THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

59th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Gland, Switzerland, 21-25 June 2021

**SC59 Doc.24.4**

**Draft resolution on Guidance on Conservation and Management   
of Small Wetlands**

*Submitted by China*

*Secretariat cover note:*

The DR refers to earlier Resolutions VII.20 and VIII.6 on the need for wetland inventories. It refers to Resolution VII.21 on including small wetlands into inventories, but omits reference to Resolution XIII.21 on small wetlands. It includes a technical Annex providing guidelines for conserving and managing small wetlands. The Secretariat invited the **STRP to review** these guidelines and the proposed classification for small wetlands, and to inform the Standing Committee.

**Draft resolution on Guidance on Conservation and Management   
of Small Wetlands**

**Action requested:**

* The Standing Committee is invited to review and approve the attached Draft Resolution for consideration by the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

**Introduction**

*Short background/contextual information for the Standing Committee*

The draft resolution aims to provide technical guidelines for Contracting Parties to strengthen the conservation and management of small wetlands, so as to improve the accuracy of inventory and monitoring as well as the effectiveness of management on small wetlands, mitigate the threats faced by small wetlands, enhance their effects against the great pressure from climate change and biodiversity loss, and improve the ecosystem services of small wetlands.

*Financial implications of implementation*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Paragraph (number and key part of text) | Action | Cost (CHF) |
| Not applicable | - | None |

**Draft Resolution XIV.xx**

**Guidance on Conservation and Management of Small Wetlands**

1. RECALLING the commitments made by Contracting Parties in Article 3.1 of the Convention to promote, as far as possible, the wise use of wetlands in their territory and;

2. RECALLING Resolution VII.20, which urges “all Contracting Parties yet to complete comprehensive national inventories of their wetland resources, including, where possible, wetland losses and wetlands with potential for restoration, to give highest priority in the next triennium to the compilation of comprehensive national inventories”, and the Framework for Wetland Inventory as annexed to Resolution VIII.6;

3. ALSO RECALLING Resolution VII.21, which encourages Contracting Parties to include small wetlands in their science-based inventories, assess the hydrological connectivity and quality of small wetlands, as appropriate, promulgate national and regional policy on small wetlands, and requests the Scientific and Technical Review Panel to prepare guidance on the identification of small wetlands, to address the significant human-induced pressures that threaten small wetlands and prevent further loss;

4. NOTING the great efforts made by many countries to conserve and manage small wetlands that provide examples of small wetland conservation and management;

5. BE AWARE that some wetland inventories carried out by many countries have not prioritized or fully covered small wetlands and set clear standards on their identification, classification and evaluation;

6. CONCERNED that small wetlands are increasingly facing development pressures leading to degradation and loss, and conservation, restoration and management of small wetlands is urgently needed;

7. ALSO BE AWARE that the lack of unified technical specifications and standards for the identification, classification, inventory, conservation, restoration and management of small wetlands, which brings great difficulties in various countries;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

8. INVITES Contracting Parties to use Annex 1 to guide the identification, classification, inventory, conservation, restoration and management of small wetlands within their territories, and report to the Scientific and Technical Review Panel on its practicability and revision suggestions;

9. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to set the specifications on the conservation and management of small wetlands that meets related legislation and plans according to their own national conditions, based on the actual situation of their small wetlands;

10. INVITES Contracting Parties to carry out identification and management of small wetlands following the guidance, designate small wetlands and small wetland complexes that meet the criteria for identifying wetlands for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, in an effort to ensure the conservation of their biodiversity, and the maintenance of their ecological, cultural and social values;

11. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, based on the latest scientific knowledge and feedback from Contracting Parties, to develop and improve the guidance, and include in the Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory and handbooks.

**Annex**

**Guidelines for conserving and managing small wetlands**

This document specifies the definition, classification, inventory, statistics, mapping, identification of small wetlands, and their restoration strategy, process, model and key points, as well as management standards. It is applicable to the work of small wetlands conservation and management.

Definition and classification

1. Small wetlands are defined here as offshore and coastal wetlands, lake wetlands, marsh wetlands and artificial wetlands with an area of less than 8hm2, and river wetlands with a width of less than 10m and a length of less than 5km, with water all year round or part of the time, including natural wetlands such as small pit-ponds, tidal creeks, ditches, seasonal ponds, pothole swamps, springs, and artificial wetlands such as rainwater wetlands, wetland wastewater treatment areas, aquaculture ponds, small paddy fields, and small urban water bodies;

2. According to the natural attributes of wetland formation, small wetlands are divided into natural small wetlands which are formed by the confluence of natural topography and hydrological conditions, with 4 categories and 19 types, and artificial small wetlands, which are formed by human activities, with 6 categories and 15 types (see Attached table 1 for details);

Identification

1. The lower limit for the investigation area on small wetland is 200m2 in the urban area and 600 m2 in the rural area, while the upper limit is 8hm2 (river wetlands should be less than 10m in width and 5km in length). It is generally centered on the open water surface, bordered by woodland, farmland, pond banks, stone slopes or roads, not including small rice paddies, flooded paddy fields or aquatic vegetable fields;

2. One small wetland that meets any of the following criteria can be identified as an important small wetland:

a. of unique type in the local region;

b. distributed with unique endangered species;

c. with unique cultural values;

d. of other special conservation significance.

3. Patches are divided according to the type and dominant use pattern of small wetlands. Each small wetland patch shall be encoded and each code are composed of local administrative division code, secondary classification code and sequence code;

4. Investigation content shall be varied in terms of the importance of small wetlands. For general small wetlands, it covers area, type, distribution, vegetation types, land ownership, conservation and management status, wetland utilization status, etc. For important small wetlands, the investigation should cover water, soil environmental condition and wildlife biodiversity as well (see Attached table 2 for details);

5. Remote Sensing (RS), and Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) should be used to obtain the spatial information of small wetlands, including their type, area, distribution and average elevation. Field investigation should be conducted to obtain the data on water supply, vegetation type and area, land ownership, conservation and management status, wetland utilization status, water-soil environment quality and wildlife biodiversity. All the data obtained should be summarized and entered into the database in a unified format.

6. Based on various investigation results, the thematic result maps of small wetland inventory can be drawn by GIS software, including the location map of field investigation sample and distribution map of small wetland resources in the investigated area. See Attached table 1 for corresponding color styles and values of different small wetlands.

7. For identifying small wetlands, applications shall be submitted by the local wetland management authority, then reviewed by relevant professional organization. Specific database of important small wetlands and general small wetlands shall be built for differentiated management.

8. A name card should be made for important small wetland, including basic information such as wetland name, location, type, total area, main predominant animals and plants, land ownership, average elevation, wetland utilization status, conservation and management status, and surrounding land use status.

Restoration

1. According to the increasing degradation level of small wetlands, different restoration strategies should be adopted, from protection and conservation, natural restoration, assisted regeneration, to eco-reconstruction.

2. Small wetland restoration processes are suggested as follows:

a. Investigation and assessment of ecological status. Focus should be put on collecting various data related to restoration area, such as natural geographic elements, animal and plant resources, human activities, climate and hydrology.

b. Identification of pressure factors. The pressure factors faced by wetlands should be identified, and necessary measures and technologies to address these problems should be determined, which include both direct and indirect human activities and natural causes such as the rise of sea level, climate change, and invasion of alien species.

c. Restoration goal setting. Small wetlands are different from large wetlands in that they usually have relatively single functions. For specific design and implementation of small wetland conservation and restoration, it should be based on the dominant functions, with more clearer restoration goals and targeted technology.

d. Restoration approach selection. Corresponding approaches shall be taken to eliminate and reduce the pressure factors that restrict the performance of the dominant functions, in terms of hydrology, habitat, biology, landscape, etc.

e. Environmental impact assessment and control. Generally, the impact assessment includes two parts: during the construction period and during the operation period of wetland restoration projects, covering the area within and around the site. In response to the problems raised after the environmental impact assessment, effective measures must be proposed to mitigate and control the impact.

f. Monitoring and evaluation. It’s required to record and report the project status and internal and external factors that affect its progress in a timely, continuous and systematic manner during the whole process of project implementation, and focus on the results of restoration actions to evaluate whether the restoration project has achieved the expected goals.

g. Later-period management. Decision makers can preserve wetlands based on the monitoring results of restoration effects and formulate short-term and/or long-term wetland management plans.

3. Models and key points of small wetlands restoration are as follows:

a. Nature conservation-dominant small wetlands. The main function is to protect the existing ecological functions, targeting at small wetlands with important ecological function values and good ecological conditions. The main approach would be protection and conservation, primarily by preventive measures, with the focus on protecting the current situation, avoiding human disturbance, and ensuring that water quality, water volume, animals and plants, topography and landforms will not undergo major changes, while following the principle of not affecting the existing ecological structure and environment. They could be seasonal wetlands.

b. Landscape construction-dominant small wetlands. The main objects are urban landscape water bodies or small wetlands with landscape ornamental values as the main function, mainly in living areas for landscape and living environment improvement and residents’ leisure activities. For their restoration, consideration should be given in terms of ecological landscape, vegetation restoration, water volume and quality, and some special requirements (such as special habitat creation), etc., to water system configuration and water circulation, water bank restoration, suitable plant selection, and building matched design and so on, to meet different needs of ecology, safety and aesthetics.

c. Water quality purification-dominant small wetlands. They are mainly intensive, flexible, beautiful and low-cost small wetlands that are made mainly to bring into full play the wetland purification capacity and reduce the domestic sewage, farmland tail water, livestock and poultry wastewater, tail water of sewage treatment plant and other different types of pollutants. With the core goals of pollution degradation and water purification, they try to achieve unpowered self-flow, and build up harmonious relationship among wetlands, people and surrounding environment.

d. Habitat restoration-dominant small wetlands. With the main function of providing wildlife habitats, to conserve and restore regional biodiversity, it is necessary to targeted restoration measures should be implemented to meet the habitat requirements of different wildlife including birds (such as waders and swimming birds), amphibious reptiles (such as frogs), fish, and insects (such as fireflies and dragonflies), through returning ponds to wetlands, water bank restoration, ecological island construction, vegetation restoration, etc. They could be seasonal wetlands.

e. Cultural display-dominant small wetlands. The main function includes cultural preservation, scientific knowledge promotion and eco-environment education. Through in-depth exploration of local social and human resources related to wetlands, combined with small wetlands conservation and habitat creation, important science education environment can be cultivated.

f. Storage- and regulation- dominant small wetlands. The main function includes storage regulation, water source supplement, local microclimate regulation and carbon dioxide fixation. Mainly through water system reorganization, vegetation restoration, water bank restoration, ecological landscape restorations, the hydrological water system of small wetlands is improved and the stability of wetland vegetation communities is ensured. They could be seasonal wetlands.

g. Biological resource utilization- dominant small wetlands. The main function is to provide abundant animal and plant products. Usually based on the cultivation of aquatic economic plants and the breeding of aquatic economic animals, activities are carried out to rationally utilize wetland biological resources, such as ecological stocking of aquatic economic animals, ecological planting of aquatic vegetables and other wetland economic plants, so as to optimize the rural industrial structure and integrate residents' life, production and ecology.

h. Multifunctional small wetlands. Small wetland complex is composed of a number of multifunctional small wetlands, connected by water systems, close in space, and located in the same ecological environment. Through micro-topography reconstruction, water space restoration, vegetation restoration, water system reorganization, etc., it’s necessary to coordinate the relationship between their sub-systems, take into consideration of the integrity of small wetland ecosystem, and fully combine their connection in space, water system and other aspects, so as to avoid habitat fragmentation and give full play to ecological functions.

Management

1. After the identification of small wetlands, important small wetlands and general small wetlands are included in wetland conservation systems. For those that are not identified, they can be included in the wetland resource pool to compensate for lost wetlands.

2. It’s necessary to carry out small wetland resource investigation and establish a database and geographic information system that include all investigation factors, encourage scientific research institutions, individuals and various stakeholders to independently or cooperatively carry out scientific research projects on small wetlands.

3. In urban areas, small wetlands should be protected and restored as urban green infrastructure; in rural areas, based on small wetland space and the interlinked river and lake system, the practice of wetland village can be explored to achieve the integrated development of rural production, livelihood and ecology.

4. Community co-management mechanism shall be explored to coordinate the relationship between the development of surrounding communities and the conservation of small wetlands. For eco-tourism, community development and co-management activities, the management department should raise funds through joint ventures and cooperation, with a conservation plan formulated beforehand, in order not to damage the structure and function of small wetland ecosystems.

5. For those who legally occupy and utilize small wetlands, an ecological compensation mechanism shall be established, based on the principle of “those who utilize should protect and who benefit from them should compensate”. Measures to protect small wetlands could be compensated or rewarded.

6. Science education on protecting small wetlands shall be strengthened. Especially on festivals as World Wetlands Day and World Environment Day, it’s necessary to raise public awareness on small wetland conservation, via TV, radio, newspapers and the Internet, through documentaries, public service advertisements and forums, etc. and carry out programs in local wetland educational centers.

7. Management departments shall supervise and inspect small wetland conservation and restoration projects from time to time, organize technical personnel to monitor and evaluate regularly, and stop and address any violation of laws and regulations timely.

**Table 1 Small wetland classification system and color code**

| **1-level** | **Code** | **2-level** | **Code** | **3-level** | **Color Style** | **Color Value** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **natural small wetland** | NSW Ⅰ | Small offshore and coastal wetland | NSW Ⅰ1 | small coastal saltwater lake | 说明: C100M100Y58K14 | C100M100Y58K14 |
| NSW Ⅰ2 | small coastal freshwater lake | 说明: C92M98Y19 | C92 M98 Y19 |
| NSW Ⅱ | Small marsh wetland | NSW Ⅱ1 | small sphagnopratum | 说明: C65M39Y76 | C65 M39 Y76 |
| NSW Ⅱ2 | small herbaceous marsh | 说明: C80M58Y70K19 | C80 M58 Y70 K19 |
| NSW Ⅱ3 | small shrub marsh | 说明: C83M53Y100K22 | C83 M53 Y100 K22 |
| NSW Ⅱ4 | small forest marsh | 说明: C72M4Y58 | C72 M4 Y58 |
| NSW Ⅱ5 | small inland salt marsh | 说明: C60Y54 | C60 Y54 |
| NSW Ⅱ6 | small seasonal marsh | 说明: C51Y56 | C51 Y56 |
| NSW Ⅱ7 | small marsh meadow | 说明: C29Y26 | C29 Y26 |
| NSW Ⅱ8 | small geothermal wetland | 说明: C60Y100 | C60 Y100 |
| NSW Ⅱ9 | small freshwater spring/oasis wetland | 说明: C39Y93 | C39 Y93 |
| NSW Ⅲ | Small river wetland | NSW Ⅲ1 | small permanent river | 说明: C68M56 | C68 M56 |
| NSW Ⅲ2 | small seasonal or intermittent river | 说明: C38M27 | C38 M27 |
| NSW Ⅲ3 | small stream | 说明: C95M81 | C95 M81 |
| NSW Ⅳ | Small lake wetland | NSW Ⅳ1 | small permanent freshwater lake | 说明: C65M72 | C65 M72 |
| NSW Ⅳ2 | small permanent saltwater lake | 说明: C43Y7 | C43 Y7 |
| NSW Ⅳ3 | small permanent inland salt lake | 说明: C28M6 | C28 M6 |
| NSW Ⅳ4 | small seasonal freshwater lake | 说明: C45Y18 | C45 Y18 |
| NSW Ⅳ5 | small seasonal saltwater lake | 说明: C21Y8 | C21 Y8 |
| **artificial small wetland** | ASW Ⅰ | small wetland for agriculture | ASW Ⅰ1 | small irrigation ditch or canal | 说明: C29M53Y81 | C29 M53 Y81 |
| ASW Ⅰ2 | small paddy field/flooded paddy field | 说明: C4M21Y72 | C4 M21 Y72 |
| ASW Ⅰ3 | aquatic vegetable field | 说明: C11M27Y40 | C11 M27 Y40 |
| ASW Ⅰ4 | small salt field | 说明: C14M5Y48 | C14 M5 Y48 |
| ASW Ⅰ5 | agricultural pond | 说明: C17Y84 | C17 Y84 |
| ASW Ⅱ | small wetland for water conservancy | ASW Ⅱ1 | small reservoir (pool) | 说明: C19Y72 | C19 Y72 |
| ASW Ⅱ2 | small canal, water conveyance river | 说明: C84M100Y53K12 | C84 M100 Y53 K12 |
| ASW Ⅲ | small wetland for aquaculture | ASW Ⅲ1 | small freshwater aquaculture | 说明: C64M21 | C64 M21 |
| ASW Ⅲ2 | small seawater aquaculture | 说明: C37M55 | C37 M55 |
| ASW Ⅳ | small wetland for landscape entertainment | ASW Ⅳ1 | landscape water body | 说明: C17M30 | C17 M30 |
| ASW Ⅴ | small wetland for ecological purification | ASW Ⅴ1 | rainwater wetland (rainwater garden) | 说明: C21M65Y9 | C21 M65 Y9 |
| ASW Ⅴ2 | artificial wetland for intensified purification of farmland tail water | 说明: C8M63 | C8 M63 |
| ASW Ⅴ3 | artificial wetland for intensified purification of livestock and poultry breeding tail water | 说明: M66Y22 | M66 Y22 |
| ASW Ⅴ4 | artificial wetland for intensified purification of domestic sewage | 说明: M67Y63 | M67 Y63 |
| ASW Ⅴ5 | artificial wetland for intensified purification of sewage treatment plants | 说明: timg (2)-恢复的 | C50 M80 Y50 |
| ASW Ⅵ | small wetland waterlogged after excavation | ASW Ⅵ1 | small wetland waterlogged after mining excavation and subsidence | 说明: C53M87Y78 | C53 M87 Y78 |

**Table 2 Small wetland investigation content**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Investigation Content** | **Description** |
| 1 | Name of investigated patch | Name based on the existing name of wetland patch or nearby natural features and residential areas on the topographic map |
| 2 | No. of investigated patch | Fill in according to the order of wetland patches in the wetland area |
| 3 | Name of wetland area | Fill in according to the existing name of wetland area |
| 4 | Code of wetland area | Fill in according to relevant regulations of wetland coding |
| 5 | Wetland type | Fill in according to the requirements of small wetland classification |
| 6 | Wetland area (hm2) | Directly fill in the area data of wetland patches interpreted by RS images |
| 7 | Wetland distribution (administrative area, center coordinate) | Fill in both administrative area and center coordinate |
| 8 | Average elevation (m) | Fill in the average elevation of the wetland patch |
| 9 | Watershed | According to the classification of the first, second, and third-level watersheds across the country, fill in to the third-level watershed |
| 10 | River wetland | Fill in the level of river |
| 11 | Vegetation type and area (hm2) | Mainly based on RS interpretation, in combination with field investigation and verification |
| 12 | Water supply situation | Fill in according to the five types of surface runoff recharge, atmospheric precipitation recharge, groundwater recharge, artificial recharge, and comprehensive recharge (subject to the dominant type, if two or more recharge types exist at the same time and difficult to distinguish between the primary and secondary recharges, fill in “comprehensive recharge”) |
| 13 | Land ownership | State, collective or private ownership |
| 14 | Main dominant plant species | Fill in the main dominant plant species found in the field |
| 15 | Wetland patch zoning factor | Mainly based on wetland type, supplemented by dominant utilization methods |
| 16 | Conservation management status | Include the conservation and management measures taken, whether it belongs to nature reserves, nature conservation areas, or wetland parks |
| 17 | Wetland utilization status | Classify according to the utilization of wetlands, and fill in the dominant use |
| 18 | Surrounding land use status | Main types of land use within 100m of small wetlands |
| 19 | Natural environment elements\* | Include shape, landform, climate, soil, sediment depth, base condition, shadow ratio |
| 20 | Wetland water environment elements\* | Include hydrology, surface water quality, and groundwater quality. |
| 21 | Wetland wildlife \* | Focus on investigating the types, distribution and habitat conditions of important aquatic invertebrates (including shellfish, shrimp, and crabs) in small wetland patches; types, distribution and habitat conditions of amphibians and waterbirds; animals, reptiles and fishes with dominance or with large numbers in small wetlands |
| 22 | Wetland insects\* | Focus on investigating the types, distribution and habitat conditions of water beetles and dragonflies in small wetlands |
| 23 | Wetland plants\* | Focus on investigating the types and distribution of aquatic vascular plants |

**Note:** No. 1-18 are the contents of general small wetland investigation, No. 19-23 are for the additional ones for key small wetlands investigation.