

National Report to be prepared in advance of the 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

Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in general, and of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002 in particular, during the period since the National Report prepared in 1995 for Ramsar COP6 and 30 June 1998

Contracting Party: **REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority: **State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment**

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Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention.

1.1 Describe any actions your government has taken (such as hosting regional or subregional meetings/consultations, working cooperatively with neighbouring countries on transfrontier wetland sites) to encourage others to join the Convention.

There were no special actions by Croatian government aimed to encourage neighbouring countries to join the Convention.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

To achieve the wise use of wetlands by implementing and further developing the Ramsar Wise Use Guidelines.

2.1 Has a National Wetland Policy/Strategy/Action Plan been developed, or is one being developed or planned for the near future? If so:

The State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment has prepared the **Draft National Biological and Landscape Strategy and Action Plan (NBSLAP)**, that is expected to be discussed for adoption by Government in May 1999. It consists of sixteen strategic objectives, one of them being wetlands protection. Strategic directions and action plans are given for the realisation of this objective.

What are/will be its main features?

The main features will be:

- to recognise that wetlands are the most endangered ecosystems in Croatia;
- to prevent the loss of remained natural wetlands;
- to ensure active protection measures for natural wetlands, especially the small Mediterranean wetlands;
- to make management plans for protected wetlands, with priority being given to Ramsar sites, especially Kopacki Rit and Neretva Delta;
- to strengthen management of wetlands on local level;
- to make inventory and evaluation of Croatian wetlands, including designation of new potential Ramsar sites and protected areas;
- to make action plans for threatened wetland sites;
- to protect watercourses and wetland areas from the pollution;
- to plan longterm actions on resatoration of degraded natural wetlands, specially in the Mediterranean area, as well as on improving natural conditions on artificial water and wetland biotopes;
- to improve data collection, inventories and monitoring on wetlands;
- to raise public awareness and to promote the protection and wise use of wetlands.

Was it, or is it, intended that the Policy/Strategy/Action Plan be adopted by the whole of Government, the Minister responsible for Ramsar matters or through some other process. Please describe.

It is intended that the NBSLAP is accepted by the Government and by the Parliament of Croatia.

How does it relate/will it relate to other national environmental/ conservation planning initiatives (e.g., National Environmental Action Plans, National Biodiversity Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies)?

National Environmental Strategy is in preparation and it will be in accordance with NBSLAP.

2.2 If a policy is in place, how much progress has been made in its implementation, and what are the major difficulties being encountered in doing so?

NBSLAP is still not in place. The major difficulties could be expected regarding some planned huge building projects that could/will threaten wetlands.

2.3 If a Policy/Strategy/Action Plan is in place, is the responsibility for implementing it with :

- a. a single Government Ministry,
- b. a committee drawn from several Ministries, or
- c. a cross-sectoral committee?

Please provide details.

The responsibility for implementing the NBSAP is with the State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment, but the very implementation must go through other sectors, too. It is planned to establish the National Committee for the implementation of NBSAP with representatives of different ministries, scientific institutions and NGO's. It is also planned to establish the National Wetlands Committee to implement the strategy and action plans for wetlands that is the part of NBSAP.

2.4 For countries with Federal systems of Government, are there Wetland Policies/Strategies/Plans in place, being developed or planned for the provincial/state or regional levels of Government? Yes/No

If yes, please give details.

2.5 Has a review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands been carried out, and if so, has this resulted in any changes which assist with implementation of the Ramsar Convention? Please describe these.

During last three years there was no such a review of legislation made, but in the Draft NBSAP it has been recognised that it is needed, specially regarding the preparation of the new Law on the Protection of Nature that would have a new accent on the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity in general, not only in protected areas. Also, the strenghtening of the Environmental Impact Assessment mechanism is needed.

2.6 Describe the efforts made in your country to have wetlands considered in integrated land/water and coastal zone planning and management processes at the following levels:
national

In 1998 the Croatian Parliament has adopted the National Physical Planning Strategy. It has incorporated the main nature protection issues and planned protected areas, between them some being wetlands. It is planned there to double the protected areas territory from 7,5% of state area to 15 % in different categories of protected areas.

provincial

District Physical Plans need to be aproved by the State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment. It is the mechanism to integrate the wetlands protection into these documents that regulate the land use on provincial level.

local

2.7 Have there been any publications produced, or practices documented, which could assist other countries to promote and improve the application of the Ramsar Wise Use of Wetlands Guidelines? Yes/**No**

If Yes, please provide details and copies.

2.8 Noting COP6 Recommendation 6.14 relating to toxic chemicals and pollution, please advise of the actions taken since then "to remedy and to prevent pollution impacts affecting Ramsar sites and other wetlands" (Operative paragraph 9).

2.9 Describe what steps have been taken to incorporate wetland economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment actions.

There have been some attempts during the Environmental Impact Assessment procedures, but without success – there are still no cost/benefit analysis that evaluate wetlands economically.

2.10 Is Environmental Impact Assessment for actions potentially impacting on wetlands required under legislation in your country? Yes/No

2.11 Is wetland restoration and rehabilitation considered a priority in your country? Yes/No.

In NBSAP wetland restoration and rehabilitation are planned as longterm actions after priority ones regarding protection and management of wetlands. Urgent restoration and rehabilitation measures are needed because of very quick eutrophication for: small wetlands, specially Mediterranean island ones; several remained small moors that are almost completely overgrown; Neretva delta Ramsar site (restoration of lagoons).

If Yes, describe the actions that have been taken to identify wetlands in need of these actions and to mobilise resources for restoration or rehabilitation.

2.12 Describe what actions have been taken to "encourage active and informed participation of local communities, including indigenous people, and in particular women, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands." (refer to Actions 2.7.1-4 in the Strategic Plan).

Recently established management authorities of Lonjsko Polje Nature Park and Kopacki Rit Nature Park (both Ramsar sites) have started activities to encourage active participation of local communities in the protection of area.

As a part of MedWet programme, there was the National seminar on the conservation and use of Croatian Wetlands *Socio-economic Aspects of the Use of the Neretva Valley* organised in the local town Metkovic, from 11-13 November 1997. It was aimed to encourage the local community to take part in the management and wise use of this wetland.

2.13 Describe what actions have been taken to "encourage involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands" (refer to Actions 2.8.1-4 in the Strategic Plan). Has this included a review of fiscal measures (taxation arrangements, etc.) to identify and

remove disincentives and introduce incentives for wetlands conservation and wise use?

Yes/No

If yes, please provide details.

In northern part of Croatia there is about 13.000 ha of extensively managed carp fishponds that have become very important artificial wetland biotopes of extreme landscape and ornithological value, especially for a number of waterbird species threatened on the European level. There are some attempts to encourage carp fisheries to recognise their ornithological value and to stimulate them to protection measures by issuing taxation arrangements and some incentive measures. This action is only in the beginning, but it is recognised as the priority action plan in the Draft NBSAP.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

To raise awareness of wetland values and functions throughout the world and at all levels

3.1 Is there a government-run national programme for Education and Public Awareness in your country which focuses on, or includes, wetlands? Yes/**No**?

If yes, what are the priority actions under this programme and who are the target groups? (Refer also to question 9.4)

3.2 Describe the steps taken to have wetlands issues and Ramsar's Wise Use principles included as part of the curricula of educational institutions. Has this been at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary and adult)? Please give details.

Regretably, no such steps have been taken. Evenmore, during last several years the number of school hours for natural subjects in primary and secondary schools has been restricted. There are some relevant subjects on faculties, like *The Nature Protection* on the Faculty of Science etc. One of the priorities in the Draft NBSAP is to ensure the biodiversity issues on all levels of education, and also to revise all existing education plans and programmes.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

To reinforce the capacity of institutions in each Contracting Party to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.

4.1 Describe the mechanisms in place, or being introduced, to increase cooperation between the various institutions responsible for actions which can have an impact on the conservation and wise use of wetlands. If one of the mechanisms is a National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee, please describe its composition, functions and modus operandi.

There are still no such mechanisms, but a National Wetlands Committee composed of different responsible institutions is planned to be established after adoption of the NBSAP.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:
a review to identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands Yes/**No**?

If yes, please indicate the major findings of the review.

b. a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries. Yes/**No**?

c. the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details. **No**.

d. people from your country have gained wetland-related training either within or outside the country. Yes/**No**? If yes, please give details.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

To ensure the conservation of all sites included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List).

5.1 Of the Ramsar sites in your country, how many have formal management plans: being prepared?

Only one – Kopacki Rit.

fully prepared?

None.

being implemented?

None.

Please indicate in the attached table of Ramsar sites which sites these are and what category they fall into.

5.2 Of the management plans referred to above, which ones have included a monitoring scheme or programme to allow changes in ecological character to be detected? Please indicate this in the attached table of Ramsar sites also.

5.3 Has there been a change in the ecological character (either positive or negative) at any of your Ramsar sites or is this likely to occur in the near future? Yes/No.

If Yes, please give details.

Neretva Delta is specially threatened in future because of different planned activities there. For the moment only five smaller segments of this area are protected, but currently there is a proposal on the Croatian government to pass a Law on proclaiming the whole area a nature park that would be managed by its own management authority.

5.4 In the case of Montreux Record Ramsar sites where the Management Guidance Procedure has been applied, what is the status of the implementation of the MGP report recommendations? What is the expected time-frame for removing the site from the Montreux Record?

Kopacki Rit was put on Montreux Record list because of the war activities and occupation in the beginning of 1990's. This situation has changed, and the area has its own management authority. The site could be removed from the Montreux Record.

5.5 For those countries referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4, "Ramsar sites in the Territories of Specific Contracting Parties", please provide advice on the actions that have been taken in response to the issues raised at that time.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 6

To designate for the Ramsar List those wetlands which meet the Convention's criteria, especially wetland types still under-represented in the List and transfrontier wetlands.

6.1 Has a national inventory of wetlands been prepared for your country? Yes/No.

If no, are there plans for this to be done? Yes/No.

Where a national inventory exists please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept and what information it contains.

6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of "important" wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No - **there is no official list.**

If yes, please provide details of when it was finalised, where it is kept, what criteria for "important" were used, and the types of information it contains.

6.3 If it is known, please provide an estimate of the area of wetlands in your country at present and any information on rates of loss or conversion to other activities.

If this information is available, please indicate what definition of "wetland" was used.

Such an estimation does not exist.

6.4 Have any actions been taken in response to the COP6 Resolutions and Recommendations that Contracting Parties should give priority to listing Wetlands of International Importance which:

- a. meet the criteria for fish habitat (Resolution VI.2),
- b. meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations using data provided by the International Waterfowl Census (Resolution VI.4),
- c. are subterranean karst or cave wetland systems (Resolution VI.5),
- d. are peatland ecosystems (Recommendation 6.1)

e. are coral reefs and associated systems (Recommendation 6.7)

f. are under-represented wetland types (which apart from d. and e. above include mangroves and sea grass beds) (Strategic Plan Action 6.2.3)

Yes/No? If yes, please describe these actions.

No such actions have been taken.

6.5 If your government indicated at COP6 that it would be proceeding to list further specific sites, please advise of the status of this action.

6.6 Please advise which of the sites included in the Ramsar List from your country are transfrontier wetlands (Refer also to 7.1).

Three of four Croatian Ramsar sites are transfrontier: Kopacki Rit (with FR Yugoslavia), Lonjsko Polje and Neretva Delta (with Bosnia and Hercegovina).

6.7 Describe any plans, or actions being taken for further transfrontier sites to be listed (Refer also to 7.1).

No such plans or actions have been taken.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilise international cooperation and financial assistance for wetland conservation and wise use in collaboration with other conventions and agencies, both governmental and non-governmental.

7.1 Briefly describe any bilateral or multilateral activities that have been taken, are under way, or are planned for the management of transfrontier wetlands or their watersheds/catchments (Refer also to 6.6 and 6.7).

Still unofficial activities have been undertaken regarding cooperation on the protection of Neretva Delta with Bosnia and Hercegovina.

7.2 Do you have Ramsar sites that are "twinned" with others, either nationally or internationally? Yes/No.

Neretva Delta is the 'twinned' Ramsar site with Hutovo Blato in Bosnia and Hercegovina.

If yes, please give details.

7.3 Where your country is also a signatory of any of the following Conventions, describe what mechanism(s) exist to assist regular dialogue and cooperative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

a. Convention on Biological Diversity

b. Framework Convention on Climate Change

c. Convention to Combat Desertification

d. Convention on Migratory Species

World Heritage Convention.

The State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment is the Administrative Authority of all these Conventions, so the cooperation between the responsible personnel is not problematic.

7.4 Is your country cooperating as part of any bilateral or multilateral activities directed at the conservation of migratory wetland species? **Yes/No.**

If yes, please provide details.

Recently the cooperation with Slovenia started regarding the conservation of geese wintering habitat on Ormozko Lake – the accumulation on the Drava River.

7.5 Are there multilateral and/or bilateral donors supporting projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in your country? **Yes/No.**

If yes, please provide details.

The GEF/World Bank project is just being started for the preparation of the Management plan for Kopacki Rit Ramsar site.

7.6 Does your government make an annual budgetary allocation to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands within your country? **Yes/No.**

All activities regarding wetlands protection are financed from the regular nature and environment state budget allocation that goes through the State Directorate for the Protection of Nature and Environment. This budget allocation is very restricted.

If yes, is this a specific allocation to a wetlands programme or as part of a larger environment or natural resource management budget?

7.7 If your country has a development assistance programme, does it include funds earmarked for wetland conservation and wise use in other countries? **Yes/No.**

If yes, please give details.

7.8 Is there a formal process in place for consultation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the development assistance programme in your country, where one exists? **Yes/No**

If yes, what is that process.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources.

8.1 Has your government made voluntary financial contributions, other than the invoiced contributions or to the Small Grants Fund, to further the work of the Convention globally? Yes/**No**.

If yes, please provide details.

8.2 If your country is in arrears with the payment of its annual contributions to the Ramsar Convention, please indicate the reasons for this situation and the prospects for paying these arrears in the near future.

Arrears are expected to be payed before the ramsar COP7.

Optional section - Participation of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention

9.1 Approximately how many NGOs have wetlands as part of their regular "business" in your country?

There are 18 NGO's registered, between other activities, also for the protection of biodiversity, but none of them particulary for the wetlands protection. There are two ornithological societies that deal with research and protection of wetland ornithofauna.

Please break this down between international, regional and national/provincial organizations.

Most of NGO's are national or national/provincial. Some NGO's are members of international organisations. There is an office of REC – Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe working actively in Zagreb.

9.2 Is there a regular forum or mechanism through which these NGOs express their views on wetland conservation and Ramsar implementation:

a. to each other? Yes/**No**

b. to the government? Yes/**No**

If yes in either case, please give details.

9.3 Does your government include one or more NGO representatives on its official delegation to Ramsar COPs? Yes/ **No**

9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No.

There are no such programmes aimed particulary at wetlands conservation.

If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives?

If yes, please give details

No such committees exist in Croatia.

9.6 Describe the themes of the Convention (refer to General Objectives 1-8 of the Strategic Plan) where you perceive the national/provincial NGOs to be most active.

The main themes for NGO's are: raising public awareness and encouraging active participation of local communities in the wetland protection.

Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with, and services provided by:

- a. The Ramsar Standing Committee
- b. The Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel
- c. The Ramsar Bureau
- d. The Ramsar NGO partners

10.3 Any other general observations and/or recommendations for the future.