

**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**

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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.

Hosting Oceania regional meeting December 1998
Assisted Vanuatu with freshwater biodiversity inventory

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:

National Wetland Policy 1986
National Wetlands Action Plan in preparation 1998

- a) What are/will be its main features?

National Policy sets broad objectives for central government
National Wetlands Action Plan assists co-ordination of the planning and management of all agencies and owners

- b) 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.

Policy was approved by the whole of government. Responsibility for implementing it rests with the Minister for the Environment and the Minister of Conservation

- c) 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)?

The National Wetlands Policy is at the same level as other national policies e.g., Environment 2010. The National Wetlands Action Plan will be subordinate to national policies and to the NZ Biodiversity Strategy.

- 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?

Progress since 1986 has been slow. The main difficulties have been with limited resources and shared responsibility among central and local government as well as private landowners.

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.

Policy is the responsibility of both the Minister of the Environment and Minister of Conservation. The National Wetland Action Plan is to be co-ordinated by DOC with input from various management agencies and stakeholder groups.

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.

N/A

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.

Yes, a review led to the 1986 Policy and provisions in both the 1987 Conservation Act and 1991 Resource Management Act.

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:

a) **national**

The Resource Management Act (1991) is concerned with integrated environmental management.

The protection of wetlands is integral to the purpose and principles (Part II) of the Act, in particular section 6 (a) which prescribes as a matter of importance the preservation of the natural character of wetlands, and section 6 (c) which provides for the protection of indigenous vegetation, significant areas of and significant habitat of indigenous fauna. Regional and district councils must recognise and provide for, or take into account these Part II matters when discharging their functions. All rights in natural water remain vested in the Crown but most management responsibilities are devolved to regional councils.

The Conservation Act (1987) establishes the Department of Conservation. The Department has a number of functions including the management for conservation purposes of land and natural resources; the preservation of indigenous freshwater fisheries; the protection of freshwater fish habitats and management of protected areas including reserves and national Parks, management of all indigenous wildlife, and a statutory role in advocating conservation of natural and historic heritage.

b) **regional**

Regional and district councils have variable responsibilities for wetland management under the Resource Management Act. Regional councils' core functions include (but are not limited to) the control of the use of land for the purpose of soil conservation; the maintenance of the quality and quantity of water in water bodies, and for natural hazards purposes. Regional councils also control discharges to water, damming and diversion of water, and activities in the Coastal Marine Area. These functions have direct relevance to the protection of wetlands.

Most of the mandatory regional policy statements (RPS) contain policies relating to the protection and restoration of significant indigenous vegetation and habitat of indigenous fauna, and the preservation of the natural character of wetlands. Typically RPS documents promote the use of a variety of methods to achieve the protection of wetlands, including rules, education, incentives, heritage orders, and advocacy.

Regional councils are also preparing regional plans under the RMA, which may impact upon the protection and restoration of wetlands. Regional land plans invariably make provisions for protection of significant wetlands, including thorough controls on discharge of sediment to water, and rules relating to the modification of wetlands generally.

Mandatory regional coastal plans contain regulatory controls (for the protection of significant wetlands in the coastal marine area), policies and objectives. Most regional councils have also produced regional water plans (or are in the process of doing this). These plans usually address wetland management through appropriate controls on discharges to water and diversions, or land drainage.

Many regional councils are committed to non regulatory methods of protection of wetlands, for instance through comprehensive riparian management programmes. Some programmes provide financial assistance to landowners for the retirement of riparian areas and replanting of these areas in native species. A number of regional councils provide "environmental funds" which promote protection of natural features through a contestable assistance fund.

Regional councils have also produced guidelines and educational material on protection and restoration options. Promotion of Landcare groups, Trees for Survival Programmes, and field days are other methods that councils use to promote wetland management.

Investigation and monitoring is an important component of wetland management. Most regional councils have information (of variable quality) on wetland values, threats and management options. These databases are used to guide decision making and as monitoring baselines etc.

Regional council animal and plant pest control responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act also affect wetland management.

The Department of Conservation produces Conservation Management (CMS) which are 10 year conservancy scale strategies that provide an overview of resources vested in Department of Conservation.

Regional Plans

The “Proposed Regional Plan”, produced by Waikato Regional Council in consultation with stakeholders and the community, has a chapter on wetlands. This outlines the values of, and issues facing wetlands, and policies and methods to protect wetlands. Rules are proposed to control drainage within all wetlands > 1 ha, and drainage within 200m of identified wetlands.

The “Proposed Bay of Plenty Regional Policy Statement” (RPS) contains a number of policies relating to the protection and restoration of significant indigenous vegetation and habitat of indigenous fauna, and the preservation of the natural character of wetlands. The RPS promotes the use of a variety of methods to achieve the protection of wetlands, including rules, education, incentives, heritage orders, and advocacy.

A number of regional plans in the Bay of Plenty also provide for protection and restoration of wetlands. The “Proposed Regional Land Management Plan” contains policies for protection of significant wetlands. Rules relating to the modification of wetlands are provided, although the plan also has a strong non-regulatory philosophy. The “Proposed Regional Coastal Environment Plan” also contains regulatory controls for the protection of significant wetlands in the coastal marine areas. Finally, Bay of Plenty Regional Council is currently producing a regional water plan that will specifically address wetland management through appropriate controls on discharges to water and diversions.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council is currently investigating the development of a regional framework to monitor ecological integrity, using vegetation, topographical, geological and bioclimatic data. This work has already highlighted that 95% of wetlands have been destroyed in the Bay of Plenty Region. This information will be used to prioritise management and restoration efforts, and to monitor changes in the extent of wetlands in the Region.

Provisions are made for the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes in regional plans and when considering applications for resource consents. This method serves to implement policies and applies to exceptional wetlands, rivers and their margins in the Manawatu-Wanganui Region.

Wellington Regional Council has not taken a particularly active approach to wetland management. The loss of wetlands is identified as a significant regional issue in the Regional Policy Statement but the only real action has been to use advocacy through statutory planning. Given that many wetlands are affected by non-notified land use consents, about which we know little, a procedure is instituted where Territorial Authorities (District Councils) consult the Regional Council over any wetland likely to be affected by such consents from a list of wetlands of importance which the Regional Council supply to them. Important wetlands in the region are also identified in the “Proposed Regional Freshwater Plan” and there is a suite of policies and rules designed to ensure their protection.

West Coast Regional Council (WCRC) and DOC are working closely together to try and achieve integrated management. The first step in this process has been to establish joint monitoring initiatives, eg WCRC concentrates on water quality sampling, habitat assessments and hydrological investigations (particularly in rivers and lakes) whereas DOC has considerably more expertise in wetland habitats.

The Canterbury Regional Council refers specifically to wetlands in their regional policy statement.

The “Regional Policy Statement” for Otago provides for the protection of Otago's remaining significant wetlands and for the provision of alternative habitats of similar or improved nature in compensation for any loss in habitat of these wetlands.

The “Draft Regional Plan: Water for Otago”, notified on 28 February 1998, identifies approximately 80 wetlands of significance and requires identified wetland values to be maintained if considered irreplaceable, and appropriately compensated for where not irreplaceable, where they may be affected by activities regulated by any plan. The plan also promotes the voluntary conservation of wetlands generally. Specifics of that are likely to be developed through the annual plan process in future years.

The Southland Regional Council has a specific Lakes, Rivers and Wetlands section.

c) **local**

District councils' functions under the Resource Management Act include the control of the actual and potential effects of the use of land, and the control of subdivision. District councils can specifically provide for the protection of wetlands through district plan provisions. Some councils also administer wetlands as part of their protected area holdings.

District councils have various provisions for the protection and restoration of wetlands. Methods used at a district level include: information and publicity; protective covenants; rates relief; provision for fencing; subdivision controls; and conditions, standards, and terms or rules for activities.

As specific examples, a few councils provide bonus subdivision privileges for the formal protection of natural features such as wetlands, whereby landowners are entitled to additional subdivision privileges on the protection in perpetuity of natural features.

Not all district councils provide regulatory controls for wetland protection. However some councils have developed rules to restrict modification of sites, including activities such as vegetation clearance.

Some district councils have also developed financial contribution policies, to offset the adverse effects of subdivision and development on the environment. Contributions can be used to protect ecosystems through fencing and covenanting.

District Plans

The Waikato District Plan has specific policies and objectives for conservation and natural resources that include wetlands. Objectives include mention of preserving wetlands and safeguarding significant habitats of indigenous flora. Policies include protecting ecologically sensitive wildlife habitats and encouraging the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna. A variety of methods are used including: information and publicity; protective covenants; use of other legislation; rates relief; provision for fencing; subdivision controls; conditions, standards, and rules for activities in rural zones and landscape areas.

The Hauraki District Plan has a specific Conservation (Wetland) Zone. The purpose is to preserve and protect the botanical, wildlife and natural character of the wetlands in the zone; maintain their flood control functions and recognise the education, economic and scientific role of wetlands. The principal method used to achieve the objectives is through rules and

the monitoring of activities in terms of resource consent conditions and/or the performance standards applying in the zone. Wetlands outside of this zone are protected under Natural Areas of Ecological Significance (Remnant Bush Outside Public Ownership). A range of incentives, information and rules are used to protect identified natural wetland areas of ecological significance.

District councils within the Bay of Plenty Region have various provisions for the protection and restoration of wetlands. Methods include: information and publicity; protective covenants; rates relief; provision for fencing; subdivision controls; and conditions, standards, and rules for activities.

As specific examples, Western Bay of Plenty District Council and Whakatane District Council provide subdivision incentives for the protection of natural features, such as wetlands, where landowners are entitled to additional subdivision rights on the protection in perpetuity of features. Western Bay of Plenty District Council has also developed financial contribution policies, to offset the adverse effects of subdivision and development on the environment. Contributions will be used to protect ecosystems through fencing and covenanting.

- 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

Colin Ogle from the Department of Conservation Wanganui gave a presentation at the Ramsar Conference in Brisbane on ephemeral wetlands - accompanied by the attached written material 'when is a dryland wetland?' which was used as handout material

- 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).

Farewell Spit is identified as an important site within the District Council Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

With regard to the Waituna site, the government has imposed more stringent standards on Tiwai Aluminium Smelter than recommended in the Ministry for the Environment guidelines

In the proposed Waikato Regional Plan (September 1998) the discharge of contaminants (not including stormwater) into wetlands exceeding one hectare in area is a non-complying activity and therefore requires a resource consent. The Plan also has a chapter on non-point source discharges. This chapter has policies and methods that encourage the use of good practice in land use activities that generate non-point source discharges to water bodies and aquatic ecosystems. These all apply to the three Ramsar sites in the Region.

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

A Massey University report on economic valuation of the ecosystems services benefits for New Zealand, has highlighted the highest values per hectare as those of wetlands and estuaries

Economic studies on the value of mangrove estuaries have been conducted in Northland. Mangrove estuaries provide feeding sites and nursery areas for a wide range of aquatic species, notably fish, some of which are commercially important. Because most of the country's estuaries are found in the north of the North Island, most commercial fishing in estuaries occurs

in the northern inlets where mangroves grow. Considering shellfish and fishing industries in New Zealand, the value of mangrove forests has been estimated as approximately \$3000/hectare/yr (1983), which would give a total value of around \$60 million/yr (1983) (Ritchie, 1976; and Bradstock 1983).

A 1978 study of the commercial fishery based on Arapaoa River in the Northern Kaipara Harbour showed that this many branched, mangrove rimmed arm of the harbour supported six full time and 2 part time fishermen catching flounder and some kahawai, mullet, parore and school shark. Oyster farming supported a further three full time and four part time farmers (Ritchie, 1976).

Mangroves give protection from erosion, protecting natural shorelines and constructed stopbanks, causeways, bridges and marinas etc. They also provide a valuable educational resource for the teaching of ecology and biology as well as valuable habitat for recreationally important gamebirds. (Nickerson 1980; and Dingwall 1984)

Environment Waikato has contracted a resource economist to provide valuations of the full range of ecosystems in the region, including wetlands. The data will be used in the State of the Environment Report, but the methodology and results need considerable debate before they are used for resource management planning and assessment.

The West Coast Conservancy is currently working with a volunteer (Ms Sarah Guillet, M.Sc. Economics) to review the existing literature on economic valuation techniques for wetlands. The conservancy hopes to apply the most appropriate techniques to various types of West Coast wetlands.

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

There is a general requirement for assessment of environmental effects when applying for a resource consent under section 88 of the RMA, but this doesn't specifically apply to all activities impacting on wetlands.

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

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.

The Land Acquisition Fund of the Northland Regional Council provides resources for enhancing and restoring wetlands.

Northland Fish and Game Council provides subsidies for protecting wetlands.

Waipa District Council has funded a lake margin restoration programme, with support from Environment Waikato.

Artificial restoration of watertables in drained wetlands (e.g. Whangamarino) is also occurring.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council has a Wetland Enhancement Working Party which is charged with the development of a programme of wetlands restoration. To date, effort has included scoping of the 10 most significant wetlands in Hawke's Bay, with progress on protection and enhancement works being made with 5 of these. Up to \$200,000 p.a. will be deployed by Hawkes Bay Regional Council and DOC.

In the Bay of Plenty restoration and rehabilitation programmes have included Maketu Estuary, Awaiti Lagoon, Lake Rotorua, Lake Tamarenuui.

Riparian management strategy is currently being prepared by the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council for wetlands and river or lake margins. Restoration and rehabilitation will be assessed in its preparation.

Restoration of Waikoko Wetland on Mana Island - formerly intensively farmed, now a Scientific Reserve administered by DoC Wellington Conservancy. A monitoring programme and photopoints will be set in place to monitor natural restoration processes

- 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).

The dune lakes of the Pouto Peninsular are important for their endemic biodiversity, including the galaxiid dwarf inanga (*Galaxias gracilis*) and the water plant hydatella (*Hydatella conspicua*). The lakes are about to be actively protected. This will primarily take the form of protective fence construction around each lake, followed by weed control and some enhancement planting of riparian areas. Fences will keep out stock which damage the lake edges and eat the riparian vegetation that normally provides protective habitat for birds such as rails, bittern and dabbling ducks. It is hoped that a minimum of one lake a year will be fenced, and, if funding is available more than one.

DOC is very keen to see the local community involved in this protection and conservation work, particularly the Tangata Whenua, who see the dune lake values as part of their food basket (such as eels) and the repository of their taonga/ treasures (such as significant waka or canoes).

Other community groups such as schools, Forest and Bird, Lions/ Service Clubs and the NZ Conservation Corps will all be encouraged to participate in one way or another. The local forestry company is proving to be very helpful and supportive by allowing their redundant fences to be recycled and put around the lakes, thus saving considerable resources.

In the Waikato user-groups have been involved in restoration work (i.e. plantings) and tribes are involved with fish pest programs

The Waikato Regional Policy Statement (March 1996) and the proposed Waikato Regional Plan (September 1998) contain environmental education methods that will assist the community to understand the values of wetlands, and adopt land management practices which avoid loss or damage to wetlands and undertake remediation of degraded wetlands.

The Proposed Waikato Regional Plan (September 1998) is also encouraging an interagency approach to managing wetlands. Tribes will be consulted and involved in developing this approach.

Bay of Plenty Regional Council has a comprehensive riparian management programme, which provides financial assistance to landowners for the retirement of riparian areas and replanting of these areas in native species. This programme fosters landowner participation in land management, and promotes joint management responses from a number of agencies. A recent programme has involved substantial retirement and replanting of native species on the margins of Lake Rotuehu (in Rotorua), through a co-operative approach involving Bay of Plenty, the Rotorua District Council, DOC, tribes and Nga Whenua Rahui. Retirement of riparian margins around the Ohiwa and Tauranga Harbours is a priority for the programme.

A range of methods is being used to achieve wetland protection by the Hawkes Bay Regional Council, from acquisition to working with local landowners and offering assistance. The latter has particularly been the case when the ownership of the land has been Maori. Assistance has been in the form of providing advice, organisation and administration, and grants.

In addition, Hawkes Bay Regional Council also has a programme in place for improving water quality in the region by providing assistance for riparian protection. This programme is targeted at improving water quality in degraded catchments where there are significant downstream values. Priority catchments include those feeding into priority wetlands. The Council offers a high (currently up to 90%) grant rate to landowners protecting and covenanting these riparian areas.

In Wanganui, local communities have been involved in the protection and restoration of riparian margins related to inanga (whitebait) conservation.

Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council is directly involved in environmental resource management projects by providing economic incentives (regional grants and rate relief), pest control and provision of public information. The Lake Horowhenua restoration project is a recent example of co-operation between public agencies and the community. The project was initiated and organised by the local community, in particular the indigenous people (Muaupoko), who own the lake bed (Horowhenua Lake Trustees).

As part of the process of writing the Lake Wairarapa Management Plan, a workshop was held by Wairarapa Area of Wellington Conservancy. Attendees included tribal Maori, regulatory authorities, farming interests, commercial and recreational fishing interests, etc. Views were sought on management issues for Lake Wairarapa and its associated wetlands. Resultant information was incorporated into the draft management plan. Several meetings were also held in the management planning process for the lake. A flax cultural harvesting project and iwi action on eel harvest have been results.

Wellington Conservancy organised 'wetland hui' to assist Kapiti Coast iwi in managing their dune wetlands. The DOC Women's Network had a project planting duneland and wetland plants on a Maori owned wetland area on the Kapiti Coast.

The West Coast Conservancy celebrated World Wetlands Day (2 February) with several actions aimed at informing local communities about the value of wetlands:

- Slide-shows (for West Coast DoC staff and Hokitika people) Open day at the local aquarium (Waterworld has a brilliant display on native fish)
- 3 panel display on West Coast wetlands and their values; the display was exhibited at agricultural shows (Hokitika and Whataroa), in visitor centres (Franz, Reefton), Regional Council (Greymouth), schools (Greymouth), and it will be mounted again during the coming Conservation Week for the Conservation Board.

West Coast Conservancy is currently involved in the development of a management strategy with the Kongahu swamp farmers, near Karamea. Wetland values have also been promoted by the TeTai Poutini Eel Management Committee who have decided to devote a significant section of their management plan to wetlands.

In the Southland Regional Council, catchment management officers advocate wetland construction as an alternative to stopbanking and floodbanking.

DOC protected natural area surveys and their implementation often includes wetlands. This includes advocacy for the protection of these areas to the landowners and Regional Councils etc.

- 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

All three Northland District Councils give rate relief for covenant areas. The Far North District Council and the Kaipara District Council give 100% rate relief and Whangarei District Council gives 50 to 100%.

Franklin and Waikato district councils have protection incentives for extra subdivision rights (not limited to, but may include legal protection of privately owned wetlands).

Environment Waikato provides funds for the protection and management of wetlands in the Waikato Region. Since 1993 there have been four applications to the fund for protection or enhancement of wetlands. Three were granted; one for purchase and legal protection of a 73 ha wetland, and two for enhancement of two small 0.5, and 3.6 ha wetlands. Grants totalling \$37,500, ranged from \$3,000 - \$20,000. The Regional Council also provides information upon request for wetland restoration and management. At least five landowners have contacted Environment Waikato for information on constructing or enhancing wetlands since 1995. At least three consent applications to the Regional Council, since 1995, have been to remove exotic plants such as willow or elder, and eight have been for the purpose of creating or enhancing wetlands.

Sponsorship programmes exist with Corbans Wines for wetland restoration, and Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill for Matata lagoon restoration.

The QEII National Trust provides for private protection, in perpetuity, of natural areas including wetlands. Since 1984 about 16 covenants involving wetlands in the Waikato Region have been registered with the QEII National Trust. This involves some 100 ha of wetland. Most are small areas, (< 5 ha). The largest is a 46 ha covenant of manuka wetland surrounding Lake Maratoto near Hamilton airport.

The Nature Heritage Fund, (formerly the Forest Heritage Fund), is a contestable Ministerial fund that was established in 1990 to help the objectives of the Government's Indigenous Forest Policy. The purpose of the fund is to protect indigenous ecosystems that represent the full range of natural diversity originally present in the New Zealand landscape by providing incentives for voluntary conservation. In 1998 the scope of the fund was widened to include other natural areas such as wetlands, tussock lands, riparian areas and coastal ecosystems.

Nga Whenua Rahui is a contestable Ministerial fund that was established in 1991 to help the objectives of the Government's Indigenous Forest Policy. The purpose of the fund is to protect indigenous ecosystems on land in Maori tenure, with particular emphasis on recognition of the special spiritual and cultural values Maori place on land, by providing incentives for voluntary conservation. In 1998 the scope of the fund was widened to include other natural areas like wetlands, tussock lands, riparian areas and coastal ecosystems.

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)

The Department of Conservation runs Conservation Week which, depending on the theme, may include wetlands education. For example, past themes have included Between Land and Sea, Mountains to Sea, and Wetlands.

Target groups include:

landowners - protection of wetlands e.g. riparian margins and coastal wetlands
schools - raising awareness among young people of the value of wetlands.

DOC also participates in Sea Week, an annual awareness raising event focusing on the marine and coastal environment. Target groups include primary and secondary schools. DOC funds activities such as teacher training workshops and field trips.

The Ministry for the Environment (Sustainable Management Fund) has supported the Guardians of Pauatahanui Estuary produced kit on Estuaries, distributed free to all secondary schools in New Zealand (1998).

- 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.

- Ad-hoc presentations to primary schools by DOC staff
- Ducks Unlimited administers the MacMaster Trophy and Grant of \$1000 a year to encourage a school's involvement in a wetland project.
- Wetlands - A vanishing ecosystem. P Fergusson, Department of Education, ISBN 0-478-214650 outlines the processes and systems of wetlands for school children.
- Waikanae Estuary education kit produced by Nikki Wright; essentially the publication as listed in 2.7, with additional reading material/references.

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 co-operation 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*.

National Wetlands Committee was established in 1998. It comprises representatives of a number of agencies which play an active role in managing wetlands including government departments and NGOs. It is envisaged that it will meet 2-3 times yearly and play a co-ordinating role in the management of wetlands.

Several regions host regional wetland forums, which include representatives from regional and district councils, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game Councils and research representatives. These groups meet several times a year to discuss common wetland issues and to promote co-ordination.

Regional and district councils have been involved in numerous surveys to identify valuable natural ecosystems, including wetlands. These surveys have often been carried out jointly by agencies, and the information collated is used in resource management decisions.

Several councils are currently investigating the development of frameworks to monitor ecological integrity, using vegetation, topographical, geological and bioclimatic data (Bay of Plenty, Waikato Regional Council, and Wellington Regional Council). This information will be used to prioritise management and restoration efforts, and to monitor changes in the extent of wetlands in the region.

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE), DoC and a number of regional and district councils are involved in a national project to investigate techniques to provide a consistent approach to monitoring wetlands in New Zealand through UNEP/GRID. This involves development of a national wetland classification system, practical application of this system to determine spatial extent of wetlands, trialing the capability of remote sensing techniques for measuring and monitoring the spatial extent of wetlands, and developing a framework to incorporate Iwi values into wetland monitoring by July 1999. In the second phase of the project, site specific indicators for measuring determining factors such as hydrological regime, biotic elements, trophic state, salinity regimes, and buffers will be developed.

The second project is a regionally based pilot on developing a process for integrated environmental monitoring, intended for expansion to national applicability (i.e., used by all regional councils). One of the issues being used to demonstrate the process is the protection of indigenous vegetation and fauna (which includes wetlands). The outputs, including a draft integrated monitoring plan, are expected in September 1998.

Waikato's Wetland Management Strategy relies on input from the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research and Landcare Research

The Waikato Wetland Forum in the Waikato Region comprises regional and local councils, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game, research representatives, and in the near future, iwi representatives. The Forum meets several times per year to discuss common wetland issues.

Environment B·O·P is part of a regional wetland forum, which includes representatives from regional and local council, Department of Conservation, Fish and Game, and research representatives. The forum meets several times a year to discuss common wetland issues.

Environment B·O·P and district councils have been involved in numerous surveys to identify valuable natural ecosystems, including wetlands. These surveys have been carried out jointly by agencies, and the information collated is used in resource management decisions.

Environment B·O·P is also currently developing a regional wetland database, which will contain all existing information about wetlands in the region. This will be used in developing policies for the protection of wetlands, and for targeting sites for management.

4.2 Of the following, indicate which have been undertaken:

a) 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.

No

b) a review to identify training opportunities for these people both within your country and in other countries.

No

c) the development of training modules or a training programme specifically for wetland managers. If yes, please give details.

In New Zealand wetland management is generally not assigned to a single manager, but integrated management means Conservation Managers look after a variety of natural areas, Resource Managers look after special functions in water and soil.

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

Yes, through the wetland restoration network

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:

- a) being prepared?
- b) fully prepared?
- c) being implemented?

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

No specific management plan for Waituna, Whangamarino, Kopuatai or Firth of Thames RAMSAR sites

Management of Ramsar sites is broadly covered in Conservation Management Strategies.

In the Waikato Area, a Wetland Management Strategy is currently being written.

The Mainland Southland - West Otago Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) is near to its final approval.

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.

The Southland CMS does not require any formal monitoring. Some monitoring of particular issues (e.g. effects of blackbacked gulls on the cushion bog vegetation; vegetation around the margins of Waituna Lagoon; has been undertaken), however there is no comprehensive monitoring.

For Farewell Spit, vegetation photo points completed every 5 years. Aerial Photography of the landform completed every 10 years.

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.

There has been some changes in vegetation around the edge of the Waituna Lagoon in response to an increased frequency of opening the lagoon. It is thought that the vegetation has largely stabilised. The vegetation is largely natural and intact.

As a sand spit, Farewell Spit is a constantly changing entity. At this stage we cannot say whether this is positive or negative.

Little change has been noted at Kopuatai Peat Dome.

A recent Masters thesis has measured the changes that have occurred in the Whangamarino wetland vegetation since the 1940's. There has been extensive loss of indigenous wetland vegetation such as the native *Carex sedgeland*. The 50% decline in the area covered by native sedge and wirerush, a characteristic community of the peat bogs has been matched by the aggressive invasion of introduced plant species such as Grey and Crack willow. (Reeves, 1994)

In the Firth of Thames there has been some mangrove loss as a result of mangrove leaf roller.

- 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?

N/A

- 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.

N/A

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.

1996 New Inventory of Wetland Systems meeting 1991 Criteria for International Significance (73 sites).

New GIS/Classification framework being developed/piloted for inventory/monitoring of all wetlands

Several regional and district authorities have regional or local wetland inventories. Many also have schedules of significant wetlands, these will include many more wetlands than those listed in the 1996 directory.

Current estimates of the extent of wetlands in the Waikato Region are in the order of 29,780 ha (+/-100 ha). Recent analysis suggests that 75% of the Region's freshwater wetlands were lost between 1840 and 1995. This is lower than the national average estimates of 85-90% loss of wetlands.

Canterbury Regional Council is currently working on an inventory of wetlands in the region. This work is in its early stages at present, but is ultimately intended to lead to the principal values of all wetlands in Canterbury being recorded, as well as the development of strategies for managing those values. To date a review of existing wetlands data in conjunction with the identification of wetlands in the region from aerial photos has almost been completed.

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

WERI is an ongoing database held by DOC
The 1996 Directory of Wetlands is based on Ramsar site forms

- 6.2 Does there exist a list or directory of “important” wetlands for your country or region? Yes/No.

The Directory of sites of international importance was published in 1996, it has not been updated. It uses 1991 criteria for international significance.

- 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.

100,000 hectares of palustrine wetlands remaining out of 672,000 ha pre settlement. Riverine, Lacustrine and estuarine losses not calculated at this stage.

- 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)

We are currently developing criteria for prioritising New Zealand applications.

- 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.

Currently evaluating 3 nominations under development

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

Nil

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

N/A

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

To mobilise international co-operation 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).

N/A

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

N/A

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 co-operative actions between the personnel responsible for their implementation and the Ramsar Administrative Authority:

a) Convention on Biological Diversity

Our Draft New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy makes specific reference to the Ramsar Convention - including a review of the 1986 New Zealand Wetlands Management Policy to more effectively guide implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

b) Framework Convention on Climate Change

N/A

c) Convention to Combat Desertification

N/A

d) Convention on Migratory Species

N/A

e) World Heritage Convention

N/A

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

- New Zealand is currently considering becoming a signatory to the Bonn Convention
- New Zealand has established the Firth of Thames site

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

Ducks Unlimited USA has provided advice and support

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

Not specifically, it is part of the protected area management budget (DOC) and environmental management budget (MfE)

- 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.

The Global Environment Issues Strategy for the South Pacific has noted the priority of wetlands (both fresh and saline) within its biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use component. This is in effect a weighting for bids received under this component.

- 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

No

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.

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

These are **optional** questions relating to co-operation with and involvement of non-government organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

At COP6 some 42 NGOs made the “Brisbane NGO pledge of support for the Ramsar Convention”. The Standing Committee agreed that for COP7 there should be an effort made to gauge the level and type of co-operation which is occurring between government Administrative Authorities and the national and international NGOs with an interest in wetlands issues.

In this **optional** section of the National Report, you are asked to describe the nature of the co-operation and relationship with any other international, regional, national and provincial NGOs operating within your country.

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

Fish and Game Councils, Ducks Unlimited, Forest and Bird.

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

Limnology Society (LIMSOC) Annual Conference.

h

b) to the government? Yes/No

NGO meetings with both Ministry for the Environment (MfE) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) on general issues

The National Wetlands Co-ordinating Committee will also provide a fora to address such issues.

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

Sometimes

9.4 Do any of the NGOs run programmes aimed at Education and Public Awareness about wetlands in your country? Yes/No. If yes, please give details (Refer also to question 3.1).

Ducks Unlimited do through sponsoring the MacMaster Trophy (refer 3.2)

9.5 Where they exist, do Ramsar site management advisory committees include NGO representatives? If yes, please give details

N/A

Many wetland management committees do, such as Lake Wairarapa

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.

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.

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