

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
4th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Montreux, Switzerland
27 June – 4 July 1990

Recommendation 4.7: Mechanisms for improved application of the Ramsar Convention

RECALLING that the Ramsar Monitoring Procedure was established by the Standing Committee at its first meeting after the Regina Conference, in order to give effect to Recommendation 3.9 on Change in ecological character of Ramsar sites;

ACKNOWLEDGING with gratitude the special funding provided for operation of the Monitoring Procedure both by Contracting Parties and by non- governmental organizations, and the many expressions of support for the Monitoring Procedure at the present meeting;

EMPHASIZING the need, as the Ramsar List grows, for the Convention to have a small but effective database, using a standardized data sheet and wetland classification, as provided for in Recommendation 2.3 adopted at the second meeting of the Conference in Groningen;

EXPRESSING its thanks to the Contracting Parties which provided expertise and finance for development and implementation of the database;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

ENDORSES the measure taken by the Standing Committee to establish a Ramsar Monitoring Procedure (the revised text of which is appended as Annex 1 to the present Recommendation), and instructs the Bureau to continue to operate this procedure when it receives information on adverse, or likely adverse changes in ecological character at Ramsar sites;

DETERMINES that Monitoring Procedure reports shall be public documents once the Contracting Party concerned has had an opportunity to study the reports and comment on them;

RECOMMENDS that the data sheet developed for the description of Ramsar sites (the text of which is appended as Annex 2 Part A to the present Recommendation) be used by Contracting Parties and the Bureau in presenting information for the Ramsar database, and as appropriate in other contexts;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that the classification system for “wetland type” developed for the description of Ramsar sites (the text of which is appended as Annex 2 Part B to the present Recommendation) be used by Contracting Parties and the Bureau in presenting information for the Ramsar database and as appropriate for other purposes; and

REQUESTS the Standing Committee to oversee the application of the Monitoring Procedure and the use of the database and classification system for “wetland type”, and to investigate the need for a Convention Scientific Committee, which would review the above matters and other questions as appropriate.

MONITORING PROCEDURE

1. It comes to the attention of the Bureau that the ecological character of a listed wetland is changing or is likely to change as a result of technological development, pollution or other human interference.
2. Where appropriate, the Bureau shall propose to the Contracting Party or Parties concerned to apply the Monitoring Procedure, requesting, at the same time, additional information on the status of the wetland concerned.
3. Where, as a result of this procedure and other information available to the Bureau, the Bureau is of the opinion that there is evidence of significant change or likely change in the ecological character of a listed wetland, the Bureau shall collaborate with the Contracting Party or Parties concerned to arrive at an acceptable solution and the Bureau may offer advice and assistance to that Party or those Parties, if required. The Bureau shall inform the Standing Committee of any action it has taken in this connection.
4. If it does not appear that an acceptable solution can be readily achieved, the Bureau shall immediately bring the matter to the attention of the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee, acting through the Chairman and Secretary, provided by the Bureau, may pursue the matter, in direct contact with the Contracting Party or Parties concerned and, where appropriate, with other responsible agencies or bodies, with a view to helping to find a solution.
5. In the event of alterations to the List or changes in ecological character in wetlands included therein, the Standing Committee shall arrange for the information to be circulated for discussion at the next Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in accordance with Article 8 paragraph 2 (d) of the Convention.
6. The Bureau shall periodically review and report progress on the conservation status of sites to which its attention has been drawn under this procedure. To facilitate follow-up, the Bureau shall maintain a register of activities undertaken in this connection.

A. INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR SITES

(NB: more detailed guidelines for completion of the sheet are available)

1. Country
2. Date (or update) of compilation
3. Reference number (for completion by Database Manager)
4. Name and address of compiler
5. Name of wetland
6. Date of Ramsar designation
7. Geographical coordinates
8. General location (nearest large town)
9. Area (in hectares)
10. Wetland type (see part B of this Annex)
11. Altitude (average; or maximum and minimum)
12. Overview of site (thumb-nail sketch in two or three sentences)
13. Physical features
 - geology and geomorphology
 - origins (natural or man-made)
 - hydrology (including seasonal water balance, inflow and outflow)
 - soil type and chemistry
 - water quality (physio-chemical characteristics)
 - depth, fluctuations and permanence
 - tidal variations
 - catchment area
 - downstream area (especially in the case of sites important in flood control)
 - climate
14. Ecological features (main habitats and vegetation types)
15. Land tenure (ownership of site and surrounding areas)
16. Conservation measures taken
 - legal status
 - management category
 - management practices
17. Conservation measures proposed (but not yet implemented)
18. Land use (human population, principal human activities and main forms of land use)
19. Possible changes in land use and proposed development projects (major developments likely to have a serious long-term effect)
20. Disturbances and threats (human activities at the site or catchment area which may have a detrimental effect on natural character)
21. Hydrological and biophysical values (e.g. recharge and discharge of groundwater, flood control, sediment trapping, prevention of coastal erosion)
22. Social and cultural values (e.g. fisheries production, forestry or historical associations, religious significance)
23. Noteworthy fauna
24. Noteworthy flora
25. Scientific research and facilities
26. Conservation education
27. Recreation and tourism

28. Management authority
29. Jurisdiction (territorial e.g. state, region or municipality - and functional e.g. Dept of Fisheries, Dept of Agriculture)
30. References (scientific)
31. Reasons for inclusion (reference to criteria)
32. Outline map of site (to be appended)

B. CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR “WETLAND TYPE”

(NB: the Database Manager will assign the wetland to a wetland type on the basis of the information sheet)

Marine and Coastal Wetlands

1. Marine waters - permanent shallow waters less than six metres deep at low tide; includes sea bays, straits.
2. Subtidal aquatic beds; includes kelp beds, sea-grasses, tropical marine meadows.
3. Coral reefs.
4. Rocky marine shores; includes rocky offshore islands, sea cliffs.
5. Sand, shingle or pebble beaches; includes sand bars, spits, sandy islets.
6. Estuarine waters; permanent waters of estuaries and estuarine systems of deltas.
7. Intertidal mud, sand or salt flats.
8. Intertidal marshes; includes saltmarshes, salt meadows, saltings, raised saltmarshes, tidal brackish and freshwater marshes.
9. Intertidal forested wetlands; includes mangrove swamps, nipa swamps, tidal freshwater swamp forests.
10. Brackish to saline lagoons with one or more relatively narrow connections with the sea.
11. Freshwater lagoons and marshes in the coastal zone; includes delta lagoon and marsh systems.

Inland Wetlands

1. Permanent rivers and streams; includes waterfalls.
2. Seasonal and irregular rivers and streams.
3. Inland deltas (permanent).
4. Riverine floodplains; includes river flats, flooded river basins, seasonally flooded grassland, savanna and palm savanna.

5. Permanent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha.); includes large oxbow lakes.
6. Seasonal freshwater lakes (over 8 ha.), floodplain lakes.
7. Permanent and seasonal, brackish, saline or alkaline lakes, flats and marshes.
8. Permanent freshwater ponds (below 8 ha.), marshes and swamps on inorganic soils; with emergent vegetation waterlogged for at least most of the growing season.
9. Seasonal freshwater ponds and marshes on inorganic soil; includes sloughs, potholes, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes.
10. Shrub swamps; shrub-dominated freshwater marsh, shrub carr, alder thicket; on inorganic soils.
11. Freshwater swamp forest; seasonally flooded forest, wooded swamps; on inorganic soils.
12. Peatlands; shrub or open bogs, fens.
13. Forested peatlands; peat swamp forest.
14. Alpine and tundra wetlands; includes alpine meadows, tundra pools, temporary waters from snowmelt.
15. Freshwater springs, oases.
16. Geothermal wetlands.

Man-made Wetlands

1. Water storage areas; reservoirs, barrages, hydro-electric dams, impoundments (generally over 8 ha.).
2. Ponds, including farm ponds, stock ponds, small tanks (generally below 8 ha.).
3. Aquaculture ponds; fish ponds, shrimp ponds.
4. Salt exploitation; salt pans, salines.
5. Excavations; gravel pits, borrow pits, mining pools.
6. Wastewater treatment; sewage farms, settling ponds, oxidation basins.
7. Irrigated land and irrigation channels; rice fields, canals, ditches.
8. Seasonally flooded arable land, farm land.

An arrangement of these terms in a hierarchical format is given hereafter.

CODING SYSTEM FOR WETLAND TYPES

Marine		Subtidal		Shallow marine waters
			Aquatic bed Reef	Marine aquatic beds Coral reefs
Marine & Coastal	Estuarine	Intertidal	Rocky Unconsol	Rocky marine shores Sand/shingle beaches
Marine & Coastal	Estuarine	Subtidal		Estuarine waters
		Intertidal	Unconsol Emergent Forested	Intertidal mudflats Salt marshes Mangrove, tidal forest
Marine & Coastal	Lacustrine/ Palustrine	Permanent/ Seasonal		Brackish/saline lagoons Coastal fresh lagoons
Marine & Coastal	Riverine	Perennial		Permanent river/stream
		Intermitt.	Emergent Emergent	Inland deltas Intermittent river/stream Floodplain wetlands
Marine & Coastal	Lacustrine	Permanent Seasonal Permanent/ Seasonal		Permanent freshwater lakes Seasonal freshwater lakes Permanent/seasonal saline lakes and marshes
Inland	Palustrine	Permanent		Permanent freshwater ponds and marshes
			Emergent	Open peat bogs, fens Alpine/tundra wetlands
Inland	Palustrine	Permanent	Shrub-dom. Forested	Shrub-dominated swamps Freshwater swamp forest Peat swamp forest
			Seasonal	Emergent
Inland	Palustrine	Permanent		Geothermal wetlands
Inland	Palustrine	Permanent		Fish, shrimp ponds
Inland	Palustrine	Permanent		Farm ponds, small tanks
Man-made	Salt exploitation			
			Salt pans, salines	
Man-made	Urban and			Reservoirs, barrages

Industrial

Sewage farms