



COP14  **2022**

14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

**“Wetlands Action for People and Nature”
Wuhan, China, and Geneva, Switzerland 5-13 November 2022**

Resolution XIV.15

Enhancing the 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;
2. RECALLING Resolution VII.20 on *Priorities for wetland inventory*, 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 XIII.21 on *Conservation and management of small wetlands*, which encourages Contracting Parties to include small wetlands in their science-based inventories, assess the hydrological connectivity and quality of small wetlands, as appropriate, and promulgate national and regional policy on small wetlands, and which 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 ongoing efforts made by many countries to conserve and manage small wetlands that provide examples of small wetland conservation and management;
5. AWARE that some wetland inventories carried out by many countries have not prioritized or fully covered small wetlands nor set clear standards for their identification, classification or evaluation;
6. CONCERNED that small wetlands are increasingly facing development pressures leading to degradation and loss, and that conservation, restoration and management of small wetlands is urgently needed;
7. ALSO AWARE that the lack of unified technical specifications and standards for the identification, classification, inventory, conservation, restoration and management of small wetlands creates great difficulties in various countries;
8. AWARE that small wetlands are often overlooked, or highly depleted, and that, owing to their restricted range, they can support vulnerable populations of threatened species, and are important for the conservation of biological diversity;

9. CONCERNED that non-sustainable land and water development may lead to the fragmentation of small wetlands that provide important habitat for migratory and/or non-migratory wetland-dependent species;
10. CONCERNED that small wetlands may be overlooked as sites of ecological significance and may not be considered for designation as Wetlands of International Importance, even though the *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance of the Convention on Wetlands* supports the designation of small wetlands;
11. AWARE that the *Sixth Assessment Report (2021)* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated that climate change is already affecting every region across the globe, with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes;
12. ALSO AWARE that the *Global Wetland Outlook: Special Edition 2021* noted that wetlands are particularly impacted by sea-level rise, coral bleaching and changing hydrology, with Arctic and montane wetlands especially at risk, and that changing weather increases risks of flooding and drought in many places;
13. FURTHER AWARE that the IPCC *Sixth Assessment Report* stated that with every increment of global warming, changes get larger in regional mean temperature, precipitation and soil moisture, and CONCERNED that this may increase the pressure on small wetlands, owing to the effects on their hydrological functioning; and
14. NOTING the publication of *A new toolkit for national wetlands inventories (2020)* by the Convention on Wetlands that can be applied and adapted to small wetlands;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to consider the conservation and management of small wetlands in policies, plans, programmes, and other policy instruments according to their own national conditions, if possible, and as part of nature-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, among its wider relevance to biodiversity conservation, and human health and wellbeing;
16. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to designate small wetlands and small wetland complexes that meet the criteria for identifying wetlands for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, as well as to identify and implement other potential measures that contribute to the conservation and sustainable and wise use of small wetlands, including mapping small wetlands within protected areas and working landscapes, in an effort to ensure the conservation of their biodiversity, and the maintenance of their ecological, cultural and social values;
17. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to develop national plans or to amend existing national and/or subnational plans to promote the conservation, restoration, and wise use of small wetlands;
18. ALSO ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to develop national and local plans and policies and develop appropriate institutional arrangements to effectively manage small wetlands to

maintain and enhance vulnerable populations of threatened migratory or non-migratory wetland-dependent species;

19. REQUESTS the Scientific and Technical Review Panel, based on the latest scientific knowledge and feedback from Contracting Parties, to develop guidance on inventories and monitoring of small wetlands and their multiple values for biodiversity conservation, drawing on the draft framework contained in Annex 1 of the present Resolution, and national best practices and experiences; and
20. REQUESTS the Secretariat, subject to available resources, to compile exemplary policies and cases related to small wetland conservation and develop promotional material or a handbook and include a section on small wetlands in the future editions of the *Global Wetland Outlook*.

Annex 1

Draft framework for the inventory, classification, management and restoration of small wetlands

A. Apply relevant Resolutions and existing guidance for the inventory, classification and assessment of small wetlands, as outlined in document SC59 Doc.13.3¹ on the consolidation of wetland inventories

Purpose: To ensure the inventory and assessment of small wetlands is consistent with and benefits from the existing guidance on wetlands.

List of relevant Resolutions on the inventory, classification and assessment of small wetlands:

- Resolution VIII.6 – Annex: *A Framework for Wetland Inventory*;
- Resolution IX.1 – Annex E: *An Integrated Framework for wetland inventory assessment and monitoring*;
- Resolution IX.1 – Annex E.i: *Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity*;
- Resolution X.15 – Annex: *Describing the ecological character of wetlands, and harmonized data formats for core inventory*.

B. Identify the types of small wetlands that may be overlooked in national and local wetland inventory, assessment and management

Purpose: To improve the inventory, assessment and management of small wetlands by considering the types of small wetlands that are likely to be omitted in local and national inventory.

Examples of small wetland types include: alpine wetlands, ponds, karst wetlands, springs, and temporary/ephemeral streams.

- Identify the types of small wetlands that may be overlooked in national and local inventory of wetland ecosystems, including small wetlands that provide ecosystem services for adjacent communities or otherwise support people and the environment.
- Integrate small wetlands into national and/or subnational wetland inventories.
- If there is no national classification system, apply the Ramsar Classification of Wetland Types.
- Where national or regional classification schemes more accurately map or describe small wetland types, align these schemes to the Ramsar classification system where practical.
- Apply existing and innovative tools for wetland inventory, including those outlined in *A toolkit for national wetlands inventories* (Convention on Wetlands, 2020).

¹ <https://www.ramsar.org/document/sc59-doc133-draft-consolidated-resolution-on-inventories>.

C. Collate information on the multiple values of small wetlands, and pressures on the ecological character of small wetlands

Purpose: To ensure the values of small wetlands are described to inform national and local plans for the management and restoration of small wetlands.

- Describe the unique values of small wetlands that may not be present in regional or national assessment of wetlands, including:
 - rare and endangered species that small wetlands support due to their naturally rare or depleted status;
 - the hydrological functioning of small wetlands, which may be highly vulnerable to changes in water use and current and projected impacts of climate change;
 - the degree that fragmentation impacts on the ecological character of small wetlands;
 - the role of small wetlands in providing refuges, or migratory pathways, for vulnerable populations of wetland-dependent species;
 - the function of small wetlands in supporting wellbeing of people, particularly in urban environments; and
 - the important ecosystem services provided by small wetlands in regulating water quality, flooding, drought and other regulating, provisioning and supporting services.
- Describe the unique pressures on small wetlands, considering how changes in physical drivers (e.g. water quantity, sediment), extraction (e.g. water use, peat harvest), pollution (e.g. agricultural nutrients, urban pollutants), invasive species, and wetland drainage and loss may disproportionately impact small wetlands.
- Ensure the data collated by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and stored by the Convention Secretariat on small wetlands are easily accessible for the purposes of monitoring, reporting and developing management plans.
- Apply the *Guidelines for the rapid assessment of inland, coastal and marine wetland biodiversity*.
- Apply the guidance on *Describing the ecological character of wetlands, and harmonized data formats for core inventory* annexed to Resolution X.15.

D. Develop and implement local and national plans that specifically consider the needs of small wetlands

Purpose: To promote the development of local and national plans for management and restoration of small wetlands.

- Apply the information collated from Steps A to C above to develop local and national plans for the management and restoration of small wetlands.
- Focus management and restoration efforts on small wetlands that:
 - are under greatest risk from a decline in ecological character;
 - support species and ecosystems that are important for maintaining local, national and global biodiversity; and
 - provide ecosystem services that are important for maintaining the wellbeing and livelihoods of people, and for regulating the environment.