

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: Estonia**

### **Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority**

Full names of the institution: Estonian Ministry of Environment

Name and title of the head of the institution: Mr. Villu Reiljan, Minister of Environment

Mailing address for the head of the institution:

Toompuiestee 24,  
EE0100 Tallinn, Estonia

Telephone: + 372 6262 802

Fax: +372 6262 801

Email:

Name and title (if different) of the designated contact officer for Ramsar Convention matters:  
Mr. Tiit Randla, Head of the Nature Conservation Division of the Nature Conservation and natural  
resources Department

Mailing address (if different) for the designated contact officer:  
Same

Telephone: +372 6262 870  
Email: tiitr@ekm.envir.ee

Fax: +372 6262 801

1.1 -

2.1 National Wetland Policy is adopted by governmental decree since 4 March 1997. Wetland issues are level included also in some other relevant policy documents like National Environmental Action Plan. There is also the National Programme on the Implementation of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1997) in governmental level. The main goal of this programme is preparing and complaining management plans for all internationally important wetlands by 2002. Yet the main policy principles are elaborated and serve as guidelines for the work of Ministry of Environment. These can be summarized as follows:

A. Concerning mires:

- \* to preserve the typical mire sites for each region of Estonia;
- \* to protect mires deserving it as habitats of rare plants and animals;
- \* to preserve mires, which are important for water protection;
- \* to preserve mires with unique peat deposits;
- \* to follow sustainability principles in the peat extraction;

B. Concerning lakes:

- \* preparing applies sensible planning processes for the catchment areas of most valuable and vulnerable lakes in order to avoid their further damage by eutrophication;
- \* cost-effective methods for lake restoration in Estonia have to be tested and some pilot projects implemented.

C. Concerning seminatural wetlands

- \* to preserve seminatural wetlands (coastal and alluvial meadows) economically viable extent;
- \* to prepare the management plans for all protected seminatural wetlands;
- \* to study and test further possibilities of wise use of seminatural wetlands.

National Wetland Strategy is under preparation (commissioned by the World bank) and has to be published in September 1998. It includes updated wetland inventory results with an emphasis on wetland types (fens and transition bogs) which were not sufficiently studied so far, protection proposals and land-use strategy for wetlands.

It is the intention of the Ministry of Environment to start also the preparation of National Wetland Action Plan, which should include overviews on current protection instruments and protected areas and further needs, sector-by-sector assessment of economic developments affecting wetlands and site-by-site Action Plans (need for management plans, time-tables for implementation and an investment matrix). Collateral funds are currently sought for this (an application has been made to OMPO, Estonia is ready to fund part of the project).

National Environmental Action Plan and National Biodiversity Action Plan have been prepared and all policy documents under preparation should be coordinated with these.

2.2 -

- 2.3 -
- 2.4 -
- 2.5 Since Estonian legislation has developed quickly after regaining independence in 1991. reviews on legislative needs are being made frequently. The coherence of Estonian laws with international conventions is assessed constantly. This has resulted, e.g., in adoption of Amendments of Act on Protected Natural Objects by which the preparation and implementation of management plans have become a legal requirement. One of the quite recent steps of Estonian government has been adoption of a decree about critical value of the peat deposit, i.e., establishing the sustainable level of peat extraction.
- 2.6
- a. For Matsalu wetland the management plan was prepared and then supplemented with the management guidelines for the whole area, which will be used in the planning of land-use in the counties within the catchment area.
  - b. The management plan for Käina bay will be integrated to the larger land/coastal zone plan in Hiiumaa island and Väinameri regions.
- 2.7 No
- 2.8 Basically the in remedy and prevention of pollution strong priority is given to the Helsinki Convention. Since under the HELCOM Programme Implementation Task Force a Working Group on Management of Coastal Lagoons and Wetlands has been active for five years, a lot has been done for specific coastal wetlands and reducing pollution in general (construction of sewage treatment plants, closing and liquidating the point-sources of pollution and reducing pollution from non-point sources). Most of these actions match well the spirit of COP6 Recommendation 6.14.
- 2.9 Wetland economic valuation techniques in strict sense are not very well developed as yet. Valuation methods worked out in the western countries are much based on the high price/value of land, In Estonia, where much of the land is abandoned, unused or underdeveloped, the land value is not always clear. Wetland economy has been studied in the sense of the cost of management and the considerations and findings incorporated in the management plans.
- 2.10 Yes
- 2.11 No, because of big number (and territory) of wetlands have still maintained their basic ecological value. Small-scale restoration projects are still carried out, e.g., on smaller lakes and also the restoration of some depleted peat-bogs (Lavassaare and Viru bog) is under way.
- 2.12 The main problem is to convince farmers to continue the management of seminatural wetlands, in the areas with no management plans adopted as yet. The new protection rules, made for different protected wetlands and management plans try sensibly to incorporate the wise use principles.
- 2.13 Yes. Mostly supporting activities of farmers (mowing and grazing) are regarded as an essential part of the implementation of the existing and prepared management plans for the wetlands with seminatural communities (floodplain and coastal meadows). Fiscal incentives

(dotations) are agreed to the farmers in the areas where the management plans are accepted and implementation has started (this applies so far to Matsalu, but hopefully in near future the scope will be extended).

3.1 Yes, addressed specifically as a part of Public Awareness Programma of the recently prepared National Environmental Action Plan.

Priority actions under this programma include public awareness projects, updating curricula and adult training.

The target groups are mostly pupils and local authorities, public awareness campaigns are addressed to the wide audience.

3.2 Wetland conservation issues have lasted a long period since had an important place in the curricula. In 60-ies, when Moscow had a plan to drain most of Estonian peat-bogs a campaign was started by Estonian scientific community to raise the public awareness about the importance of wetlands, especially the peatbogs. The ideology worked out by that time included implicitly also the Wise Use principles, but needs somewhat to be updated and addressed more explicitly. Wetland issues are quite well covered in the curricula of secondary and tertiary levels.

4.1 National Ramsar Committee is the basic mechanism promoting cooperation between the various scientific and administrative institutions.

4.2

a. Not formally, identifying the training needs has been considered to be a part of day-to-day routine for the Ministry of Environment. With limited budget this is a matter of balancing priority needs with existing and upcoming opportunities.

b. Not formally.

c. Not specifically, but since the management plan for Matsalu wetland is in the phase of implementation, can it be used as a demonstration project for other wetland managers.

d. Yes. Two wetland managers have attended the Lelystadt /Holland/ courses about wetland management. Several workshops have been organized in Estonia in cooperation with WWF and former IWRB and similar courses attended by wetland managers in other countries.

5.1

a. 3

b. 1

c. 1

5.2 Monitoring is a mandatory part of the management plan, only the extent of monitoring may vary significantly - some of the wetlands (Vilsandi, Endla) have stationary monitoring stations with wide scope of monitoring parameters.

5.3 Yes.

Positive changes include the following:

- \* Pollution rates have decreased significantly because of decline in the primary economy sectors and construction of sewage water treatment plants;
- \* Active planning and construction of trails and other public access facilities have channeled the visitor load in many wetlands and making its impact more manageable.

Negative changes include mostly:

- \* Valuable seminatural habitats are often abandoned by farmers and grow over;
- \* Privatization of land has created different problems and sometimes violations against the protection regime. Smaller fens on private lands and not protected, have sometimes seriously damaged with drainage.
- \* Forestry is a very quickly developing sector with serious impact to wet forests and wetlands, adjacent to forests (The newly adopted Forest Policy has among its objectives to mitigate this development);
- \* Tourism and visitor load are increasing and affect negatively the areas where the visitor facilities are absent.

5.4 -

5.5 -

6.1 Yes.

On fifties integral mapping of Estonian plant communities led by prof. L. Laasimer continued the ambitious task undertaken by prof. T. Lippmaa in thirties and resulted in the L.Laasimers monograph published in 1965 (The Plant cover of Estonian SSR ). Along with this, complex ecological studies of some bog systems, were initiated by prof. V. Masing resulted in considerable expertise in Estonian bogs, their ecology and genesis. The most recent monographic study on Estonian mires " Eesti sood ( Estonian Mires )" by U. Valk was published in 1988.

Estonian lakes have been studied and inventoried (excluding the lakes less than one ha in size) relatively well by Dr. A.Mäemets; the classification of lakes as well as ecological features of Estonian lakes has been described by the latter and the staff of the limnological station of the Institute of Zoology and Botany. Two monographs have been published.

The project Wetstonia was initiated by Estonian Fund for Nature in 1993 to get an overview about flood plain and coastal meadows. The database of Wetstonia consists more than of 3000 data sheets and a report has been published in 1996. Due to the rapid changes in ecological conditions of seminatural habitats additional inventories are essential.

The knowledge about offshore marine areas is sporadic.

The inventory of fens and transition bogs has recently been completed as a preparatory work for Estonian Wetland Conservation Strategy commissioned by the World Bank.

6.2 Yes.

Estonian Ornithological Society has prepared a directory of Important Bird Areas (IBA-s). Most recent inventory reports on flood plain and coastal meadows, fens and transition bogs include the assessment of their conservation value (importance) based on different criteria.

6.3 About 300 000 ha of Estonian mires have been drained and about other 300 000 ha influenced by the drainage, the data is not fully available about the loss of wet meadows.

6.4 No.

7.1

- 6.5 In addition to the ten wetlands listed as a Ramsar-sites Estonian Government shadow-listed with a decree ten additional important wetlands to be Ramsar listed by 2010.
- 6.6 Not yet.
- 6.7 Plans exist to expand the area of protected wetlands around Nigula, complement them in cooperation with Latvia with bogs in North-Vidzeme area (Latvia) and thus form a transfrontier site.  
Possibilities exist also for forming transfrontier site with Russia (Emajõe Suursoo Mire and Piirissaar Island lies close to the Ramsar site in Russia). Forming a transfrontier site will be possible after signing the border contract between Estonia and Russia.
- 7.1 Various bilateral contracts have been signed with Russia about the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection in Lake Peipsi and its catchment.
- 7.2 Yes. Nigula Nature Reserve (Estonia) and North-Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve (Latvia) cooperate closely to establish a transfrontier wetland site.
- 7.3
- a. Convention on Biological Diversity - well coordinated between each other by responsible officers in the same - Nature Conservation and Natural Resources Department of the Ministry of Environment.
  - b. Framework Convention on Climate Change - adequately coordinated by the Policy Department of the Ministry of Environment.
  - e. World Heritage Convention - coordinated to some extent by responsible officers of different ministries.
- 7.4 No, but Estonia intends to join the East-Paleartic and African Flyway Agreement of the Bonn Convention.
- 7.5 Yes.  
Ramsar Small Grant Fund has provided a tractor to Matsalu wetland;  
Within HELCOM PITF MLW framework and supported by various donors (WWF, EU Phare, World Bank, management plans have been prepared for Matsalu and Käina bays; EU LIFE programma has supported the preparation of management plan for Alam-Pedja wetland;  
Danish Government supports the preparation of management plan for Soomaa National Park.  
Several grants for various purposes (mostly public awareness) have been received from different donors.
- 7.6 Yes.  
Allocations are a part of the budget of nature conservation programma.
- 7.7 No.

7.8 No.

8.1 Yes, Ministry of Environment has partly paid the travel costs of the participants in various meetings (e.g., to Riga).

8.2 -

- 9.1 Mostly three national NGOs - Estonian Fund for Nature, Estonian Ornithological Society and Estonian Society for Protection of Hereditary Habitats.
- 9.2 No  
No
- 9.3 Yes
- 9.4 Yes, project Coastwatch (including subprojects like Riverwatch and Lakewatch) has been run by Estonian Fund for Nature for several years.
- 9.5 NGO-s are usually represented in the Steering Committees at the projects aimed at the preparation of management plans.
- 9.6 Preparing inventories, making conservation proposals, public awareness, working camps to assist in management.

- 10.1 Estonia joined Ramsar Convention quite recently and most important is, that we have quickly proceeded with first essential steps in fulfilling the obligations deriving from agreement.
- 10.2 All very positive observations.
- I. 10.3 -

**The Ramsar Convention Bureau**  
Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland  
tel +41 22 999 0170  
fax +41 22 999 0169  
e-mail [ramsar@hq.iucn.org](mailto:ramsar@hq.iucn.org)