

**National Report to 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: Russian Federation

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority

Full name of the institution: State Committee of the Russian Federation for Environmental Protection

Names and titles of the designated contact officers for Ramsar Convention matters:

Mr. Amirkhan M. Amirkhanov
Deputy Chairman
Mailing address: 8-1 Kedrov Street, Moscow 117874, Russia
Telephone: + 7 095 1240471

Mr. Sergei B. Tveretinov
Deputy Director, Department for International Co-operation
Mailing address: 4/6 B.Gruzinskaya Street, Moscow 123812, Russia
Telephone: + 7 095 2546733 Fax: + 7 095 2548283

Mr. Valentin Yu. Iliashenko
Head of the Department for Biodiversity Conservation
Mailing address: 8-1 Kedrov Street, Moscow 117874, Russia
Telephone: + 7 095 1240471

Other institutions responsible for the implementation of the Convention:

The Inter-sectoral Working Group on Ramsar Convention co-ordinates activities of all interested federal authorities and scientific institutions.

Name and title of the head of the Group: Mr. Valentin Yu. Iliashenko, Chairman

The Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation provides scientific and technical assistance and advice on activities related to the Convention.

Name and title of the head of the institution: Mr. Andrei S. Peshkov, Director
Mailing address: Znamenskoye-Sadki, Moscow 113628, Russia
Telephone: + 7 095 4230322 Fax: + 7 095 4232322

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 1

To progress towards universal membership of the Convention

- 1.1 Recognising the need for the publication of the texts of international conservation conventions and agreements in Russian to assist the CIS countries with implementation of these initiatives, the 6th session of the Interstate Environmental Council (July 1995, Minsk) has decided to produce such a publication. To encourage the CIS countries to join the Ramsar Convention, in conformity with the decisions of the 5th session of the Interstate Environmental Council (September 1994, Moscow), the text of the Convention has been considered one of the most important to be included in this publication.

The Joint Chinese-Mongolian-Russian Commission on Torey Lakes continued its work in 1996-1998 to ensure conservation of this important transfrontier wetland, with the catchment area mainly located in China and Mongolia.

In cooperation with Ukrainian ornithologists, the Russian Bird Conservation Union carried out wetland inventory work in the Desna river valley in 1996.

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. By 1996, the Ministry of Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources of the Russian Federation (presently the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Environmental Protection) has developed the conceptual framework of the programme for conservation of important wetlands (Krivenko and Vinogradov, 1995; Krivenko, 1997). On this basis, a draft strategy for wetland conservation in Russia is now being prepared with support from Wetlands International. Once discussed widely, this document is thought to be given the status of the National Strategy for Wetland Conservation in the Russian Federation (the framework of the draft strategy is presented in Annex 1).
- 2.2-3 It is suggested that the draft strategy for wetland conservation be based on the cross-sectoral approach to the coordination of activities of relevant federal authorities.
- 2.4 The draft national strategy for wetland conservation contains the section of *Regional Strategies*, which recommends a number of optional objectives and actions to be included in the wetland strategies of individual regions. The development and adoption of these strategies are under the competence of relevant regional authorities.
- 2.5 A detailed review of wetland legislation has not been carried out so far, although it is planned to be compiled under the National Wetland Strategy project. An overview of legislation and practices which impact on biological diversity, including wetlands, is given in the *Conservation of Biological Diversity in Russia*, National Report on the implementation of the Biodiversity Convention (1997).
- 2.6 Continuous efforts are made to resolve some problems connected with transfrontier wetlands and coastal zones. Of particular significance is the development of a legislative framework for international regulation of resource use in the Caspian Sea.

Due to the reorganization of federal authority structures, the management of fisheries in coastal waters and within the exclusive economic zone has been passed to the Federal Frontier Service.

In February 1998, Wetlands International, the Astrakhan State Committee for Environmental Protection and the RIZA Institute (The Netherlands) organized a workshop to develop a Strategy and Action Plan on Integrating Land Use and Conservation Planning in the Wetlands of the Lower Volga. This provided an cross-sectoral review and follow-up to an earlier action plan (1992) which had been only partially implemented.

- 2.7 So far, much attention in the literature has been given to the theory of sustainable use of wetlands, but no practices have been documented.
- 2.8 The present economic situation has closed many factories and has considerably reduced the amounts of applied pesticides and fertilisers, with the resulting decrease in pollution impacts affecting wetlands.
The Law on Conservation of Natural Environment regulates industrial pollution through a system of emission and effluent standards and penalties.
- 2.9 A detailed economic mechanism of sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, including wetlands, is being developed under the GEF Biodiversity Conservation Project which has been implemented since 1997.
- 2.10 In accordance with the 1995 Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, all development projects that are likely to have an adverse effect on the natural environment, including wetlands, should be subjected to independent environmental impact assessment (EIA). The procedure includes preparation of a section on potential impact as a standard part of project documentation. The EIA commissions are vested with the right to prohibit implementation of a project, to set limits on some activities or technologies applied, to include additional activities (such as installation of waste treatment equipment, establishment of protected natural areas within the area covered by the project, or, in compensation, in adjacent areas), and to introduce compensatory payments.
- 2.11 Wetland restoration and rehabilitation do not receive special attention in the Russian conservation legislation. Nevertheless, these actions have been included in a number of projects, such as the Volga Revival Programme and the Project on Conservation and Sustainable Use of Lake Baikal and its Catchment.
- 2.12 Local communities, including indigenous people, are encouraged to participate through conservation GOs and NGOs in the decision-making process at both regional and federal levels.
- 2.13 The private sector is still under development in Russia and so far has not been much involved in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Environmental factors are taken into account when enterprises included in the List of Environmentally Dangerous Factories and Organisations are privatised.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

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

- 3.1 No

- 3.2 Wetland subjects are included in the courses on ecology conducted in the universities and in the biological and geographical departments of pedagogical institutes. The development of a governmental educational programme and training courses is planned under the National Wetland Strategy. Actions in public awareness for the protection of wetlands are taken by the regional conservation authorities. On the eve of the 1998 World Wetland Day, a number of special publications and TV programmes was produced in the local mass media; lessons on wetland functions and values were conducted in some schools. A joint meeting of GOs and NGOs dedicated to the World Wetland Day was held in the city of Novosibirsk. There is a hope that the National Conference on the Strategy for Wetland Conservation in Russia, that will be held in February 1999, will play an important role in raising the level of knowledge and awareness of wetlands among decision-makers, especially at regional level.

Of major importance is the translation into Russian and publication of the *Ramsar Strategic Plan 1997-2002* and *COP6 Resolutions & Recommendations* by the Wetlands International-Russia Programme.

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 Coordination of activities of various institutions which have interest in wetlands is conducted by the *Inter-sectoral Working Group on Ramsar Convention*. The Group was established under the State Committee for Environmental Protection by Chairman Resolution No. 9 issued on 15 January 1997. The members of the Working Group belong to 16 bodies, including the State Committee of the Russian Federation on Environmental Protection, the State Ecological Fund, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Forestry, the Ministry of Fisheries, the Russian Union of Hunters and Fishermen, the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow University and NGOs. Dr V.Iliashenko is Chairman and Dr V.Krivenko is Deputy Chairman of the Group. The Group has its meetings at least every three months.

The main objectives of the Working Group are to coordinate actions on:

- the Strategy for Wetland Conservation in the Russian Federation;
- development of a mechanism to protect internationally important wetlands;
- wetland inventories;
- various present-day matters.

The Group discusses the draft documents and project proposals related to the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

- 4.2 A review to identify the training needs and opportunities is planned to be undertaken on the results of the National Conference on the Strategy for Wetland Conservation in Russia, that will be held in Moscow in February 1999.

Two Russian specialists participated in the International Course on Wetland Management (Lelystad, the Netherlands) in 1997 and 1998: Dr. E.E.Tkachenko, Deputy Director of the Daursky Nature Reserve (the Torey Lakes Ramsar Site) and V.V.Borisov, Instructor of the Pskov Pedagogical Institute (the Pskovsko-Chudskaya Lowland Ramsar Site).

There is an increasing need for the staff of institutions concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands to receive a training in management and other wetland-related subjects.

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 Protection and management of the Ramsar sites is conducted in accordance with individual regulations. These regulations have been developed for each site on the base of the Standard Regulations, approved by the State Committee on Environmental Protection and adopted by the relevant regional authorities. The regulations determine the regime of protection and resource use within each site.
- The formal management plans are a new thing for Russia. In 1998, a project on the development of two management plans: on the Volga Delta and on the two Ramsar sites in the Kuban Delta has been started, with support from the Ramsar Small Grants Fund.
- 5.2 It is planned that the above management plans will include sections on monitoring changes in ecological character of wetland ecosystems.
- 5.3 The human impact on natural ecosystems, including Ramsar wetlands, has reduced in recent years due to the economic recession.
- 5.4-5 The Russian Federation has not nominated any site for the Montreux Record and was not referred to in COP6 Recommendations 6.17.1-4.

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 An inventory of even the most important wetlands in the country is far from completed. According to some rough estimations, several thousand sites, from a few hectares to several million hectares in area, meet the Ramsar criteria.

The results of inventory studies have been concentrated in the Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation since Russia (as part of the USSR) joined the Convention.

In 1994/95, the IWRB Project on Wetland Inventory in the Russian Federation was carried out, with funding from the US State Department via the Ramsar Bureau and the Government of the Netherlands. The inventory of the Black Sea wetlands was compiled under the IWRB Project on Conservation of the Black Sea Wetlands, with financial assistance from the European Commission TACIS fund. In 1996, information on the 35 Ramsar sites was compiled under the Support for Wetland Conservation in Russia Project (1997-1999) implemented by the Wetlands International office in Moscow, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries of the Netherlands. The report resulted from these activities was submitted to the Ramsar Bureau in 1997. The Russian Government, through the State Committee for Environmental Protection, also provided funds for the wetland inventory activities, totalling \$35,000 in 1995, \$30,000 in 1996 and \$20,000 in 1997. At the present time, inventory studies are being continued, although the information is mainly collected incidentally, during fieldwork carried out under different projects. Noteworthy are the activities of the 'Scaup' Migratory Animals Research Centre. Since 1997, the Centre, supported from regional conservation structures, has been implementing the programme of 'Development of a network for monitoring and conservation of waterfowl in Russia and adjacent countries'. The results so far have been the estimation of waterfowl numbers in all administrative regions of Russia, identification of the migration flyways and staging areas, and development and testing of a population monitoring methodology.

So far, 400 wetland sites which meet the Ramsar criteria have been identified. This list is evidently incomplete. The southern taiga, forest-steppe and steppe of Western Siberia, extensive areas in Eastern Siberia and the Far-Eastern region have received little study. The wetland inventory in these areas requires complicated and very expensive aerial surveys.

- 6.2 The total area of the 35 Ramsar sites is 10.6 million ha. The majority of the sites are large complex habitats and include wetlands of various types, with a high proportion of floodplain and deltaic riverine complexes, peatlands, closed lakes and sea shores. These sites support large populations of waterfowl, the total number of which is estimated at 10 million (by August, at the end of the breeding season), which comprises over 12% of their Russian population.

Information on the listed Ramsar sites has recently been published as the 1st volume of the *Wetlands in Russia* series, with financial and technical assistance from the Wetlands International-Russia Programme. The Wetlands International office in Moscow is now preparing the 2nd volume which will contain descriptions of over 120 wetland sites which are currently on the Shadow List.

- 6.3 In Russia, there is no correct estimate of land and water areas that meet the Ramsar definition. According to the Russian encyclopaedias, there are 120,000 rivers with a total length of 2,300,000 km, 2 million lakes with a total area of 370,000 km², some 1.8 million km² are covered by mires, and the length of Russia's coastline comprises about 60,000 km. In the Russian Land Cadastre, there are categories for mires and for lands under water. The former totals 1,081,600 km² in area, and the latter, 720,300 km². Under these circumstances, it seems hardly possible to provide any information on rates of wetland loss or conversion to other activities.

- 6.4 a. A large number of the Russian Ramsar sites meet the criteria for fish habitat (*e.g.* the Volga Delta is almost unequalled in the world in abundance and diversity of sturgeons, and the Lower Ob is of global importance for whitefish *Coregonus sp.*). These criteria will be also considered a priority during the further development of the Ramsar network.

b. Although the waterbird populations are traditionally regarded as the major criterion to evaluate the importance of a wetland in Russia, the 1% criterion is little used. The waterbird population structure in the country is quite complicated, and even the identification of populations is still a controversial subject. For one example, the ducks which breed in the Lower Ob area have been reported at wintering sites throughout Europe, Africa and Asia up to the Ganges eastward. It seems hardly possible to identify a population itself under such conditions, let alone estimate its size.

c. Although there are extensive karst areas and cave water bodies in the country, so far none of these have been designated under the Convention.

d. A list of important peatland areas consisting of 45 sites has been developed under the Wetlands International-Russia Programme, and will be brought to discussion at the National Wetland Conference in February 1999.

f. The sea grass beds are well represented at a number of listed sites, *e.g.* the Onega Bay Ramsar site.

Widening the scope of wetland ecosystems designated as wetlands of international, federal, regional, *etc.* importance is one of the priority questions discussed in the Draft Strategies for Wetland Conservation and for Biodiversity Conservation. In addition to the wetland types mentioned, the wetlands which are important from the point of view of limnology, provide

habitat for any aquatic organisms, are of cultural or religious value, and help traditional lifestyles to survive need to be identified.

- 6.5 The identification of new sites to be listed as Ramsar wetlands is regarded as an action proposed by the State Environmental Committee; such an action does not have the status of official governmental activity.
- 6.6 The following Ramsar sites are transfrontier wetlands:
Lake Khanka
Pskovsko-Chudskaya Lowland
Torey Lakes
Khingano-Arkharinskaya Lowland
Zeya-Bureya Plains
Kurgalsky Peninsula
- 6.7 The list of wetlands which has been prepared to be submitted to the Government for further Ramsar designations contains the following transfrontier sites:
Fjarvann
Ainovy Islands
Nerussko-Dresnyanskoye Polesje
Khasan (Tumangan Delta)
Kunashir and the Malye Kurily Islands, including the Malye Kurily Nature Reserve
Sebez Lake (in the Pskov Region)

The Tumangan Delta has received the most study under the Chinese-Russian Agreement on the construction of an international highway and a port in this area.

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 A project on conservation and management of the Tumangan Delta wetlands has been developed under a bilateral Chinese-Russian agreement.

Regular consultations on the Torey Lakes Ramsar Site are held between Russia and Mongolia.

A list of transfrontier sites which are of importance for migratory species has been prepared under the CIS Agreement on Conservation and Wise Use of Migratory Birds and Mammals and their Habitats. The list includes 15 areas, practically all of them are covered by wetlands.

- 7.2 The Russian Ramsar sites of Lake Khanka and Pskovsko-Chudskaya Lowland are shared respectively with China and Estonia.

The management staff of the Volga Delta Ramsar site have taken part in a RIZA (the Dutch Institute for Inland Water Management and Waste Water Treatment) project linking European deltas and the Symposium 'Dealing with Nature in Deltas'.

- 7.3 The Russian Federation is a signatory of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Heritage Convention. Particularly

close cooperation and regular information exchange are provided under the Biodiversity Convention owing to the single management structure.

- 7.4 As the successor to the former USSR, the Russian Federation is a Contracting Party to the bilateral conventions on migratory birds signed with the USA, Japan, India and North Korea. Cooperative work on these conventions is not very active at present.

The Russian Federation is a Contracting Party to the CIS Agreement on Conservation and Wise Use of Migratory Birds and Mammals and their Habitats. Cooperative actions under the Agreement are now hampered by economic difficulties experienced by all the Parties.

Actions on wetland conservation have been included in a number of bilateral Action Plans (*e.g.* with the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway).

- 7.5 Financial support to projects which contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Russia has been provided under bilateral and multilateral conventions, contracts and agreements. Wetland inventory projects have been funded from the Government of the Netherlands, the European Commission TACIS fund, the US State Department via the Ramsar Bureau and Wetlands International. A number of bilateral projects is carried out with funding from Japan and other countries.

- 7.6 There is no target-oriented funding to the network of Ramsar sites from the federal budget, although most Ramsar sites include state nature reserves for which funding is provided. For the last two years (1996/97), the strict nature reserves ('zapovedniks') which have wetlands within their areas have received 10 billion roubles from the state budget (payments to the staff included) and 750 million roubles from the Federal Environmental Fund. Funding from local budgets is provided to nature reserves, natural parks, wildlife refuges and other protected natural areas designated at both federal and local levels. Sectoral agencies and NGOs also provide financial support to wetland conservation. However, it is difficult to give a correct estimate of the total funding allocated to the conservation and wise use of wetlands within the country.

- 7.7 No

- 7.8 No

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

To provide the Convention with the required institutional mechanisms and resources

- 8.1 No

- 8.2 The Russian Federation has paid its 1996 and 1997 annual contributions to the Convention. In 1998, a partial payment of *c.* 1190 SFR was made (transferred in US dollars).

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

- 9.1-6 The Russian Union for Bird Conservation takes an active part in the implementation of the Convention. Prof. Vladimir E. Flint, President of the Union, and other members of the staff participate in the activities of the Cross-sectoral Working Group on the Ramsar Convention.

The Union is responsible for the implementation of the IBA Programme, which is carried out in close cooperation with the wetland inventory projects.

The most active participation of the Wetlands International-Russia Programme Office in almost all actions related to the implementation of the Convention has been noted in the above sections of this report.

The level of involvement of regional/local NGOs is different depending on local conditions. A good example is provided by the 'Dront' Ecocentre (Nizhni Novgorod City) which cooperates with the regional administrative and conservation authorities on the management and conservation of the 'Kama-Bakaldino Mires' Ramsar Site.

Final comments:

10.1 General comments on implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan:

- There still exist no definition of a wetland of international importance as an object of conservation and management. In this connection, the formulation of the wise use concept is still unclear. What is it that should be used wisely: some entity or a set of ecosystems listed in Article 1.1 of the Convention? The latter variant seems not an easy task to perform in Russia where Ramsar wetlands are mainly presented by large complex habitats.
- The implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan at national level, with all identified priorities receiving proper consideration, is difficult to organize in Russia. Different directions of the Plan require different efforts in terms of time, regional scope and financial, technical and scientific resources in the country which is so large in area, extremely varied in human population density, and characterised by a rich diversity of wetland ecosystems. A wetland inventory phase may take a decade in Russia, while the problem of peatland conservation is often of local importance.

Strategy for wetland conservation in the Russian Federation

(A conceptual framework)

1. Introductory chapter

1.1. Preamble (2 pp.)

The Preamble is a policy statement which reflects in broad terms the national interests toward wetlands determining the necessity of their conservation, including:

- an outline of the role of wetlands in the biosphere and economy, in both the global and national context;
- an overview of wetland resources in Russia;
- description of major features of wetland ecosystems in Russia;
- relevance to the concept of sustainable development and the UN Programme of 'Agenda 21';
- long-term and short-term objectives of wetland conservation.

1.2. Importance of wetlands (2 pp.)

Basic description of the role of wetlands in Russia by biogeographical region, as well as their role in national economy by major sector/industry.

1.3. Role of wetlands in the functioning of natural ecosystems (5 pp.)

Description of major ecological functions of wetlands by biogeographical region;

- storage and self-purification of fresh water, which is vital for people and ecosystems;
- carbon accumulation;
- regulation of climate through transpiration;
- regulation of the water cycle;
- groundwater discharge and recharge;
- erosion and abrasion control;
- sedimentation of many pollutants (sulphur, acid rain substances, *etc.*);
- biodiversity support;
- providing habitats for plants and animals, including threatened species;
- protection of soils and waters.

1.4. Role of wetlands in national economy and wetland amenity values

Description, by biogeographical region, the following wetland functions and values:

- source of drinking water;
- support of groundwater supplies;
- flood control;
- providing resources for fishery, hunting, reed harvesting, *etc.*;
- providing environmental and resource basis for local communities who have developed their traditional lifestyles;
- supply of fertilisers and fire-wood for local purposes;
- opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism;
- aesthetic values; and
- importance of wetlands for scientific research.

1.5. Economic valuation of wetlands (2 pp.)

Formulation of the problem of quantifying wetland values in economic terms; information on some direct economic benefits (e.g. peat deposits, fish stocks).

1.6. Degradation of wetlands (7 pp.)

Overview of the levels of wetland decline throughout the country, with regions where wetlands have been destroyed and degraded most significantly being indicated.

2. Federal policy on wetlands

2.1. Preamble (2 pp.)

Basic description of the key subject areas

2.2. Policies and responsibilities of federal authorities in wetland conservation (10 pp.)

Description of main objectives in wetland conservation that should be brought into focus by governmental bodies at federal level, such as:

- to maintain the quality of the environment;
- to provide environmental security in the country;
- to implement international obligations under the Ramsar Convention, Rio de Janeiro documents and other environmental treaties;
- to provide wise use and conservation of transboundary wetlands, river basins and lakes;
- to ensure conservation of natural areas which are of importance for indigenous peoples;
- to ensure protection of designated nature reserves;
- to conserve and sustain migrating animals;
- to conserve the plant and animal species listed in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation; and
- to prevent the impacts on wetland ecosystems caused by industrial and agricultural developments approved by the federal authorities, and by other activities carried out by governmental organisations, including military and border-guard services.

Analysis of existing situation concerning the division of responsibility between the federal and regional authorities and forms of ownership of wetland resources.

2.3. Development of the Wetland Cadastre (7 pp.)

Analysis of the level of our knowledge about wetlands in Russia; the extent of their coverage by inventory. Formulation of the problem of compiling a detailed wetland inventory/cadastre, emphasising the following key directions:

- development of a regionally orientated system of criteria for wetland values;
- development of a single system of criteria for identifying wetlands of international, national, regional and local importance;
- establishment of a procedure to evaluate the level of degradation of wetland ecosystems;
- development of a procedure for economic valuation of wetlands; and
- carrying out inventory work in the most important wetlands.

2.4. Development of legislation which will allow to achieve compatibility of economic activity with the natural functioning of wetland ecosystems (10 pp.)

Formulation of basic principles to regulate resource uses in wetlands, including:

- licensing the use of nature resources following the requirements of catchment-wide planning;
- environmental impact assessment of projects and development schemes;
- introduction of a system of economic incentives and disincentives for wetland uses; and

- promoting traditional activities in wetlands retaining by local communities and ingenious peoples.

2.5. Development of a network of state inspections controlling the status of wetlands in Russia (5 pp.)

Formulation of strategic directions to deal with this problem, including:

- development of a single system of criteria to evaluate the status of wetlands;
- creation of a network of representative wetlands to monitor their status;
- adoption of existing monitoring systems (the hydro-meteorological stations, nature reserve network, satellite monitoring system, *etc.*) to monitor the status of wetlands; and
- regular evaluation of the results of monitoring studies and preparation of reports to relevant governmental authorities and press releases.

2.6. Development of networks of important wetland sites (7 pp.)

Development of networks of protected wetlands at all (international, national/federal, regional) levels as a single system which allows to ensure conservation of wetlands, their functions, the biodiversity they support, as well as sustainable development of wetland resources. Discussion on the principles of developing the network, considering the representation of regions, wetland types, levels of anthropogenic transformation, biodiversity, limnology and role for ingenious peoples as focal points.

2.7. Maintenance of ecological character of wetlands, which are undergoing considerable human impact, and restoration of degraded wetlands (3 pp.)

Compilation of a register of wetlands which have been lost during the present century, identification of the most important sites and development of a restoration programme for these sites. Identification of threatened wetlands and the major threats. Development of sample action plans to conserve wetlands undergoing some typical changes under human impact.

2.8. Education, professional training and public awareness (5 pp.)

From the strategic point of view, the most important is a wide popularisation of knowledge and public awareness for wetland values and threats, based on the improved state educational system, mass media and Internet.

Development of training programmes for specialists, teachers, decision-makers at all levels and other target groups.

2.9. Public and NGO participation in wetland conservation and management (2 pp.)

Set of activities to promote people to participate in the decision-making process, particularly where wetlands are involved (including appealing against any decisions at court, conduct local referendums on development plans, *etc.*).

Discussion of the problem of community rights to carry out activities on their land in connection with wetland conservation needs.

Mechanisms to realise the rights of ingenious peoples connected with wetlands.

Relationship between GOs and NGOs where wetland conservation is concerned.

A conservation NGO as a party to a lawsuit.

2.10. Scientific research on wetlands (4 pp.)

Strategic directions are divided into three groups:

- Ecological. The main issues, in addition to the development of the wetland cadaster, are:
 - natural wetland dynamics;
 - transformations of wetland ecosystems caused by human activities of different types;

- ways to conserve ecosystems, which are under considerable pressure, by imitating natural processes and creating 'ecological barriers';
- methods to restore destroyed wetland complexes.
- (b) Economic:
 - economic valuation of wetland benefits;
 - procedures to evaluate damage to wetlands from various human activities;
 - a system of incentives to promote sustainable use of resources;
 - a system of disincentives for non-sustainable use.
- (c) Sociological:
 - legal status of wetlands; land tenure in wetland areas; regulation of resource uses in wetlands; responsibilities in wetland use and conservation taken by different groups (authorities at federal, regional and local levels, community, social group, economic unit, person, *etc.*);
 - evaluation of amenity values of wetlands: their role as nature/historical monuments, as recreation areas (including those used for hunting, fishing, *etc.*) and areas at which traditional activities are carried out;
 - analysis of contradictions which arise from different attitudes toward wetlands and their uses.

2.11. International cooperation in wetland conservation and sustainable use (3 pp.)

Intensification of work on the implementation of the Ramsar Convention.

The problem of transboundary wetlands.

Regional (CIS) problems to co-ordinate conservation activities (in particular concerning transboundary sites, international water bodies and migrating wetland-dependent animals).

3. Regional strategies

3.1. Rationale (3 pp.)

This chapter gives some information on the role of regional wetland strategies and discusses the following main issues:

- relationships between federal and regional authorities on wetlands of international and national importance;
- establishment and management of protected wetland areas at local level;
- relationships between regions concerning the use of transboundary wetlands and large basins.

3.2. Regional approach (10 pp.)

Description, by large regional groups, of the following issues:

- features of regional wetland legislation;
- development of a regional wetland cadaster and compilation of a regional inventory of important wetlands;
- networks of regionally and locally important wetlands;
- regional features of wetland transformation depending on dominating types of economic development;
- regional aspects of wetland conservation and wise use depending on natural conditions and types of economic development;
- regional features of education and public awareness activities connected with dominating or traditional forms of resource use and social life;
- the role of regional conservation NGOs.

The regions described are:

- the taiga and tundra;
- the central part of European Russia;
- the southern part of European Russia;
- Siberian steppes;

- the southern part of the Far East.

4. Priorities

The list of priority actions will be subject to constant modification until the final version of the Strategy is developed. In general, this list should follow the objectives described in Section 2. At the present moment, a draft list is presented, which may be extended or contracted in the course of discussion.

- Prepare and publish a booklet on the relationships between the national and regional authorities towards wetlands in federal countries (Canada, USA and Germany).
- Convene a meeting on federal and regional responsibilities in wetland conservation at the level of leaders of regional environmental committees.
- Continue publishing a series of books of 'Wetlands in Russia'; after presenting information on the Ramsar sites and wetlands on the Shadow List, provide an overview of important wetlands by region or by wetland type.
- Develop criteria to identify wetlands of national/federal importance.
- Provide a breakdown of available information on wetlands in Russia, with inventory priorities to be identified (by 2000).
- Prepare a draft governmental decree on the Federal Wetland Cadastre.
- Establish a working group on legislative problems of wetland use regulation, which will prepare an overview of 'Current legislation concerning the use of wetlands in the Russian Federation'.
- Convene a meeting on legislative problems of wetland use regulation, particularly in the Ramsar sites, participated by regional authorities, sectoral agencies and experts.
- Convene a meeting and establish a working group on wetland economics.
- Prepare draft amendments to the Law on Environmental Protection pending in Parliament.
- Prepare with cooperation of nature reserves and publish an overview of 'Recent changes in the status of important wetlands in Russia'.
- Prepare a draft governmental resolution to extend the network of Ramsar sites and to develop a network of nationally important wetlands in the country.
- Initiate preparation of a section on important wetlands to be included in the Protected Areas Law.
- Develop a draft governmental programme on wetlands in the steppe region.
- Publish leaflets and booklets about wetlands and the Ramsar Convention targeted at potential sponsors among the Russian business circles.
- Prepare a book/booklet on wetland functions and values (on the basis of the Ramsar and Wetlands International's publications) targeted at the general public.
- Convene a workshop on wetland conservation for the staff of regional environmental committees.
- Provide regular circulation of wetland related information to the regional environmental committees.
- Develop a wetland website in Russian.
- Prepare a report about the Strategy for Wetland Conservation in the Russian Federation to be presented at a meeting of green movements, with a suggestion to develop a Wetland Council.
- Promote more detailed sections on wetlands to be developed within the GEF Biodiversity Project.
- Provide information on Russian wetlands for the Ramsar website.
- Prepare comments for the next meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, in particular on the Ramsar definition (to define a Ramsar site as the subject of conservation and management) and on twinning sites.