technologies of wetlands in Japan: relationships with local people and communities*. Published by Wetlands International-Japan. Available for download from <http://www.wetlands.org/WatchRead/Currentpublications/tabid/56/mod/1570/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/3269/Default.aspx> or from info@wi-japan.org.

²³ Sasagawa, K, Natori, Y, Joo, G-J, Kelin, C, Choowaew, S and Sasaki, M (eds) (2015). *Wetland culture in East Asia: a lasting legacy of skills, knowledge and wisdom*. Published by Wetlands International-Japan. Available from info@wi-japan.org.

²⁴ Doucouré, B (2015). *Fonctions des savoirs endogènes, des normes et des pratiques culturelles dans la conservation de la biodiversité marine et côtière: l'exemple de la Guinée, de la Guinée Bissau et du Sénégal*. Synthesis report for the Conseil pour le Développement de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales en Afrique.

guidance may also be useful, for example if conducting community-based consultations about local traditional knowledge²⁵.

Ramsar **Contracting Party National Reports**, submitted to each meeting of the Convention's Conference of the Parties, follow an agreed standard format based on questions about selected aspects of Convention implementation. The detail of the format is revised from time to time, but the most recent version (used for reports submitted prior to COP12 in June 2015) contains two questions which should generate information of relevance to Cultural Inventories. Question 1.4.1 asks "has an assessment been conducted of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites?", and question 1.4.3 asks "have socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands?".

The answers provided²⁶ may not necessarily itemise specific wetland sites or areas where the services and values concerned have been documented, but they will constitute a first step towards locating such information. Inventory projects should therefore check and take account of the official answers given to these questions in relevant national reports, and should investigate further where it appears useful to do so. The Ramsar Culture Team in the meantime is looking into providing a global extraction/summary of the information contained in the most recent round of reports.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) produced a thematic study for World Heritage on "**Cultural Heritages of Water**" in the Middle East and North Africa in 2015²⁷. It addresses instances where water-related culture features in the World Heritage properties designated in this region, including a typology and observations on references to threats and management issues. Many of the situations described concern important wetland systems, and the information on this should be relevant to incorporate in Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands in the countries concerned. Some of the instances concern Ramsar Sites; although this fact is not identified in the publication itself, so a manual cross-comparison exercise would be required.

Another relevant study is the "**Rapid assessment of cultural conservation practices in the Mediterranean**" produced by the Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture in 2013²⁸. It too offers a typology, and focuses on practices contributing to the conservation of areas of high biodiversity value, summarising them in a standard template for each practice-type and

²⁵ Doucouré, B (2014). *Projet PACT-Biodiv: Conservation de la biodiversité à travers la valorisation du patrimoine culturel et traditionnel; étude sur les savoirs endogènes et pratiques culturelles (SENEP): outils de collecte des données*. CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal.

²⁶ Copies of the individual COP12 round of reports may be found here:
http://www.ramsar.org/library/field_document_type/national-reports-532/field_tag_body_event/conference-of-contracting-parties-366/field_tag_body_event/cop12-punta-del-este-2015-509?sort=search_api_aggregation_1&order=asc.

²⁷ ICOMOS (2015). *Cultural Heritages of Water. The cultural heritages of water in the Middle East and Maghreb*. Thematic study, first edition. ICOMOS, Charenton-le-Pont, France. Written in English and French and available for download at <http://www.icomos.org/en/116-english-categories/resources/publications/3802-icomos-thematic-study-on-the-cultural-heritages-of-water-in-the-middle-east-and-the-maghreb>.

²⁸ Mediterranean Consortium for Nature and Culture (2013). *A rapid assessment of cultural conservation practices in the Mediterranean*. Published by DiversEarth. Available for download from <http://medconsortium.org/cultural-practices-page/>.

noting the countries and (where applicable) sites where the practices concerned exist. Again some of the instances involve wetlands: these would need to be identified and extracted, and could then form a contribution to Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands in the countries concerned.

For considering cultural values & practices in terms of ecosystem services, useful methodological advice is provided in a recent publication entitled “**Guidelines for the Rapid Assessment of Cultural Ecosystem Services**” (GRACE)²⁹. Its approach is applicable to all ecosystem types including wetlands, and it provides help in understanding ecosystem services concepts, planning a rapid assessment, collecting data via field-based stakeholder consultations and analysing the narratives that emerge. Further help specifically on assessing recreation as an aspect of cultural ecosystem services is given in the “**Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site-based Assessment**” (TESSA) published by an international consortium in 2013³⁰. Various approaches to **cultural mapping** and **documenting oral traditions** have also added usefully to the repertoire of methods that help with these issues, particularly for traditional and indigenous knowledge that is not well documented in more typically technical and academic ways³¹.

Day-to-day interactions over the years in the Ramsar Culture Network and the wider Ramsar community as a whole, including at Ramsar meetings, have generated numerous other pieces of information about interesting individual instances of cultural values and practices associated with wetlands. This intelligence is currently scattered across a disparate range of files, documents, correspondence, anecdotal memories and literature on other subjects. Part of the purpose of the “Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands initiative” is to locate and pool this information, alongside information from systematic studies, in order to compile the fullest possible knowledge-base on this subject for everyone’s benefit.

The “meta-inventory” or “inventory of inventories” (and methods) begun by this summary above will continue to be expanded, as part of the Ramsar Convention’s efforts on documenting cultural values and practices relating to wetlands, alongside the compilation of new data from individual Rapid Cultural Inventories undertaken according to the guidance given below. Information on other relevant initiatives not yet mentioned above is welcome at any time, and can be sent to culture@ramsar.org.

²⁹ Infield, M, Morse-Jones, S, and Anthem, H (2015). *Guidelines for the Rapid Assessment of Cultural Ecosystem Services* (GRACE): Version 1. Published by Fauna & Flora International.

³⁰ Peh, K S-H, Balmford, A P, Bradbury, R B, Brown, C, Butchart, S H M, Hughes, F M R, Stattersfield, A J, Thomas, D H L, Walpole, M and Birch, J C (2013). *Toolkit for Ecosystem Service Site-based Assessment* (TESSA). Cambridge, UK. See <http://tessa.tools/>.

³¹ See for example Crawhall, N (2008). *The role of participatory cultural mapping in promoting intercultural dialogue - ‘We are not hyenas’*. Concept paper for UNESCO, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, ref CLT/CPD/CPO/2008/IPS/1. Available at http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=37746&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html. See also Maffi, L and Dilts, O (eds) (2014). *Documenting and revitalizing oral traditions*. Biocultural Diversity Toolkit Volume 4. Published by Terralingua. See <http://terralingua.org/our-work/voices-of-the-earth/>.

STAGE 1: DESK STUDY

1.1 Screen existing studies

A first step before embarking on new data collection is to identify whether any existing studies or relevant data sources exist for the area which a given Rapid Cultural Inventory is planning to address.

As a starting-point for this step, the sources mentioned in the introduction of this guidance above in the section on “Other experience and inputs that may help” should be considered.

Remember that the source concerned may not necessarily be primarily concerned with culture and wetlands, or titled in a way that makes its relevance immediately apparent. Studies of cultural heritage may have a partial wetland component that has not yet been presented as such; or studies of wetland biodiversity may have a partial cultural component that has similarly not yet been presented as such.

This step will also provide a picture of the nature of gaps in coverage of the issue for the area concerned, which in turn may help to refine the scope and objectives of the given Inventory (see 3.1 below).

Part of this “desk study” stage is therefore in the nature of a literature-search, and part of it may involve some detective work to spot and verify the relevance of subsidiary parts of work that has been undertaken on other subjects.

The other main part of this step then consists of isolating and extracting the relevant information from the sources concerned, so that it may be reorganised (to the extent necessary) for consistent compilation according to the simple inventory structure suggested in Stage 3 below.

It is expected that many Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands will consist entirely of this “desk study” stage and nothing more. If no resources for new fieldwork are available, and/or if the area concerned is already well documented but simply needs its information synthesising into a more useable format, this stage alone can generate an Inventory that adds hugely to whatever intelligence currently exists.

STAGE 2: CONSULTATION

2.1 Identify potential stakeholders

Input to an Inventory may need to be drawn from a range of people who have knowledge that has not been published. Stakeholder consultation is also important for involving people who are affected by the issues or are in relevant positions of influence.

In this context the stakeholders concerned are primarily those who may be in a position to contribute their input to an Inventory initiative for a given area (eg a country or other defined geographical area - see 3.1 below). They may be researchers with expertise in the subject-matter that is applicable to the area, and their particular contribution might be to add material to the desk-based documentation search described in 1.1 above. They may alternatively be the intended members of a project team (paid or voluntary) who are going to carry out the work for the Inventory. They may alternatively be inhabitants or users or managers of the area(s) concerned, and their contribution in that case might be as subjects for field research, eg by surveys or interviews.

There may also be a category of stakeholders who are not necessarily contributors to the Inventory but whose interests may be affected by the process, and who may have views about it. Custodians of traditional knowledge, community leaders responsible for the conduct of cultural practices, and other researchers with coincident or overlapping interests, may all fall into this category. It will be important not to make hasty assumptions about who can act as spokespeople for any of these groups: the most important stakeholders in this respect are not necessarily always the ones who identify themselves as such.

Based on a definition of the purpose of the Inventory (in most cases the purpose will be as described in the introductory section of this guidance above under “What are Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands?”), it will also be important to identify those individuals, groups or organisations who are stakeholders in the sense of being intended recipients, end-users and advocacy targets (ie the “audience”) for the results. This may include both those who have expressed a need for the information and those who have not done so but who may need to be persuaded about its role and significance. Clarity at the outset about these stakeholders can help to refine the project’s objectives.

The degree of effort devoted to identifying potential stakeholders will naturally vary in proportion to the scale and depth of the particular Inventory initiative being launched in a given case.

2.2 Contact and consult key stakeholders

Consultation should be planned carefully, giving thought to any particular sensitivities that apply.

It is worth constructing a careful summary explanation of the scope and purpose of the project, in appropriate language, to provide in advance to the stakeholder(s) concerned, together with an explanation of the intended consultation process.

Consultation with stakeholders may take place through correspondence, telephone interviews, one-to-one meetings, focus groups/workshops, public meetings, or by general invitations issued via websites and social media. The method chosen will depend on the nature of the interest each type of stakeholder has, and their proportional significance for the project. Reasonable notice-periods should be provided for planning all interactions and as deadlines for receiving consultation responses.

Ground-rules about permission to edit, publish or otherwise use the information exchanged should be made clear at the outset, and valid restrictions requested by stakeholders in this regard should be respected. The wishes of anyone who declines to participate should of course also be respected.

STAGE 3: DOCUMENTATION

3.1 Describe the purpose and scope of the Inventory

In constructing the report, database or other records which will comprise the Inventory's content and output, a key section to document unambiguously at the start is a statement of the purpose and scope of the particular Inventory.

The end-uses of a given Inventory may be regional, national, local or site-based, but the main purpose in each case is to make information on cultural values and practices relating to wetlands more readily available for supporting both the conservation of cultural heritage and the Ramsar Convention's expressed aim of integrating cultural aspects more effectively in wetland management.

Some Inventories may also have their own additional purposes which will need defining. These may include contributing to the updating of formal datasheets for designated sites; contributing to the drafting or revising of strategic planning and management instruments; influencing the development of new national policy or legislation; and publishing educational/interpretation materials of various kinds. Most will also be aiming to add to the centrally-coordinated efforts of the Ramsar Secretariat to build a more complete worldwide knowledge base about cultural values and practices relating to wetlands.

Defining the scope includes the spatial extent to be covered by the Inventory. Many may be national in scope, but others may focus on a sub-national area, a transfrontier zone, a river basin, a cluster of sites or one individual wetland system.

It will be important to indicate whether the information is being compiled for a named site or list/network of sites (eg particular categories of designated/protected areas that include wetlands); or for wetland systems in a broader sense (eg catchment-based, or all wetlands of a particular ecosystem type); or for wetland-related narratives at a geopolitical or a human population-based scale. Named locations are preferred where possible, but there are clearly some cultural values that do not operate at that level, and it is legitimate to include them if this non site-related scope is made explicit.

Defining the scope also includes the temporal dimension. It should be specified whether the Inventory aims to research historical values and practices (and if so, how far back in time); or whether it is aiming to be a contemporary survey of current stakeholder knowledge/field observations as well/instead. The timeframe for data collation and reporting/publication etc should be specified, as should the timeframe for any intended future review or updating of the Inventory.

3.2 List and describe significant cultural values/practices

The main part of the content of the Inventory consists of a description of the values and practices of interest, noting various features of importance about them, and (in most cases) categorising them according to a recognised typology.

This section will be the main part of the content of the Inventory. Its complexity and depth will depend on the scale of the particular Inventory project concerned and the sources available. The Summary Worksheet in Annex 2 below provides one form in which the results can usefully be recorded. At its most basic, the description could comprise a simple narrative about the most notable cultural values and practices that are relevant to the area(s) concerned, or a simple list of those present. Preferably however it should also include some or all of the categories of information described below.

- **A categorisation of the values and practices according to a recognised typology.** Many typologies exist, and their scope varies according to the purpose in each case. Some have been mentioned in the section of this guidance on “Other experience and inputs that may help” above. Two in particular have been enshrined in Ramsar documents, and they may therefore be the first preference for use in many cases: one is the brief categorisation of social & cultural values and cultural ecosystem services provided (as optional data fields) in the Information Sheet for Ramsar Sites (the RIS); and the other is the suggested typology of wetland-related human activities contained in the 2008 Ramsar Guidance Document on Culture and Wetlands. These, and two other lists of a similar kind, are reproduced in the Appendix to this guidance below.

- **A description of the area to which each identified value or practice relates**, with other locational/geographical details where appropriate. This can be supported by maps (see 3.5 below). Where Ramsar Sites (or parts of them) are concerned, the Site's unique Ramsar reference number should be given as well as the site name.
- **A description of the time period to which each identified value or practice relates** (historical dates/earliest known origins, date at which it ceased to be present, or specify that it is still of continuing relevance if this is the case).
- **The main exponents, practitioners or beneficiaries of the documented values and practices.** Particular values may be held in common by a particular community of stakeholders or a social group who derive benefits (tangible or intangible) from the wetland systems (or stories) concerned. These people may live in the area concerned or they may not, and their location in relation to the wetland(s) concerned should be specified. For values that are of global significance as the common heritage of humanity, it may be the global community as a whole who should be mentioned. In the case of cultural practices, there may be details to record concerning roles played by particular members or groups in the community, such as elders, leaders, nominated celebrants, men, women, children, etc. Details of roles played by any particular institutions should also be specified.
- **A note of any specialised or vernacular terms used locally** (including in local languages) to refer to the values and practices concerned.
- **A comment on the relative significance of the values and practices concerned** (eg in terms of rarity, magnitude, degree of formal recognition, or diversity in combination with other values). The *conservation implications* of this significance should not be noted here but under section 3.3 below instead ; and the *trend/prognosis* for this significance should not be noted here but under section 3.4 below instead.
- **A transcription of any pertinent officially-adopted descriptions of the values and practices concerned**, specifying the source in each case; eg Ramsar Information Sheet (for Ramsar Sites), Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (for World Heritage Sites), Ramsar National Report, national protected area citation, etc.

3.3 Note any conservation implications of the cultural values/practices for the wetland(s)

Particular cultural values and practices may or may not be an important influence on the ecological status of the wetland(s) to which they relate; and where there is such a link, the link may be either positive or negative. Where applicable, information on this aspect should be recorded.

This section is designed to prompt a consideration of the relationship between the cultural values and practices being documented and the ecological conservation status of the wetland or wetlands concerned. (The conservation status of the *cultural interests themselves* should not be noted here but under section 3.4 below instead).

Where the cultural interests play a material role in maintaining the ecological character of the wetland(s), either directly or indirectly, details of this should be recorded. For example religious taboos may protect the wildlife from over-exploitation; a customary regime for apportioning water rights may help to maintain the ecosystem; or the significance of the area as an icon of local identity may be the motive for keeping it undeveloped.

Where the cultural interests are having a negative impact on the wetland(s), or potentially are at risk of doing so, details of this should be recorded. For example major influxes of people participating in ritual events may damage or disturb water, soils, vegetation or wildlife; the symbolic importance of an area in ancient mythology or modern popular culture may lead to souvenir-hunting that removes or damages elements of the natural environment; or the over-harvesting of certain natural products for traditional medicine may threaten the survival of the plant or animal species concerned.

3.4 Summarise the status of the cultural values/practices

This will be the section of an Inventory in which to include comments on whether the values and practices concerned are past, present, changing or vulnerable to change.

In this section of the Inventory it should be clarified whether the values or practices being documented relate to a former period of history or whether they are continuing. If they relate to a former period of history, the time of their cessation and the reasons for it (if known) should be noted.

If they are continuing, it should further be clarified whether any changes have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in relation to the values or practices concerned. If no changes are occurring, it would be useful to note (if known) the factors that will be necessary or helpful to ensure the continuation of the values/practices in future. If a change is occurring or is likely to occur, the nature of this, the cause of it, the consequences of it, and (if negative) the seriousness of it in terms of conservation objectives should be described; and options for

remedial or preventative measures identified where possible. (Specific *recommendations for action* should be noted under section 4.1 below rather than here).

Where Traditional Environmental Knowledge is concerned, more in-depth assessments of the status and trends of such knowledge may be assisted by the method developed by Terralingua for the “VITEK” index³².

3.5 Include supporting materials

Inventories can include further information in the form of appended supporting materials.

The descriptive parts of the Inventory set out above should be accompanied by any other materials that may help to flesh out or supplement the descriptions provided. This may include lists of reference sources (and links to them where relevant), images, illustrations, maps (including the results of any “cultural mapping” exercises), data tables, details of survey methods, interview results, further detail on case examples, reviewer opinions, confidence statements, useful contacts and anything else deemed appropriate.

³² Zent, S and Maffi, L (2008). *Methodology for developing a Vitality Index of Traditional Environmental Knowledge (VITEK) for the project ‘Global indicators of the status and trends of linguistic diversity and traditional knowledge’*. Final Report on indicator no 2. Published by Terralingua. Available from <http://terralingua.org/our-work/vitality-index-of-tek/> .

STAGE 4: ACTION

4.1 Recommend any actions to integrate cultural values/ practices more strongly in management, as appropriate

Inventories are likely to pull together or generate useful suggestions for conservation actions; for example to address threats, restore or enhance values, improve integrated management or strengthen policy. This is where much of the beneficial impact of the work may lie.

This section can include a summary of any current recommendations made elsewhere about the issues covered in the Inventory, as well as any recommendations the compilers of the Inventory themselves wish to put forward (as long as attribution clarifies which is which). If the recommendations carry any official endorsement, or if they represent a particular consensus among certain stakeholders, details of this should be provided.

The main category of recommendations (as suggested by the title of this section) will concern actions to improve the integration of the cultural values and practices (documented in the Inventory) in the protection and management of the wetland systems concerned. This might involve adjusting a particular cultural heritage conservation regime (such as a site management plan) to give better attention to its wetland dimension; or adjusting a wetland conservation regime to give better attention to its cultural dimension. Actions may relate to the measures necessary to safeguard the interests at stake; or to ways of celebrating and capitalising on them more fully (eg through public awareness and education activities); or both.

Generic recommendations about integrating cultural values and practices in wetland legislation, policies, strategies, plans, assessments, heritage protection, education and training are made in Ramsar COP Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21, as mentioned in the introductory section of this guidance above. Inventories do not need to repeat such generic ideas: instead they should focus on the particular scope (of values, practices, wetland types, geographical areas etc) which each of them has addressed.

Where recommendations address the integration of cultural interests in wetland management plans, it will be useful have regard to Ramsar's existing guidance on wetland management planning³³ and its guidance on assessing site management effectiveness³⁴; and to relate the recommendations to these where appropriate.

³³ Three principal sources are relevant:

(i) Ramsar Convention (2002b). *New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar sites and other wetlands*. COP8 Resolution VIII.14. Valencia, Spain, November 2002.

(ii) Chatterjee, A, Phillips, B and Stroud, D A (2008). *Wetland management planning: a guide for site managers*. WWF, Wetlands International, IUCN and Ramsar Convention.

(iii) Ramsar Convention Secretariat (2010). *Managing wetlands: Frameworks for managing Wetlands of International Importance and other wetland sites*. Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands, 4th edition, vol. 18. Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland.

³⁴ Ramsar Convention (2015b). *Evaluation of the management and conservation effectiveness of Ramsar Sites*. COP12 Resolution XII.15, Punta del Este, Uruguay, June 2015.

In addition to management issues, recommendations may address any other matter which is deemed appropriate and which can realistically be acted upon. This may include interpretation, promotion, funding, policy, legislation or other matters. Where issues of concern have been noted under section 3.4 above, it is particularly expected that recommendations should suggest courses of action to reduce or remedy the problem(s) concerned.

ANNEX 1: Typologies of cultural values and practices

Section 3.2 of this guidance above has suggested that Inventories should categorise the values and practices they are documenting according to a recognised typology. Two Ramsar typologies which might be used for this purpose are presented below, followed by two others which may also be helpful in shaping the thinking on this for a given Inventory, depending on the circumstances.

1. From the Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS) - version as revised in 2012³⁵.

The RIS asks about social and cultural values associated with the site, according to the following categories:

- (i) Sites which provide a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland.
- (ii) Sites which have exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland.
- (iii) Sites where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples.
- (iv) Sites where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland.

The RIS also asks about the cultural ecosystem services provided by the site, according to the following categories (based on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment):

Recreation & tourism

Recreational hunting and fishing
Water sports and activities
Picnics, outings, touring
Nature observation and nature-based tourism

Spiritual & inspirational

Inspiration
Cultural heritage (historical and archaeological)
Contemporary cultural significance, including for arts and creative inspiration, and including existence values
Spiritual and religious values
Aesthetic and “sense of place” values

Scientific & educational

Educational activities and opportunities (formal and informal)

³⁵ Ramsar Convention (2012). *Streamlining procedures for describing Ramsar Sites at the time of designation and subsequent updates*. COP12 Resolution XI.8, Bucharest, Romania, July 2012. Annex 1: *Ramsar Site Information Sheet (RIS) - 2012 revision*.

Important knowledge systems, importance for research (scientific reference area or site)
Long-term monitoring site
Major scientific study site
'Type location' for a taxon

Other

2. From the Ramsar Culture and Wetlands Guidance Document³⁶.

(Wetland-related human activities)

1. Habitation

- 1.1 Cultural landscapes
- 1.2 Cultural heritage sites
- 1.3 Settlements and structures
 - 1.3.1 Ancient sites and structures (up to 1599)
 - 1.3.2 Traditional and modern settlements and structures
- 1.4 Wetland archaeology
- 1.5 Infrastructure
 - 1.5.1 Terrestrial transportation networks
 - 1.5.2 Water management facilities and networks

2. Primary uses of wetland resources

- 2.1 Agriculture
 - [2.1.1. Rice cultivation]*
 - 2.1.2 Other wetland related agriculture
- 2.2 Stock-breeding
- 2.3 Fishing and aquaculture
 - 2.3.1 Artisanal fisheries
 - 2.3.2 Commercial fisheries
 - 2.3.3 Extensive aquaculture practice
 - [2.3.4 Intensive aquaculture facilities]
 - 2.3.5 Sports fishing
- 2.4 Management of forest wetland types
 - 2.4.1 Wood products
 - 2.4.2 Non-wood forest products
- 2.5 Hunting
 - 2.5.1 Subsistence hunting
 - 2.5.2 Sports hunting
- 2.6 Salt extraction
 - 2.6.1 Artisanal/traditional salinas
 - 2.6.2 Industrial facilities
- [2.7 Mining and quarrying]
 - [2.7.1 Sand and gravel extraction]
 - [2.7.2 Gold mining]
 - [2.7.3 Other mineral extraction]

³⁶ Ramsar Culture Working Group (2008). *Culture and wetlands - a Ramsar guidance document*. Ramsar Convention, Gland.

- 2.8 Water use
 - 2.8.1 Irrigation
 - 2.8.2 Domestic use
 - 2.8.3 Water transfer infrastructure
 - 2.8.4 Industrial use (energy production)
 - 2.8.5 Other water uses (water mills, saw mills etc)
- 2.9 Use of other wetland natural resources
 - 2.9.1 Biomass extraction
 - 2.9.2 Sustainable use of medicinal plants

3. Secondary use of wetland resources

- 3.1 Food processing
 - 3.1.1 Traditional methods of food preservation
 - 3.1.2 Culinary heritage
- 3.2 Craftsmanship
 - 3.2.1 Artefacts
 - 3.2.1.a Artefacts of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.1.b Traditional and modern artefacts
 - 3.2.2 Handicrafts and tools
 - 3.2.2.a Handicrafts and tools of ancient origin (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.2.b Traditional and modern handicrafts and tools
 - 3.2.3 Transportation means (boats etc)
 - 3.2.3.a Ancient transportation means (up to 1599)
 - 3.2.3.b Traditional and modern transportation means
- 3.3 Traditional building construction
 - 3.3.1 Dwellings
 - 3.3.2 Utilitarian buildings
 - 3.3.3 Public buildings
- 3.4 Wetland-based traditional marketing
- 3.5 Tourism – eco-tourism and cultural tourism
- 3.6 Leisure and sports
 - 3.6.1 Nature appreciation
 - 3.6.2 Hiking and mountain climbing
 - 3.6.3 Rafting and kayaking
 - 3.6.4 Sailing and boating
 - 3.6.5 Diving
 - 3.6.6 Speleology
- 3.7 Social practices and methods
- 3.8 Festivals, celebrations and events

4. Knowledge, belief systems and social practices

- 4.1 Scientific research and education
- 4.2 Traditional knowledge
 - 4.2.1 Oral traditions and expressions
 - 4.2.2 Languages, dialects and special terms
 - 4.2.3 Gender, age and social class-related roles
 - 4.2.4 Practice of traditional medicine

4.3 Spirituality and belief systems

4.4 Artistic expression

* The inclusion of the items in square-brackets was questioned by a small number of consultees during the production of the Guidance.

3. From the IUCN World Heritage Conservation Outlook Assessment framework³⁷.

Cultural and Spiritual Values

Cultural and historical values (e.g. archaeology, historic buildings including temples, pilgrimage routes, and/or historic/culturally important land use)

Sacred natural sites or landscapes (e.g. sacred groves, waterfalls and/or mountains)

Wilderness values or other similar iconic values

Health and Recreation Values

Collection of medicinal resources (e.g. herbs) for local use

Recreation and tourism

Knowledge

Providing an important resource for building knowledge

Contributing to education (i.e. formal and informal dissemination of information)

Collection of genetic material (e.g. crop wild relatives, tree species)

4. From EUROPARC-Spain's manual on incorporation of intangible cultural and spiritual heritage values in protected areas³⁸.

Artistic

Dances and traditional rural games

Music and traditional songs

Nature photography

Literature of nature

Movies and TV shows

Painting landscapes and nature

Aesthetic-perceptive or scenic

Visual, auditory, or olfactory beauty

Silence or tranquillity

Harmony

Social: historical, ethnological and governance

Knowledge and traditional crafts

Governance and traditional institutions

³⁷ IUCN (2012). *IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessments - Guidelines for their application to natural World Heritage Sites*. Version 1.3, 17.08.2012. Available for download from https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/wcpa_worldheritage/about_world_heritage/worldheritageoutlook/.

³⁸ Mallarach, J M, Comas, E and de Armas, A (2012). *El patrimonio inmaterial: valores culturales y espirituales - manual para su incorporación en las áreas protegidas*. Manual 10, EUROPARC-España Programa de trabajo para las áreas protegidas 2009-2013.

Festivals and fairs
Gastronomy
Rules or customary norms
Facts or relevant historical events

Oral and linguistic

Traditional legends and stories
Sayings and riddles
Languages or dialects
Relevant place names and their etymologies
Relevant vocabulary of nature, meanings, nuances and values

Religious

The religious heritage of monasteries, sanctuaries, hermitages and chapels that stays active and the spaces used
Developed in nature rituals and ceremonies
Processions and pilgrimages

Spiritual

Natural elements considered holy or sacred: caves, Islands, mountains, sources, rivers...
Monasteries, chapels, tombs, and abandoned historic or prehistoric religious monuments
Other natural spaces - holy, sacred, magic...

