NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

National Reports to be submitted to the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Republic of Korea, 28 October – 4 November 2008

Please submit the completed National Report, in electronic (Microsoft Word) format, and preferably by e-mail, to the Ramsar Secretariat by **31 March 2008**.

National Reports should be sent to: Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Secretariat (dufour@ramsar.org)

Introduction & background

1. This Ramsar COP10 National Report Format (NRF) has been approved by the Standing Committee for the Ramsar Convention's Contracting Parties to complete as their national reporting to the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Convention (Republic of Korea, October/November 2008).

2. Following Standing Committee discussions at its 35th meeting in February 2007, and its Decisions SC35-22, -23 and -24, this COP10 National Report Format has been significantly revised and simplified in comparison with the National Report Formats provided to previous recent COPs.

3. In particular this National Report Format provides a much smaller number (66) of implementation "indicator" questions, compared with the much larger suite of questions on all aspects of national implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 included in previous NRFs.

4. The COP10 NRF indicators include, with the agreement of the Standing Committee (Decision SC35-24), certain indicators specifically requested to be included by the Convention's Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) and CEPA Oversight Panel, in order to facilitate their information gathering and reporting on key aspects of scientific, technical and CEPA implementation under the Convention.

5. The 66 indicator questions are grouped under each of the implementation "Strategies" approved by the Parties at COP9 (Resolution IX.8) in the Convention's "A Framework for the implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 in the 2006 -2008 period" (www.ramsar.org/res/key_res_ix_08_e.htm). The indicators have been selected so as to provide information on key aspects of the implementation of the Convention under each of its Strategies.

6. In addition, for each Strategy the option is provided for a Contracting Party, if it so wishes, to supply **additional information** concerning its implementation under each indicator and, more generally, on implementation of other aspects of each Strategy.

The purposes and uses of national reporting to the Conference of the Contracting Parties

7. National Reports from Contracting Parties are official documents of the Convention, and are made publicly available through their posting on the Convention's Web site.

8. There are six main purposes for the Convention's National Reports. These are to:

   i) provide data and information on how the Convention is being implemented;
   ii) capture lessons/experience, so as to allow Parties to develop future action;
   iii) identify emerging issues and implementation challenges faced by Parties that may require further attention through Convention processes;
   iv) provide a means for Parties to be accountable against their obligations under the Convention;
   v) provide each Party with a tool to help it assess and monitor its progress in implementation, and plan for its future implementation and priorities; and
   vi) provide an opportunity for Parties to draw attention to their achievements during the triennium.

9. In addition, the data and information provided by Parties in their COP10 National Reports now have another important purpose, since a number of the indicators in the National Reports on Parties' implementation will provide key sources of information for the analysis and assessment of the "ecological outcome-oriented indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention" currently being further developed by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for Standing Committee and COP10 consideration.

10. To facilitate the analysis and onward use of the data and information provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports, once received and verified by the Ramsar Secretariat all information is entered and held by the Secretariat in a database, which then facilitates extraction and analysis of the information for a number of purposes.

11. The Convention's National Reports are used in a number of ways. These include:

    i) providing the basis for reporting by the Secretariat to each COP on the global and regional implementation, and progress in implementation, of the Convention. This is provided to Parties at COP as a series of Information Papers including:

    - the Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see, e.g., COP9 DOC 5);
    - the Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 (b), (c), and (d) concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance (see, e.g., COP9 DOC 6); and
    - the reports providing regional overviews of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in each Ramsar region (see, e.g., COP9 DOCs 10-13);

    ii) providing information on specific implementation issues in support of the provision of advice and decisions by Parties at COP. Examples at CO9 included:

    - Resolution IX.15, *The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*, and
    - Information Papers on *Issues and scenarios concerning Ramsar sites or parts of sites which cease to meet or never met the Ramsar Criteria* (COP9 DOC 15) and *Implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme for the period 2003-2005* (COP9 DOC 25);

    iii) providing the source of time-series assessments of progress on specific aspects in the implementation of the Convention, included in other Convention products. An example is the summary of progress since COP3 (Regina, 1997) in the development of National Wetland Policies, included as Table 1 in Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 2 (3rd edition, 2007); and

    iv) providing information for reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on the national-level implementation of the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan and the Ramsar Convention's lead implementation role for the CBD for wetlands.

The structure of the COP10 National Report Format

12. In line with Standing Committee Decisions SC35-21 and SC35-22, the COP10 National Report Format is in three sections.

13. **Section 1** provides the Institutional Information about the Administrative Authority and National Focal Points for the national implementation of the Convention.

14. **Section 2** is a "free-text" section in which to provide a summary of various aspects of national implementation progress and recommendations for the future.

15. **Section 3** provides the 66 implementation indicator questions, grouped under each Convention implementation strategy, and with a "free-text" section under each Strategy in which the Contracting Party may, if it wishes, add further information on national implementation of the Strategy and its indicators.

Guidance for filling in and submitting the COP10 National Report Format

IMPORTANT – READ THIS SECTION OF GUIDANCE BEFORE STARTING TO FILL IN THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT

16. All three Sections of the COP10 National Report Format should be filled in, in one of the Convention's official languages (English, French, Spanish).

17. The deadline for submission of the completed National Report Format is **31 March 2008**. It will not be possible to include information from National Reports received from Parties after that date in the analysis and reporting on Convention implementation to COP10.

18. All fields with a pale yellow background must be filled in.

19. Fields with a pale green background are free-text fields in which to provide additional information, if the Contracting Party so wishes. Although providing information in these fields in the COP10 NRF is optional, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide such additional information wherever possible and relevant, since it is the experience of the Secretariat that such explanatory information is very valuable in ensuring a full understanding of implementation progress and activity, notably in informing the preparation of global and regional implementation reports to COP.

20. In order to assist Contracting Parties in their provision of such additional information, for a number of indicator questions some particularly helpful types of such information are suggested. However, of course, Parties are free to add any other relevant information they wish in any of the "Additional implementation information" fields.

21. The Format is created as a "Form" in Microsoft Word. You are only able to move to, and between, each of the yellow or green boxes to give your replies and information. All other parts of the form are locked.

22. To go to a yellow or green field you wish to fill in, move the cursor over the relevant part of the form, and left-click the mouse. The cursor will automatically move to the next field available.

23. To move down the sequence of fields to fill in, you can also use the "Tab" key on the computer keyboard.

24. For a "free-text" field, you can type in whatever information you wish. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green or yellow "free-text" box, it is recommended that you cut-and-paste the existing text into a separate file, make the amendments, and then cut-and-paste the revised text back into the green box. This is because within the "Form" format there is limited facility to make editorial changes within the "free-text" box once text has been entered.

25. For each of the "Indicator questions" in Section 3, a drop-down menu of answer options is provided. These vary between indicators, depending on the question asked in the indicator, but are in general of the form: "Yes", "No", "Partly", "In progress", etc.

26. For each indicator question you can choose only one answer. If you wish to provide further information or clarifications concerning your answer, you can provide this in the green additional information box below the relevant indicator question.

27. To select an answer to an indicator question, use the Tab key, or move the cursor over the relevant yellow box, and left-click the mouse. The drop-down menu of answer options will appear. Left-click the mouse on the answer option you choose, and this will appear in the centre of the yellow box.

28. The NRF is not intended normally to be filled in by one person alone – for many indicators it would seem best for the principal compiler to consult with colleagues in the same and other agencies within the government who might have fuller knowledge of the Party's overall implementation of the Convention. The principal compiler can save the work at any point in the process and return to it subsequently to continue or to amend answers previously given.

29. After each session working on the NRF, remember to save the file! A recommended filename structure is: COP10NRF [Country] [date].

30. After the NRF has been completed, please send the completed National Report to the Ramsar Secretariat, preferably by email, to Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Convention Secretariat, email: dufour@ramsar.org. The Secretariat must receive your completed National Report in electronic (Microsoft Word) format.

31. When the completed National Report is submitted by the Party, **it must be accompanied by a letter or e-mail message in the name of the Administrative Authority, confirming that this is that Contracting Party's official submission of its COP10 National Report**.

32. If you have any questions or problems concerning filling in the COP10 NRF, please contact the Ramsar Secretariat for advice (e-mail as above).

SECTION 1: INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

NAME OF CONTRACTING PARTY: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	
DESIGNATED RAMSAR ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY	
Name of Administrative Authority:	**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental & Scientific Affairs, Department of State**
Head of Administrative Authority - name and title:	Mr. Dale Hall, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ms. Claudia McMurray, Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans, Environment and Science
Mailing address:	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1849 C Street, NW, 3012 MIB Washington, DC 20240 OES Room 7831 Department of State Washington DC 20520
Telephone/Fax:	703-358-1767; 703-358-2115
Email:	dale_hall@fws.gov
DESIGNATED NATIONAL FOCAL POINT *(DAILY CONTACT IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY)* FOR RAMSAR CONVENTION MATTERS	
Name and title:	Herbert Raffaele, Chief, Division of International Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mailing address:	4401 Fairfax Dr. Arlington, VA 22203
Telephone/Fax:	703-358-1767/703-358-2115
Email:	herb_raffaele@fws.gov
DESIGNATED NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO STRP (SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL)	
Name and title of focal point:	Gil Cintron
Name of organisation:	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mailing address:	4401 Fairfax Dr. Arlington, VA 22203
Telephone/Fax:	703-358-1765/703358-2115
Email:	gil_cintron@fws.gov
DESIGNATED GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS	
Name and title of focal point:	Jean Schlegel, Division of International Conservation
Name of organisation:	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mailing address:	4401 Fairfax Dr. Arlington VA 22203
Telephone/Fax:	703-358-2215/703-358-2115
Email:	jean_schlegel@fws.gov
DESIGNATED NON-GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS	
Name and title:	Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, President

Name of organisation:	Environmental Concern (on behalf of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee)
Mailing address:	201 Boundary Lane, PO Box P St. Michaels, MD 21663
Telephone/Fax:	ph: (410) 745-962/fax:(410) 745-35170
Email:	admin@wetland.org

SECTION 2: GENERAL SUMMARY OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

In your country, in the past triennium (i.e., since COP9 reporting):

A. What new steps have been taken to implement the Convention?

Since COP9, the U.S. has served in five Ramsar Committees, including as Chair of the Finance Committee. The U.S. continues to be actively involved in Standing Committee meetings, and as a member of the Board of the Ramsar Regional Training Center (CREHO) in Panama. The U.S., through the U.S. State Department, has provided financial assistance for the Wetlands for the Future program. The U.S. recently designated its 23rd Ramsar site, the Beidler Forest in South Carolina and is working on several more new designations. The U.S. has made great progress in updating the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) for most of its Ramsar sites. The U.S. National Ramsar Committee (USNRC) is more active and energized than it has ever been, and held a recent meeting of Ramsar sites managers hosted by the Caddo Lake Institute. Caddo Lake has also contributed to Ramsar activities by designing and printing Ramsar and USNRC banners to be distributed among Ramsar sites. The USNRC also conducted a survey of all U.S. Ramsar sites to assess the benefits of Ramsar designation. Results of that survey can be found online at http://www.ramsarcommittee.us/ELR%20Ramsar%20article.pdf. Small grants totaling nearly $100,000 were awarded in 2008 to support CEPA activities in work towards new Ramsar site designations. The program was coordinated by Environmental Concern, Inc., on behalf of the USNRC, with funding from the US. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife Without Borders Global Programs. There continues to be a potpouri of activities across the nation on World Wetlands Day, with increasing demand for Ramsar produced materials.

B. What have been the most successful aspects of implementation of the Convention?

In terms of wetlands conservation specifically, in 2004 President Bush announced a goal for expanding wetlands acreage through both creating new wetlands and improving the quality of existing wetlands, while protecting existing, high-quality wetlands. His goal is to achieve at least one million acres in each of these separate categories between Earth Day 2004 and 2009. This goal does not reflect a net acreage total (i.e. the goal does not reflect loss of wetlands). After three years of progress toward the President's five-year goal, the team of six Federal departments working with multiple states, communities, tribes and private landowners is on track to meet or exceed this goal. Since this goal was set, 2,769,000 acres of wetlands have been restored or created, improved or protected.

C. What have been the greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?

The greatest difficulty has been the lack of a national budget to implement the Ramsar Convention.

D. What proposals and priorities are there for future implementation of the Convention?

Several sites are being proposed for future designation as Wetlands of International Importance.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is developing an implementation plan that will lead to a national assessment of the ecosystem services that US wetlands are providing. The draft plan should be available for review in July 2008. EPA and Ramsar's STRP are discussing how to colloborate on this project and an MOU is being contemplated.

E. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat?

No.

F. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention's International Organisation Partners (IOPs)?

No.

G. How can national implementation of the Ramsar Convention be better linked with implementation of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), especially those in the "Biodiversity cluster" (Ramsar, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), CITES, and World Heritage Convention), and UNCCD and UNFCCC?

No suggestions.

H. How can Ramsar Convention implementation be better linked with the implementation of water policy/strategy and other strategies in the country (e.g., sustainable development, energy, extractive industry, poverty reduction, sanitation, food security, biodiversity)?

No suggestions.

I. Does the Contracting Party have any other general comments on the implementation of the Convention?

Suggestions on the National Report format:

1. In addition to the qualitative text boxes for responses to the indicator questions, Parties might be asked to assess their progress on this indicator on a simple 1-5 scale, and qualify their responses in the text box.

2. In addition, after the 1st quantitative response, and the text box, Parties could be asked to quantify the degree to which progress toward the indicator is relevant/important to their national strategies, also on a 1-5 basis. For this question, it would be important to define a limit to the number of indicators that can receive a '5', to ensure that there is some prioritization and not everything gets a '5'.

Implementing these suggestions would provide a valuable evaluative component in addition to the questions in Section 2.

3. Questions/sections on the National Report related to Ramsar site activities should coincide as closely as possible with the RIS template. Currently there are items on the National Report template that require parties to request additional information from their sites above and beyond the information found on the RIS (which in itself already proves to be difficult to obtain in terms of getting sites to provide RIS updates) in order to complete the Report. As much as possible, the RIS should feed into the National reporting needs.

SECTION 3: INDICATOR QUESTIONS & FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION

Guidance for filling in this section

1. For each "indicator question", please select one answer from the "drop-down" list in the yellow box.

2. If you wish to add any additional information on either one or more of the specific indicators for each strategy, and/or for other aspects of the national implementation of this strategy, please provide this information in the green "free-text" boxes below the indicator questions for each Strategy.

3. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green "free-text" box, it is recommended that you cut-and-paste the existing text into a separate file, make the amendments, and then cut-and-paste the revised text back into the green box.

4. So as to assist Contracting Parties in referring to relevant information they provided in their National Report to COP9, for each indicator below (where appropriate) a cross-reference is provided to the equivalent indicator(s) in the COP9 NRF, shown thus: {x.x.x}

GOAL 1. THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS

STRATEGY 1.1: *Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of wetland resources at relevant scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, in particular in the application of the wise use principle.*

Indicator questions:

1.1.1 Does your country have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory? {1.1.1}	A - Yes
1.1.2 Is the wetland inventory data and information maintained and made accessible to all stakeholders? {1.1.3; 1.1.6}	A - Yes
1.1.3 Does your country have information about the status and trends of the ecological character of wetlands (Ramsar sites and/or wetlands generally)? {1.2.2} [if "Yes", please indicate in Additional implementation information below, from where or from whom this information can be accessed]	A - Yes
1.1.4 If the answer is "Yes" in 1.1.3, does this information indicate that the need to address adverse change in the ecological character of wetlands is now greater, the same, or less than in the previous triennium, for:	
a) Ramsar sites	B - the same
b) wetlands generally	B - the same

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.1.1 – 1.1.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.1.3: [.. additional information …]"

1.1.1, 1.1.2 and 1.1.3: The FWS strategically maps the Nation's wetlands and deepwater habitats to gather information on their characteristics, extent, and status through the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI). As part of the President's Wetlands Initiative, the FWS completed an updated national wetlands status and trends report in 2005. The study found that there are about 107.7 million acres of wetlands in the continuous United States. Between 1998 and 2004, there was an estimated gain in wetlands acreage of 191,750 acres, or about 32,000 acres per year. The net gain in wetlands acreage was attributed to an increase in freshwater ponds, conversion of agricultural lands or former agricultural lands that had been idled, in combination with wetland restorations. The report did not document or address changes in wetlands quality. There is additional work to be done to ensure that the Nation's wetlands base is sustained and provides the necessary functions, diversity, and structure to improve the quality of our wetland resources. http://www/fws/gov/nwi/statusandtrends.htm

It is important to note that the NWI provides an estimate of the acreage of wetlands. The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), with members of all the Federal agencies, are developing a Wetland Mapping Data Standard to increase the speed of wetlands mapping in the United States. The Wetland Mapping Data Standard was released for public comment and should be finalized in 2008. The mapping standard will enable any entity mapping wetlands to upload data to the NWI.

The NRCS conducts the National Resources Inventory (NRI), also a scientifically based statistical survey of the Nation's natural resources that provides updated information on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's non-Federal land. The NRI is unique in that it is a nationally consistent database constructed specifically to estimate five-, 10-, and 15-year trends for natural resources. http://222/nrcs.usda.gov/technical/NRI/

Information about Ramsar sites is maintained by the National Administrative Authority at USFWS. http://www.fws.gov/international/ramsar/ramsar.htm

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is developing an implementation plan that will lead to a national assessment of the ecosystem services that US wetlands are providing. The draft plan should be available for review in July 2008. EPA and Ramsar's STRP are discussing how to colloborate on this project and an MOU is being contemplated.

1.1.4: In some cases, the need is greater, such as for example, in terms of Louisiana Coastal Wetlands. Louisiana, home to 40 percent of all coastal wetlands in the lower 48 states, is projected to lose almost 17 square miles of coastline each year for the next 50 years to storms, sea level rise, and land subsidence. http://www.nola.com/speced/lastchance/multimedia/flash.ssf?flashlandloss1.swf.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.1 national implementation:

On Earth Day 2004, President Bush celebrated the opportunity to move beyond the Federal policy of 'no net loss' of wetlands and called for a new commitment to attain an overall increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands in America. This includes both creating new wetlands and improving the quality of existing wetlands. The President also required that we protect existing, high-quality wetlands. His goal is to achieve at least one million acres in each of these separate categories by 2009. This goal reflects agency performance in restoring, improving and protecting wetland acres. The goal does not reflect a net acreage total (i.e. the goal does not reflect loss of wetlands). To date, the team of six Federal departments (including the Environmental Protection Agency and the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Transportation, and the Army) working with multiple states, communities, tribes, and private landowners is on track to meet or exceed this goal. Since this goal was set, 2,769,000 acres of wetlands have been restored or created, improved or protected. In addition, many agencies of government contribute to the continuing goal of 'no net loss' by ensuring mitigation for wetlands that are developed for other uses.

STRATEGY 1.2: *Develop, review, amend when necessary, and implement national or supranational policies, legislation, institutions and practices, including impact assessment and valuation, in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the wise use principle of the Convention is being effectively applied, where possible specifying the appropriate policy instrument(s) in each Contracting Party which ensures wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

1.2.1 Is a National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place? {2.1.1} [If "Yes", please give the title and date of the policy in Additional implementation information]	A - Yes
1.2.2 Does the National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) incorporate any World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets and actions? {2.1.2}	A - Yes
1.2.3 Have wetland issues been incorporated into national strategies for sustainable development (including National Poverty Reduction Plans called for by the WSSD and water resources management and water efficiency plans)? {2.1.2}	E - Not applicable
1.2.4 Has the quantity and quality of water available to, and required by, wetlands been assessed?	A - Yes
1.2.5 Are Strategic Environmental Assessment practices applied when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact upon wetlands? {2.2.2}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.2.1 – 1.2.5 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.2.3: [.. additional information …]"

1.2.1: Although the United States does not have one comprehensive National Wetland Policy document since the late 1970s, the United States has created and implemented a number of programs to protect the nation's wetlands. In May 1977, President Carter issued an executive order requiring all federal agencies 'to avoid . . . adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands.' In April 2004, President Bush announced a new national goal of increasing the overall acreage of wetlands in the United States each year. The President's goal is to create, improve, and protect at least three million acres of wetland over five years. The Council on Environmental Quality declared in 2007 that 2,769,000 acres of wetlands had been restored, improved, or protected through wetland conservation programs in the three years since the President's announcement. Additionally, over 25 federal statutes currently govern the creation, management, use, and conservation of wetlands. In all, the United States employs four main strategies to restore, improve, and protect the nation's wetlands: regulatory programs, grant programs, incentive programs, and focused planning and implementation.

I. Regulatory Programs

The most important statutes aimed at protecting wetlands through regulation are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (Clean Water Act or CWA), the Rivers and Harbors Act, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

NEPA is a significant element of U.S. wetland policy; it requires extensive information gathering concerning the environmental consequences of many federal actions, and it provides a number of opportunities for public input and participation.. NEPA requires all federal agencies to go through an in-depth analysis called an environmental impact statement before engaging in a major federal project that will have a significant impact on the environment. The procedural requirements of NEPA ensure that federal agencies consider environmental impacts, including those associated with wetlands, while defining and planning major federal projects so that the nation's natural resources and ecosystems are protected for future generations.

The Clean Water Act, section 404 in particular, is a substantive regulatory program aimed at protecting 'waters of the United States,' particularly wetlands, from the adverse effects related to "filling" wetlands. Activities in waters of the United States that are regulated under this program include fills for development, water resource projects (such as highways and airports), and conversion of wetlands to uplands for farming and forestry. Section 404 of the CWA requires any person who wishes to discharge into a wetland, or fill a wetland, to go through an extensive process that requires searching for upland alternatives, ensuring that the water quality of the State will not be impaired by the project, and mitigating the negative environmental impacts of filling the wetlands through wetland restoration or creation. This program is not a comprehensive regulatory program meant to protect all activities within wetlands; however, because it regulates any activity that includes a 'discharge of a pollutant,' most activities within wetlands, as defined under the statute, fall under this program.

Section 401 of the CWA is another provision thatadds an additional layer of protection for waterbodies, including wetlands. Section 401 gives states power to deny any federal permit to a person who plans to discharge into a state waterbody. States may deny or condition a permit to ensure the permitted activity will not result in a violation of water quality standards.

The Rivers and Harbors Act, a precursor to the CWA, is another regulatory program that may be used to protect wetlands. The provisions of the Rivers and Harbors Act require any person who plans to construct, excavate, or dredge in or obstruct or change the course of a navigable water to obtain a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers before doing so.

Finally, the ESA is a regulatory program that indirectly serves to protect wetlands by requiring protection of listed endangered and threatened species. Over one-third of the plant and animal species listed as threatened or endangered in the United States require wetland habitat during some portion of their life cycle. Many of the provisions of the ESA address the survival of listed species by targeting the preservation of the species' habitat. For example, §7 of the ESA makes it unlawful for any federal agency to engage in a major federal project that will jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species or that will destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. Therefore, since more than one-third of listed species need wetlands to survive for some portion of their life cycle, protecting wetlands is a secondary effect of the ESA.

II. Financial Assistance and Grant Programs

The United States has several programs that give financial assistance to State and local governments, Tribes, and private parties to restore, improve, and protect the nation's wetlands. Some examples of these programs include the Federal-Aid Highway Program, North American

Wetland Conservation Act Program, National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program, and Landowner Incentive Program.

Under the Federal-Aid Highway Program, state transportation agencies may use national Highway System and Surface Transportation Program funds to finance wetlands and natural habitat conservation planning and implementation, as well as compensatory mitigation and restoration projects that offset unavoidable losses from transportation projects. From 1996-2006, the program has resulted in a net increase of 31,555 acres of wetlands with a total of 49,000 acres of wetland mitigation.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act Program, passed to support the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, is a voluntary grant program, which provides grants to help public and private groups restore and protect wetlands in North America. Since 1991, the program has resulted in protection, restoration, or enhancement projects for 14.6 million acres of wetlands.

In addition to the more comprehensive grant and financial assistance programs, the United States has enacted programs aimed at restoring and protecting wetlands in certain locations such as coastal areas and private and tribal lands. The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program (NCWCGP) has given partial funding to several coastal states and one territory to acquire, conserve, and restore coastal wetland ecosystems. Since 1990, the program has granted $183 million. In addition, the Landowner Incentive Program gives financial assistance to State and Tribal conservation agencies in order to help landowners restore habitat for species that are at risk on private and tribal lands.

III. Incentive Programs

The United States has enacted several incentive programs aimed at encouraging and aiding State and local governments and private landowners to restore, improve, or protect wetlands. These programs create either long-term agreements with private landowners or provide technical assistance to public and private parties. The Wetlands Reserve Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and Conservation Technical Assistance are three examples of incentive programs.

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is one of several programs aimed at retiring agricultural land to restore and protect wetlands. This program primarily targets wetlands whose owners had previously drained the wetlands for farming and restores these wetlands by purchasing permanent or thirty-year easements on the land. The WRP is included in the Farm Bill, which expired in fall 2007. Congress has not passed the 2007 Farm Bill, but the current version does contain a renewal of the WRP.

Partners for Fish and Wildlife is a voluntary, citizen-based program that restores and improves wetlands on private land through agreements with private landowners. This program also provides technical assistance to other federal, state, and local agencies.

The Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program helps private landowners, conservation districts, tribes, and other organizations by providing technical assistance through a network of professional conservationists. In 2006, the CTA helped landowners create, restore, or enhance 65,300 acres of wetlands.

IV. Focused Planning and Implementation

In addition to a regulatory scheme and funding programs, the United States has developed a number of plans focused on certain special areas of wetland protection. One example is the National Wetlands Mitigation Plan. The United States adopted a National Wetlands Mitigation Plan in December 2002 and has been working on completing the 17 objectives since its adoption. The National Wetlands Mitigation Plan's objectives are meant to improve the ecological performance and results of wetlands compensatory mitigation under the Clean Water Act and other related programs. These objectives focus on improving guidance documents to federal agencies, Tribes, and states, as well as continuing the financial contribution for the state grants program on wetlands and creating a mitigation-tracking database system. Since 2002, the United States has begun work on all 17 objectives and has completed nine in full.

1.2.2: Although the United States created most of the programs that make up its wetland policy before the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), many of the national programs meet the WSSD's targets and actions pertaining to wetlands. The WSSD's targets and actions pertaining to wetlands fall into four general categories. First, the WSSD calls for national and sub-national strategies to protect wetlands from land-use activities, pollution, and other detrimental

activities. Second, the WSSD calls on countries to protect coastal areas. Third, the WSSD calls on countries to improve scientific understanding of the importance, quality, and quantity of each nation's wetlands and incorporate that knowledge into decision-making. Fourth, the WSSD calls on countries to enhance the efficient use of water resources, particularly through indigenous and community-based approaches.

The United States has taken action both at the national and sub-national level to protect the nation's wetlands from pollution resulting from land-use activities. Most of this action occurs under the auspices of the CWA, which basically requires that any person who wishes to fill a wetland with dredged or other material or discharge a pollutant into waters of the United States, including wetlands, obtain a permit before doing so. Section 404 of the CWA restricts filling wetlands unless the project has no practicable uplands alternative, the project limits the negative effects on wetlands as much as possible, and the project mitigates unavoidable impacts. The United States also employs a variety of grant and incentive programs to encourage state and local governments, Tribes, and private landowners to restore, improve, and protect wetlands.

Additionally, the United States has implemented many programs focused on protecting coastal areas. One example of a coastal-focused program is the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA). The CWPPRA provides grants for projects to restore, improve, and protect coastal wetlands in Louisiana. By September 2007, the United States had approved 143 active CWPPRA projects. Seventy-four of these projects have been constructed, and 17 are currently under construction.

The United States also has many programs aimed at understanding the importance of wetlands and disseminating information for the future restoration and protection of wetlands. The National Wetlands Inventory, run by the Fish and Wildlife Service, assesses the location and characteristics, as well as status and trends, of the nation's wetlands. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) compiles a report periodically that includes the water quality information for any wetland subject to CWA jurisdiction. In addition, the EPA serves as a clearinghouse for much of the information pertaining to wetlands, including links to the National Wetlands Inventory, water quality reports, and reports focusing on the importance of wetland ecosystems.

In accordance with the targets and actions relating to wetlands, the United States uses the information from the National Wetlands Inventory to make informed decisions regarding wetland use, management, and protection. The main process the United States uses to make informed decisions regarding environmental impacts is NEPA, which requires federal agencies to produce an environmental impact statement before finalizing any federal project with significant impacts upon the environment.

Additionally, the United States has employed several grant and incentive programs aimed at engaging local communities in wetlands restoration, improvement and protection, as the WSSD recommends. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Five Star Challenge Grants Program, National Estuary Program, and the Community-based Restoration Program.

1.2.4: The United States assesses the quantity and quality of water in wetlands ecosystems through three major programs: the National Wetlands Inventory, the National Resources Inventory, and the Clean Water Act §305(b) program.

The National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) produces information on the characteristics, extent and status of the Nation's wetland, deepwater, and riparian habitats. The NWI lists the location, acreage, and type of wetland, but does not assess the water quality of wetlands. The NWI is available on the internet, and most of the information is in a digital map format for ease of use.

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) compiles information on the status, conditions, and trends of soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's non-federal lands. The NRI is aimed at recognizing trends in 10 to 15 year time-lines for natural resources, of which wetlands are one component.

The Clean Water Act's §305(b) requires the federal government to compile information from states on the water quality of all of the "waters of the United States." This report is an in-depth compilation of water quality. However, it is limited to waters that are considered "waters of the United States," meaning under the jurisdiction of the CWA, and therefore, does not include the water quality of any wetlands that do not fall into that category. The EPA is required to review the §305(b) report biennially. However, issued its last report in 2002.

1.2.5: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires all federal agencies, before

engaging in a major federal project that will have a substantial impact on the environment, to conduct a thorough and in-depth analysis—an Environmental Impact Statement—before progressing with the project. The Environmental Impact Statement includes information regarding the direct and indirect environmental impacts of the project, as well as any alternatives that may be less environmentally damaging. The procedural requirements of NEPA ensure that federal agencies consider environmental impacts, including those associated with wetlands, when defining and planning major federal projects so that the nation's natural resources and ecosystems are protected for future generations.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.2 national implementation:

An important aspect of the President's Wetlands Initiative is its continued emphasis on the goal of 'no net loss' of wetlands by existing programs that regulate certain activities in wetlands and other waters. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States, including wetlands, and is jointly administered by the USACE and EPA. The USACE has primary responsibility for day-to-day permitting of activities in jurisdictional 'waters of the United States', a broad category of aquatic resources that includes wetlands. A comprehensive permit review requires applicants to first avoid and then minimize impacts, and finally use compensatory mitigation to replace wetland functions lost. Regulated activities under this program include fills for development, water resource projects (such as dams and levees), and infrastructure development (such as highways and airports). During the past three years, more than 270,000 permit applications were processed requiring applicants to avoid impacts to more than 22,000 acres of wetlands, resulting in approximately 50,000 acres of compensatory mitigation annually representing a ratio of more than two acres of mitigation for every acre of permitted impacts to wetlands. The Wetland Conservation ('Swampbuster') provision established in the 1985 Farm Bill, and amended in 1990, requires all agricultural producers to protect the wetlands on the farms they own or operate if they wish to be eligible for certain USDA farm program benefits.

STRATEGY 1.3: *Increase recognition of the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defence, climate change mitigation, food security, poverty reduction, cultural heritage, and scientific research, with a focus on under-represented ecosystem types, through developing and disseminating methodology to achieve wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

1.3.1 Has an assessment been conducted of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar sites? {3.3.1} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in the Additional implementation information below, the year of assessment and from where or from whom this information can be obtained]	C - Partly
1.3.2 Have wise use wetland programmes and/or projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives and/or food and water security plans been implemented? {3.3.4}	C - Partly
1.3.3 Has national action been taken to implement the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (Resolution VIII.17)? {3.2.1}	C - Partly
1.3.4 Has national action been taken to apply the guiding principles on cultural values of wetlands (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21)? {3.3.3}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.3.1 – 1.3.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.3.3: [.. additional information …]"

1.3.1: EPA's Office of Research and Development is developing an implementation plan that would lead to a national assessment of the ecosystem services that US wetlands are providing. The draft plan should be available for review in July 2008. EPA's Office os Water is working with EPA's Office of Research and Development, States, and Tribes to implement a National Wetland Condition Assessment in 2011. As part of this effort, EPA intends to explore how changes in wetland condition impacts the delivery of ecosystem services across multiple spatial scales.

1.3.3: Peatlands are now recognized as a vital part of the world's wetland resources and are increasingly seen to be important ecosystems contributing to global carbon conservation relevant to climate change, biological diversity, global water issues, and to many wetland functions valuable to human communities. Although the U.S. does not have a national plan to address peatland conservation, peatlands are part of the nation's wetland conservation policy and efforts are made national and state levels. The total area of peatland in North America is 1,735,000 km² (40% of the world's peat lands). They occur in nearly every state of the United States. Peatlands are dominant over large parts of the landscape in the mid-high latitudes where cool conditions led to peat development even in areas with relatively low precipitation.. 50% of the peatlands in the US occur in nearly undisturbed settings in Alaska, although north of 60oN, low temperatures mean conditions are less favorable for peat formation.. In North America, Sphagnum peatlands occur throughout the range of the Pleistocene glaciation, which includes the Northeast and the Great Lakes region of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota; and also in unglaciated parts of New Jersey and northern Pennsylvania, Illinois and Indiana. Minnesota was particularly well-suited for the formation of peatlands, with about 3 million hectares of peatlands, the most of any state in the contiguous U.S. Peatlands cover about 14 percent of the state's land area, but they hold 37 percent of its stored carbon, the highest of any land or vegetative form. Much of the northern part of the state was once the flat bottom of glacial Lake Agassiz. The Red Lake peatland forms the largest continuous peatland complex (150,000 ha) in the contiguous US. The Red Lake peatland lies within the level landscape of glacial Lake Agassiz. Even though large expanses Minnesota's peatlands have been drained for farming, they are still constitute the state's largest intact original ecosystem and wilderness. Minnesota's peat bogs, though long inhospitable, still need active protection in the face of an ever-expanding population and unpredictable development and land-use patterns. About 3,000 acres of the state's peatlands are being mined for sphagnum moss but the leading users for peatlands are recreational hunters. So far, the bog landscapes in have been self-protective. In 1892, U.S. government land surveyors declared Minessota's bogs "practically unfit for any purpose." Later efforts to drain it for farming failed. The high water table and the peatlands' sheer size resisted road- and railroad-building. The Big Bog State Recreation Area (Big Bog SRA) established by Minnesota's 2000 Legislature, is the newest member of Minnesota's state park system and perhaps one of the most unique. The Big Bog contains the largest, most diversely patterned peatland in the US. It lies in the middle of the Agassiz Lowland landscape region in the north central part of Minnesota. It is located in northern Minnesota's Red Lake peatland close to the town of Waskish. Big Bog SRA contains a campground and day use area in its southern unit on Red Lake, and about 4000 hectares of peatland north of Red Lake.

The National Park Service has designated several peatlands as National Natural Landmarks.[When designated, a landmark is included in the National Registry of Natural Landmarks, which currently lists 580 National Natural Landmarks nationwide. Of the 580 listed landmarks, half are administered by public agencies (Federal, State, county or municipal governments) about one-third are owned solely by private parties. The remaining natural landmarks are owned or administered by public and private owners].

The Red Lake Peatland Natural Landmark is one of the largest peatlands remaining in the conterminous United States, illustrating a variety of geological features and plant associations, especially the dominant and rare string bog. In New England Somerset County Bog and Jack Pine Stand National Natural Landmark is one of the larger peatlands in Maine, and the only intermontane peatland in the northern Appalachian Mountains, and has the greatest abundance and variety of string patterns of any U.S. peatland east of the northern Great Lakes.

For now, peatlands have the potential to become part of a strategy for countering climate change -- storing carbon in the landscape where it can't be emitted into the atmosphere. They are one of the elements in the climate-change system that can provide benefits by being left alone. Wetlands, particularly peatlands constitute the largest carbon reservoir in the terrestrial biosphere. Thawing of permafrost and peatlands could increase to levels approaching 10-25% of current man-made emissions. In spite of this the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, although it acknowledges the global significance of protecting and enhancing carbon sinks, fails to recognize peatlands or wetlands

as a key reservoir that could be easily managed to reduce abrupt climate change vulnerability.

1.3.4: The Kawainui and Hamakua Marsh Complex in the state of Hawaii applies the guiding principles on cultural values to wetlands. The Kawainui Marsh, the largest remaining emergent wetland in Hawaii and Hawaii's largest ancient freshwater fishpond, is located in what was once the center of a caldera of the Koolau shield volcano. Sacred to Hawaiians, the marsh provides primary habitat to four of Hawaii's endemic and endangered waterbirds, including the Laysan Duck and the Hawaiian Goose or Nene, and contains archaeological and cultural resources, including ancient walled taro water gardens (lo'i) where fish were also cultivated.

For the past three years, the Wakarusa Wetlands in Kansas have been prominently featured in the National Day of Prayer to Protect Native American Sacred Places. Native Peoples magazine featured the Wakarusa Wetlands on its (May-June 2007) cover for a story about 'Saving Sacred Places'. Native poets, writers, local artists, nature writers and photographers have joined to produce Wakarusa Wetlands in Word & Image, an anthology intended to raise awareness of how important this place is to Native Americans and others both locally and throughout Indian Country.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.3 national implementation:

For WWD 2008, there was a series of ten weekly benefit concerts held in the student union of Haskell Indian Nations University. These concerts raised awareness about Wakarusa Wetlands, which is considered sacred to many Native Americans.

STRATEGY 1.4: *Integrate policies on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties and in decision-making processes at national, regional, provincial and local levels, particularly concerning territorial management, groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning, and responses to climate change, all in the context of implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).*

Indicator questions:

1.4.1 Has the Convention's water-related guidance (see Resolution IX.1. Annex C) been used/applied in decision-making related to water resource planning and management? {3.4.2 – r3.4.xiv}	B - No
1.4.2 Have CEPA expertise and tools been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management?	A - Yes
1.4.3 Has the Convention's guidance on wetlands and coastal zone management (Annex to Resolution VIII.4) been used/applied in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) planning and decision-making? {3.4.5}	B - No
1.4.4 Have the implications for wetland conservation and wise use of national implementation of the Kyoto Protocol been assessed? {3.4.9}	B - No

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.4.1 – 1.4.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.4.3: [.. additional information …]"

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.5: *Identify priority wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites.*

Indicator questions:

1.5.1 Have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects been implemented? {4.1.2} [If "Yes", please identify any major programmes or projects in Additional implementation information]	A - Yes
1.5.2 Has the Convention's guidance on wetland restoration (Annex to Resolution VIII.16; Wise Use Handbook 15, 3rd edition) been used/applied in designing and implementing wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects? {4.1.2}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.5.1 – 1.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.5.2: [.. additional information …]"

1.5.1: The primary programs making contributions to restoration are the Wetlands Reserve Program (USDA/NRCS), National Wildlife Refuge System (DOI/FWS), North American Wetlands Conservation Act (DOI/FWS), Conservation Reserve Program (USDA/FSA), and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (DOI/FWS). The primary contributors to the improvement of wetlands goal are the National Widlife Refuge System; Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (DOA/USACE, Civil Works); North American Wetlands Conservation Act; Conservation Technical Assistance Program (USDA/NRCS); and the Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (USACE, EPA, FWS, and NOAA).

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.6: *Develop guidance and promote protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species in wetland systems.*

Indicator questions:

1.6.1 Have national policies, strategies and management responses to threats from invasive species, particularly in wetlands, been developed and implemented? {r5.1.ii}	A - Yes
1.6.2 Have such policies, strategies and management responses been carried out in cooperation with the focal points of other conventions and international organisations/processes? {r5.1.ii}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.6.1 – 1.6.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.6.2: [.. additional information …]"

1.6.1: The United States has instituted numerous programs aimed at the prevention and control of invasive species. In all, this framework comprises 27 federal laws, over 300 programs, and around 320 groups and organizations that play some role in the invasive species problem in the United States. The two largest federal organizations for invasive and aquatic invasive species are the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) and the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (ANSTF). Their strategic plans are summarized below, particularly as they apply to wetlands.

I. The Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force

The ANSTF, established under the Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 is dedicated to the prevention and control of nonindigenous aquatic species. In line with its mission, the ANSTF developed a Strategic Plan for 2007- 2012 (Strategic Plan) that consists of five main goals: (1) preventing the introduction of invasive species, (2) minimizing harmful effects of already-introduced invasive species, (3) facilitating research concerning invasive species, (4) educating the public on invasive species and promoting domestic and international action, and (5) maximizing the organizational effectiveness of the ANTSF.

The ANSTF's first goal in the Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of preventing the introduction of aquatic nuisance species and plans to 'develop strategies to identify and reduce the risk of harmful aquatic species being introduced into waters of the United States.' These strategies include the development and use of science-based risk assessments, identification of priority pathways, and coordination to minimize introduction via these pathways. The ANSTF has taken important steps towards implementing this goal, including developing the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) program. HACCP details a method for identifying risks and focusing procedures for activities in pathways that could lead to the introduction of invasive species. It also provides training and information for regional organizations to use when developing HACCP plans. Currently, 175 plans have been developed in 26 different states. In addition, the ANSTF has conducted ecological surveys throughout the nation in order to establish data and document impacts of aquatic nuisance species.

The second goal of the Strategic Plan is to "minimize the harmful effects of aquatic nuisance species already introduced into waters of the United States." If and when an aquatic nuisance species is identified as causing harm or having the potential to cause harm, ANSTF identifies environmentally sound methods that can control spread and help minimize harm to the public interest. These methods include the development of species-specific control plans, rapid response control capabilities, survey and monitoring efforts, state management plans and research and education relating to monitoring and control. In implementing this goal, ANSTF has assisted in the development of state management plans for aquatic nuisance species, which has resulted in several approved plans, a number of plans in development, and two interstate plans. Additionally, species management control plans have been developed or are being developed by the ANSTF for many aquatic nuisance species, including species of the genus Caulerpa, the European Green Crab (Carcinus maenas), Mitten crabs (Genus Eriocheir), New Zealand Mudsnail (Potamopyrgus antipodarum), Giant Salvinia (Salvinia molesta), Purple Loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria), water chestnut (Trapa natans), and nutria (Myocaster coypus).

The third goal of the Strategic Plan is to facilitate research that will address the threat and harmful effects of aquatic nuisance species. The ANSTF Research Committee develops research priorities on nuisance species and coordinates research activities with federal, state, and tribal governments, as well as academia to gather information on the biology of particular species and their interactions with the ecosystem. Among other things, ANSTF maintains a list of publications resulting from its funded research and encourages the development of management and control tools. The ANSTF is currently researching many topics, including invasive biology; the ecological and economic impacts of aquatic nuisance species; the prevention, monitoring and control of aquatic nuisance species; and ballast water.

The fourth goal of the strategic plan is to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of preventing the introduction, spread, and impact of aquatic nuisance species. To this extent, the ANSTF has helped to develop and participate in the Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers™ and Habitattitude™ campaigns. Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers™ educates the public on how aquatic species travel to new waterways through recreational equipment and how to clean equipment in order to prevent spreading. Habitattitude™ educates the public on the dangers of releasing pets, plants, and other species into the wild. Another aspect of the Strategic Plan's fourth goal is increasing international cooperation with nations that share waterways with the United States and broadening involvement in international activities and organizations concerning aquatic nuisance species.

The final goal of the Strategic Plan is to "maximize the organizational effectiveness of the

[ANSTF]." ANSTF's main objective in this area is to facilitate cooperation between federal, state, tribal and local governments on invasive species issues. This has been carried out in the context of the four goals discussed supra, as well as with other federal and state programs like the NISC, discussed infra.

II. National Invasive Species Council

Executive Order 13112 (EO) established the NISC, which, with assistance from the Invasive Species Advisory Committee, develops the NISC Management Plan (Plan). The Plan is broader than the ANSTF Strategic Plan in that it applies to terrestrial species as well as aquatic species, but despite this breadth, it has major implications for the management of aquatic invasive species. The Plan recommends action in the areas of leadership and coordination, prevention, early detection and rapid response, control and management, restoration, international cooperation, research, information management, and education and public awareness. Currently, a management plan for 2008-2012 has been drafted and is undergoing public comment.

Leadership and coordination between federal, state and other organizations is a NISC priority. The Plan calls for a unified, effective, and coordinated federal response and encourages working in partnerships with states and providing meaningful public participation. In order to aid oversight between federal agencies for the implementation of the EO, the NISC developed an oversight/implementation mechanism where its members can report their progress. The NISC works with federal agencies such as the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the National Ocean Commission to coordinate comments concerning the identification of high priority aquatic invasive species. Additionally, the NISC has drafted guidance to federal agencies on manners of addressing the prevention and control of invasive species in the context of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Additionally, the Plan outlines a risk-based approach to prevent the introduction of invasive species. NISC plans to identify invasive species likely to be introduced and their pathways of introduction and will then take steps to interrupt these pathways. To this end, NISC has secured additional resources to help strengthen port inspections and fund research on new ballast water technologies. NISC has helped implement a process for identifying high priority invasive species likely to be introduced unintentionally by initiating the design and development of a global exotic pest surveillance program that collects, reports, analyzes, disseminates, and utilizes information on pest disease and control in foreign countries. Additionally, in conjunction with the ANSTF, NISC formed the Pathways Working Group, which is developing a system for evaluating invasive species pathways and mitigation strategies. The 2008-2012 draft Plan also proposes to improve international, federal, state, and tribal standards in order to protect the United States from invasive species, in part by increasing sanitary and phytosanitary standards and improving international risk analysis processes.

The Plan also outlines a strategy for early detection and rapid response. The plan supports the of creation of an integrated program involving research and development, technical assistance, and operations, all done in cooperation with state and local authorities. NISC has established and improved early detection and rapid response monitoring programs. For example, NISC has implemented systematic monitoring programs for aquatic invasive species in the San Francisco Bay, Puget Sound, Lower Columbia River, Prince William Sound, Honolulu Harbor, Mobile Bay, Chesapeake Bay, and Massachusetts Bay. It has also used underwater video technology to discover the presence of Curly-Leaf Pondweed (Potamogeton crispus) in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. In the future, NISC proposes more substantive efforts in early detection and rapid response. The 2008-2012 draft Plan is more specific, proposing "initiating three (3) systematic monitoring pilot programs" in order to enhance monitoring efforts in identified high-priority locations and developing predictive models that will forecast the spread of endangered species.

NISC also recognizes the need to control and manage permanently established invasive species and seeks to lessen the species' effects by working towards eradication within an area by suppressing population, limiting spread, and reducing effects. Many federal agencies have worked toward this goal by developing sanitation methods to reduce the spread of invasive species and by releasing natural enemies of invasive species to decrease or eradicate their populations. Future goals in this area, as reflected in the 2008-2012 draft Plan, include evaluating regional invasive species control and management and reducing spread of invasive species though cleaning treatments such as watercrafts.

The NISC addresses the EO's mandate that federal agencies must "provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded." To achieve this, NISC plans to develop and issue recommendations, guidelines, and procedures for land and water

management agencies to use in restoring species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been occupied by invasive species. In addition, NISC will develop draft legislation that will authorize tax and other incentives to private landowners whom assist in the restoration process. In the context of wetlands and other aquatic areas, one of the most noteworthy projects has been the Bureau of Reclamation's work to recover habitats invaded by salt cedars (Tamaricaceae). The 2008-2012 draft Plan proposes to take substantive steps towards restoring some high-value ecosystems and including invasive species considerations in other federal projects.

Finally, NISC plans to increase international cooperation in dealing with invasive species. Recognizing the need for international cooperation in dealing with the prevention and control of invasive species, the NISC intends to take a leadership role in international cooperation and invest in strategies to raise the capacity of other nations to manage the movement of invasive species. This also includes strengthening and expanding US participation in internationally mutually-supportive standards and codes of conduct, and the outline of a North American Invasive Species Strategy. The implementation of these goals is discussed infra.

III. Other Notable Organizations/Projects

While the ANSTF and NISC are the leading governmental organizations planning and implementing strategies for dealing with invasive species, particularly in the wetlands context, many other federal agencies play a role through the development of their own plans, as well as by working in conjunction with the ANSTF and NISC. The National Park Service has Exotic Plant Management Teams to deal with invasive plants in the nation's parks. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), together with the National Marine Fisheries Service, head the NOAA Restoration Center, which works toward eliminating invasive species in coastal and estuarine habitats and restoring these habitats to their native ecosystems. The NOAA Restoration Center has removed invasive species from bays and estuaries in Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Washington. The Army Corp of Engineers runs a variety of invasive species control programs, including the Aquatic Plant Control Research Program and the Removal of Aquatic Growth Program. Additionally, the Environmental Protection Agency conducts research that evaluates ecological indicators, such as nonindigenous species for surface waters, nonindigenous submerged aquatic vegetation, and the effects of non-native species on wetlands restoration.

1.6.2: The United States' invasive species policies and strategies have been carried out in cooperation with international conventions and organizations. The strategies of the management plans of both the ANSTF and NISC include international components, and many of the goals rely on international cooperation in order to succeed. While ANSTF and NISC are, for the most part, not directly involved with the international aspect, the federal agencies that compose these organizations do cooperate in international conventions and organizations.

Cooperation with conventions and organizations on biodiversity is important in implementing and achieving many invasive species plans. The Department of Interior participates in a variety of scientific, technical, and policy activities involving biodiversity through multiparty organizations such as the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network and the North American Biodiversity Information Network. In addition, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provides that the parties shall 'prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species.' Although the United States has not ratified the CBD, it does consider invasive species factors that threaten the recovery of endangered and threatened species in its Species Recovery Program under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The United States has also made efforts to cooperate with other organizations to increase global public awareness of invasive species issues. The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) takes a proactive stance in the Global Invasive Species Programme, which raises awareness of invasive species issues among other governments, encourages international cooperation, and supports capacity-building efforts in developing countries. Additionally, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service provides financial support to the Global Invasive Species Database, which aims to increase public awareness about invasive species and facilitate effective prevention and management activities through the dissemination of knowledge on a global scale.

The United States also works directly with other nations to provide assistance with invasive species issues. One goal of NISC and ANSTF is to help prevent the introduction of invasive species in other countries through development assistance, military famine relief, and international financing projects. The Agency for International Development works to ensure that its overseas development assistance programs do not lead to the introduction of invasive species in other

nations.

Finally, overseeing trade is an important step in the prevention of the introduction of invasive species both domestically and worldwide. The United States is involved in the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. These measures are adopted to protect plant or animal life or health where it may affect trade. Through the Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the United States cooperates with foreign officials to prevent the introduction of invasive species in daily imports and exports. Additionally, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative increasingly includes invasive species among its concerns when it considers efforts to protect the environment in developing and implementing trade policies. Last, the United States Coast Guard, under the Department of Homeland Security, leads the United States' compliance with ballast water management standards under the International Maritime Organization.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.6 national implementation:

Several U.S. Ramsar sites are facing the challenge of invasive species. The best know example is Caddo Lake and the Giant Salvinia. Caddo Lake is a 25,000-35,000 acre lake/wetland complex located in northeast Texas and northwest Louisiana. It is considered one of the most bio-diverse ecosystems in this region. As a result, both the Louisiana and Texas Wetlands of Caddo Lake have been delineated by DOI as Resource Category 1 (RC-1) habitat. About 25,000 acres of the Texas lake and wetlands are designated by Texas and the United States as the 13th U.S. 'wetland of international importance' under the Ramsar International Treaty.

For the past ten years, this site has seen a steady increase in water hyacinth infestations -- due in part to uncoordinated bi-state responses, and chronic state funding shortfalls and federal agency non-participation. The recent discovery of Salvinia molesta in two areas on the Louisiana side of the lake (about 300 total acres) and its more recent spread of Salvinia to Texas portions, increases -- very significantly-- the risk of further profound ecological degradation of these important biological resources.

Giant salvinia and water hyacinth infestations pose a very serious threat to the native plants and animals living in the Caddo Lake National Wildlife Refuge, which was established in 2000 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Caddo Lake Wildlife Management Area, established by Texas in 1993. Both of these refuge areas are within the Ramsar wetland site.

In their efforts to prevent Giant Salvinia from spreading any further on Caddo Lake, the Caddo Lake Giant Salvinia Task Force constructed a nylon mesh-netting barricade early in the summer of 2007. An application for a permit to construct the barricade was submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers in April, 2007.

Critical elements of Caddo Lake Strategic Plan for controlling Giant Salvinia developed by Randy Westbrooks (USGS):

1. Large infestations of GS (100+ acres) must be eradicated by the Louisiana Fish and Game Department and the Texas Park System (they have trained personnel and equipment already at the lake).

2. Small infestations (new patches in the lake) can be eradicated by a Caddo Lake Giant Salvinia Task Force Contractor (quick response that cannot be provided by the state agencies).

3. Micro infestations around docks and boathouses must be controlled by home owners (manually remove the plants from the lake to dry out).

A Pulling Together Initiative (PTI) grant for $40,000 was awarded to the Task Force in 2007 to meet the following objectives:

a. Conduct detection and delimiting surveys to identify and determine the total extent of Giant Salvinia Infestations on Caddo Lake.

b. Conduct appraisal surveys of treated areas to determine efficacy of state and task force sponsored treatments on the lake.

c. Facilitate formation and utilization of a collaborative response framework (modeled on the Unified Incident Response Command Structure [UICS] format) to coordinate multi-agency, bi-state and community-based responses.

d. Establish a community-level 'Caddo Lake Weed Warden' Program for local Outreach, Training, Certification and Deployment of local residents and civic organizations --as in-situ Sentinels and Auxiliary Rapid Response Network Members -- to Augment State & Federal Agency Programs to Detect, Suppress and/or Eradicate Giant Salvinia and other Aquatic Weed Infestations at Caddo Lake, Texas and Louisiana.

e. Implement a three level management plan to control Giant Salvinia on the lake (e.g. Large Infestations – Treated by Appropriate State Agencies; Small Infestations – Treated immediately by a Task Force Contractor; Areas around Boathouses and Docks – Manually Removed by Shoreline Residents and Home Owners.

f. Record and report project activities and outcomes to US Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of International Conservation for inclusion in the US National Ramsar Reports to the international signatories of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

GOAL 2. WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

STRATEGY 2.1 *Apply the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Handbook 7, 2nd edition; Handbook 14, 3rd edition).*

Indicator questions:

2.1.1 Have a strategy and priorities been established for any further designation of Ramsar sites, using the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List? {10.1.1} [If further Ramsar site designations are planned, please indicate in Additional implementation information, the number of sites and anticipated year of designation]	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 2.1.1

A number of planned and/or potential new site designations are under various stages of submission, planning or discussion. There is currently no strategic or prioritized plan for designation of Ramsar sites.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.1 national implementation:

While the U.S. does not currently have a strategic prioritization for further designation of Ramsar sites, the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, supported in part by the USNRC Small Grants Program, is developing a statewide prioritized plan for Ramsar designation, which may serve as a model for other states.

STRATEGY 2.2 *Maintain the Ramsar Sites Information Service and constantly update it with the best available information, and use the Ramsar Sites Database as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.*

Indicator questions:

2.2.1 Have all required updates of the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands been submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat? {10.2.3}	B - No
2.2.2 Are the Ramsar Sites Information Service and its database used in national implementation of the Convention concerning Ramsar site issues?	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.2.1 – 2.2.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.2.1: [.. additional information …]"

2.2.1: RIS updates were and submitted for: Okefenokee (Nov 2006); Everglades (May 2005); Catahoula Lake (April 2005); Delaware Bay (January 2008); Caddo Lake (April 2007); Cache River-Cypress Creek (November 2007); and Bolinas Lagoon (December 2007).

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.2 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.3 *Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites.*

Indicator questions:

2.3.1 Have the measures required to maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites been defined and applied? {11.1.1}	E - Planned
2.3.2 Have management plans/strategies been developed and implemented at all Ramsar sites? {11.1.2} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate, in Additional implementation information below, for how many sites have plans/strategies been developed but not implemented; for how many are plans/strategies in preparation; and for how many are plans/strategies being reviewed or revised]	A - Yes
2.3.3 Have cross-sectoral site management committees been established at Ramsar sites? {11.1.5} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please name the sites in Additional implementation information]	C - Some sites
2.3.4 Has any assessment of Ramsar site management effectiveness been carried out? [if "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the year of assessment and from whom, or from where, the information is available]	B - No

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.3.1 – 2.3.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.3.3: [.. additional information …]"

2.3.1: With respect to meeting its wise use obligation, the United States relies on several federal, state, and local regulatory regimes, as well as various non-regulatory wetland restoration programs. While many federal agencies cooperate on Ramsar issues in the United States, the USFWS takes the lead with respect to technical and scientific issues. In addition, the US National Ramsar Committee has recently created as Task Force that will focus on Threats to the Ecological Character of Ramsar sites.

2.3.2: All Ramsar sites in the U.S. have management plans.

2.3.3: Although a comprehensive list for all Ramsar sites is not available, there are many well-known cross-sectoral management groups in existence that have an impact on the management of U.S. Ramsar sites. Examples include the multitude of groups focused on jointly managing and conserving the Everglades, Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.3 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.4 *Monitor the condition of Ramsar sites, notify the Ramsar Secretariat without delay of changes affecting Ramsar sites as required by Article 3.2, and apply the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.*

Indicator questions:

2.4.1 Are arrangements in place for the Administrative Authority to be informed of changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites, pursuant to Article 3.2? {r11.2.iv} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please summarise the mechanism(s) established in Additional implementation information]	B - No
2.4.2 Have all cases of change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat, pursuant to Article 3.2,? {11.2.4} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate in Additional implementation information below for which Ramsar sites Article 3.2 reports have been made by the Administrative Authority to the Secretariat, and for which sites such reports of change or likely change have not yet been made]	B - No
2.4.3 If applicable, have actions been taken to address the issues for which Ramsar sites have been listed on the Montreux Record? {r11.2.viii} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please provide in Additional implementation information information about the actions taken]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.4.1 – 2.4.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.4.3: [.. additional information …]"

2.4.3: The primary and overarching purpose of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is to restore the South Florida ecosystem, which includes the Everglades. The plan provides the framework and guidance to restore, protect and preserve the water resources of the greater Everglades ecosystem. CERP has been described as the world's largest ecosystem restoration effort, and includes providing more natural flows of water, improved water quality, and more natural hydro-periods within the remaining natural areas. The plan is intended to help restore the ecosystem while ensuring clean and reliable water supplies, and providing flood protection in urban areas. http://www.evergladesplan.org

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.5 *Promote inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.*

Indicator questions:

2.5.1 Have all transboundary/shared wetland systems been identified? {12.1.1}	B - No
2.5.2 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems (including regional site and waterbird flyway networks)? {12.1.2; 12.2.2} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information below for which wetland systems such management is in place]	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.5.1 – 2.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.5.1: [.. additional information …]"

2.5.2: Examples include partnerships such as the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI); Partners in Flight; Important Bird Areas.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.6 *Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.*

Indicator questions:

2.6.1 Has the Contracting Party been involved in the development of a regional initiative under the framework of the Convention? {12.3.2} [If "Yes" or "Planned", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the name(s) and collaborating countries of each regional initiative]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 2.6.1

The U.S. has continued to provide financial support for the regional initiative CREHO, a training center on wetlands for the Americas, based in Panama.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.6 national implementation:

GOAL 3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

STRATEGY 3.1 *Collaboration with other institutions: Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other agencies.*

Indicator questions:

3.1.1 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)? {13.1.1}	A - Yes
3.1.2 Are the national focal points of other MEAs invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee? {r13.1.iii}	C - Partly
3.1.3 [For African Contracting Parties only] Has the Contracting Party participated in the implementation of the wetland programme under NEPAD? {13.1.6}	E - Not applicable

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 3.1.1 – 3.1.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "3.1.3: [.. additional information …]"

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 3.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 3.2 *Sharing of expertise and information: Promote the sharing of expertise and information.*

Indicator questions:

3.2.1 Have networks, including twinning arrangements, been established, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features? {14.1.3} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the networks and wetlands involved]	C - Partly
3.2.2 Has information about the country's wetlands and/or Ramsar sites and their status been made publicly available (e.g., through publications or a Web site)? {14.1.1}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 3.2.1-3.2.2

3.2.1: A comprehensive list covering all U.S. Ramsar sites is not available, however at least one U.S. Ramsar site has established networks for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features. The Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve provides a fellowship program to scientists worldwide. This program provides access to onsite locations (e.g. the Model Marsh) within the Reserve, use of the onsite lab, coordination with ongoing research and monitoring efforts, and access to databanks kept at the Reserve. The Reserve has also engaged in a joint project with Mexican government agencies and non-profits. The vision of this project is to reduce erosion from the Los Laurels Canyon's hillsides and the subsequent sedimentation in the Reserve. Furthermore, this project will include community participation on both sides of the border.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 3.2 national implementation:

GOAL 4. IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

STRATEGY 4.1 *Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values: Encourage active and informed participation of local communities and indigenous people, including women and youth, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including in relation to understanding the dynamics of cultural values.*

Indicator questions:

4.1.1 Has resource information been compiled on local communities' and indigenous people's participation in wetland management? {6.1.5}	C - Partly
4.1.2 Have traditional knowledge and management practices in relation to wetlands been documented and their application encouraged? {6.1.2}	C - Partly
4.1.3 Does the Contracting Party promote public participation in decision-making (with respect to wetlands), especially with local stakeholder involvement in the selection of new Ramsar sites and in Ramsar site management? {6.1.4}	C - Partly
4.1.4 Have educational and training activities been developed concerning cultural aspects of wetlands? {r6.1.vii}	C - Partly
4.1.5 Have cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning of Ramsar sites and other wetlands? {r.6.1.vi} [if "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate, if known, how many Ramsar sites and their names in Additional implementation information below]	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.1.1 – 4.1.5 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.1.3: [.. additional information …]"

4.1.5: The management plans for the Federally managed portions of Ramsar sites do take into account the social and cultural values of the sites (including wise use and the protection of culturally significant historical and archaeological sites) , however more specific information for each site is not available.
An excellent example of how the social and cultural values of a site have influenced management planning is the Kawainui and Hamakua Marsh Complex in the state of Hawaii. The Kawainui Marsh, the largest remaining emergent wetland in Hawaii and Hawaii's largest ancient freshwater fishpond, is located in what was once the center of a caldera of the Koolau shield volcano, Sacred to Hawaiians, the marsh provides primary habitat to four of Hawaii's endemic and endangered waterbirds, and contains archaeological and cultural resources, including ancient walled taro water gardens (lo'i) where fish were also cultivated. Kawainui Marsh stores surface water, providing flood protection for the adjacent Kailua town, one of the largest towns on the windward side of O'ahu. Hamakua Marsh is a smaller wetland historically connected to and immediately downstream of Kawainui Marsh, which also provides significant habitat for several of Hawaii's endemic and endangered waterbirds.
Kawainui Marsh and the surrounding area was a significant prehistoric settlement as evidenced by Hawaiian legend, extensive agricultural systems, ceremonial sites, burial sites, and habitation areas. This area once supported one of the largest native Hawaiian settlements, contains some of the oldest known Hawaiian agricultural sites, and Kawainui Marsh and surrounding environs have provided significant information about Hawaiian culture, particularly having to do with the relationship of the early Hawaiians to the environment of a windward valley (Handy et al., 1972; Kelly and Clark, 1980; Kelly and Nakamura, 1981; Drigot and Seto, 1982). Kawainui Marsh was a primary food-producing area from traditional Hawaiian times to the early 20th century. Kawainui is a significant archaeological site because it is one of the few areas remaining on O'ahu where

evidence of terraced agricultural pondfields and a fishpond still exists in conjunction with associated religious structures (Handy et al., 1972; Kelly and Clark, 1980). In 1979, the U.S. National Registrar for Historic Places issued a 'Determination of Eligibility Notification' finding that Kawainui Marsh area is eligible for listing in the National Register for Historic Places (U.S. Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1979). According to the determination, 'Kawainui Marsh is important as a major component of a larger cultural district which would include... the ponding/wet agricultural area.. .remains of extensive terracing systems, ceremonial sites, burial sites, and habitation areas associated with this agricultural complex' (U.S. Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, 1979).

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.2 *Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

4.2.1 Is the private sector encouraged to apply the wise use principle in activities and investments concerning wetlands? {7.1.1}	A - Yes
4.2.2 Have private-sector "Friends of Wetlands" fora or similar mechanisms been established? {7.1.4} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the private sector companies involved]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.2.1 – 4.2.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.2.2: [.. additional information …]"

4.2.1: Seventy-four percent of the land in the United States is privately owned. To better conserve privately owned wetlands, the Federal government relies on voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. For example, technical and financial assistance provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service help private landowners apply needed conservation techniques on their land. When private landowners use these programs to restore, protect and improve wetlands on their property, they serve as stewards of our environment. Other cooperative conservation efforts include public-private partnerships, technical assistance, regulation and mitigation for water quality, farmland and transportation.

4.2.2: Authorized by the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Act, the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is a voluntary program begun in 1987, working with landowners to restore wetlands on private lands using cooperative agreements. The FWS has entered into more than 41,000 agreements with partners. The program has restored 800,000 acres of wetlands, more than 1.6 million acres of uplands, and more than 6,000 miles of riparian and instream habitat. http:www.fws.gov/partners

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.2 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.3 *Promote measures which encourage the application of the wise use principle.*

Indicator questions:

4.3.1 Have actions been taken to promote incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands? {8.1.1}	A - Yes
4.3.2 Have actions been taken to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands? {8.1.1}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.3.1 – 4.3.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.3.2: [.. additional information …]"

4.3.1: One of the best known examples is the Wetland Conservation ('Swampbuster') provision established in the 1985 Farm Bill, and amended in the 1990 Farm Bill, which requires all agricultural producers to protect the wetlands on the farms they own or operate if they wish to be eligible for certain USDA farm program benefits. Producers are not eligible if they have planted an agricultural commodity on a wetland that was converted by drainage, leveling, or any other means after December 23, 1985, or if they have converted a wetland for the purpose of agricultural commodity production, or for making such production possible, after November 28, 1990. NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance staff make wetland determinations, develop wetlands mitigation and restoration plans, and administer other Swampbuster-related provisions.

Other incentives programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP, http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip); Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp); Grasslands Reserve Program (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/grp); Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP, http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/), Landowner Incentive Program (http://Federalaid.fws.gov/lip/lip.html).

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.3 national implementation:

The National Wetlands Awards, co-sponsored by several federal agencies, recognizes leaders in wetland conservation. Individuals within the Ramsar community have been specifically recognized, such as Francisco Abarca of the Arizona Department of Game and Fish. (See http://www.nationalwetlandsawards.org/nwa2006.htm for details.)

STRATEGY 4.4 *Support, and assist in implementing at all levels, the Convention's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme (Resolution VIII.31) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through public participation and communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA).*

Indicator questions:

4.4.1 Has a mechanism for planning and implementing wetland CEPA (National Ramsar/Wetland Committee or other mechanism) been established with both CEPA Government and NGO National Focal Point (NFP) involvement? {r9.iii.ii} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please describe in Additional implementation information below the mechanism]	A - Yes
4.4.2 Has a National Action Plan (or plans at the subnational, catchment or local level) for wetland CEPA been developed? {r.9.iii.iii} [Even if a National Action Plan has not yet been developed, if broad CEPA objectives for national CEPA actions have been established please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4]	D - Planned

4.4.3 Have actions been taken to communicate and share information cross-sectorally on wetland issues amongst relevant ministries, departments and agencies? {r9.iii.v}	A - Yes
4.4.4 Have national campaigns, programmes, and projects been carried out to raise community awareness of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands? {r9.vi.i} [If: a) support has been provided for the delivery of these and other CEPA activities by other organisations; and/or b) these have included awareness-raising for social, economic and/or cultural values, please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4 below]	A - Yes
4.4.5 Have World Wetlands Day activities in the country, either government and NGO-led or both, been carried out? {r9.vi.ii}	A - Yes
4.4.6 Have education centres been established at Ramsar sites and other wetlands? {r9.viii.i} [If any such centres are part of the Wetland Link International (WLI) Programme of the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust, UK, please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4 below]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.4.1 – 4.4.6 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.4.3: [.. additional information …]"

4.4.1 and 4.4.2: In FY2007, USFWS' Wildlife Without Borders-Global Programs awarded a $99,400 grant to Environmental Concern (on behalf of USNRC) to run a small grants program for US organizations doing CEPA projects and support efforts to designate new sites (Environmental Concern is the non-governmental focal point for CEPA in the US). The grant will also be used to create a national CEPA Task Force and CEPA Action Plan.

4.4.4: EPA celebrates American Wetlands Month in May with federal, state, tribal, local, non-profit, and private sector organization partners. This annual celebration is a time to recognize and highlight the ways that wetlands enrich the environment and human society. EPA encourages individuals and groups to plan activities and events that raise awareness of the critical role wetlands play in our environment and build support for their protection and restoration. Some examples of celebratory activities and events include wetland walks, canoe trips, bird watches, or other outdoor activities; wetland or stream clean-ups; recognizing a wetland hero; talks and presentations about wetlands; volunteer wetland monitoring or restoration groups; and wetland festivals. More information at: http://www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/awm.

Another example of such campaigns is focused on marine debris and its effect on the marine ecosystem. Developed by NOAA, the site is designed to help identify, reduce, and prevent debris in the marine environment. The section on resources addresses four key target groups (beachgoers, fishers, boat/marina owners, and students/educators) and provides good information on what to do and what not to do. http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html.

4.4.5: Highlights from WWD 2008 include: 1) Olentangy River Wetland Research Park at The Ohio State University: http://swamp.osu.edu/news/PDFs/WorldwetlandsDayposter.pdf; 2) Wisconsin Wetlands Association held its 13th annual conference as a WWD event: Wetlands in the 21st Century: Altered Landscapes & Changing Climates: www.wisconsinwetlands.org/2008conference.htm;

4.4.6: Examples include: 1) Ballona Institute's Shallow Water Nature Store & Corner Library - the library being the *beginning* of a full natural history research center and archives of the Los Angeles/southern California area; 2) Horicon Marsh International Education Center (Wisconsin).

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.5 *Promote international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, while ensuring that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including foreign and domestic investments.*

Indicator questions:

4.5.1 [For Contracting Parties with development assistance agencies only] Has funding support been provided from the development assistance agency for wetland conservation and management in other countries? {15.1.1} [If "Yes" or "Some countries", please indicate in Additional implementation the countries supported since COP9]	A - Yes
4.5.2 [For Contracting Parties in receipt of development assistance only] Has funding support been mobilized from development assistance agencies specifically for in-country wetland conservation and management? {15.1.8} [If "Yes" or "Some countries", please indicate in Additional implementation the agencies from which support has been received since COP9]	D - Not applicable

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.5.1 – 4.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.5.2: [.. additional information …]"

4.5.1: An example includes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA): this program supports voluntary public-private partnerships to conserve North American wetland ecosystems. It provides matching grants to public and private groups and agencies for wetlands restoration and protection in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. More than 24 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands have been affected by protection, restoration or enhancement activities since 1991. http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWCA/grants.htm

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.6 *Provide the financial resources required for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.*

Indicator questions:

4.6.1 {16.1.1} a) For the last triennium have Ramsar contributions been paid in full and in a timely manner (by 31 March of calendar year)?	A - Yes
b) If "No" in 4.6.1 a), please clarify what plan is in place to ensure future prompt payment:	

4.6.2 {16.1.2} a) Has any additional financial support been provided through voluntary contributions to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund or other non-core funded Convention activity?	A - Yes
b) If yes, please state the amounts:	
The U.S. funds Ramsar's Wetlands for the Future program, at an estimated US$210,000-250,000 per year. The USFWS' Wildlife Without Borders-Latin America & the Caribbean program also provided support to groups in Latin America to conduct a survey on the effectiveness and use of Ramsar guidance, as well as for the migratory birds and wetlands newslink: http://birdsandwetlands.com.	

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.6.1 – 4.6.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.6.2: [.. additional information …]"

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.6 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.7 *Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Ramsar Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness to support implementation of this Framework.*

Indicator questions:

4.7.1 Has the Contracting Party used its previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring its implementation of the Convention? [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information how the Reports have been used for monitoring]	B - No

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 4.7.1

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.7 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.8 *Develop the capacity within, and promote cooperation among, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

4.8.1 Has a review of national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands been completed? {18.1.1} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information if this has led to proposals for, or implemenation of, any changes in institutional responsibilities]	B - No

4.8.2 Is a National Ramsar/Wetlands cross-sectoral Committee (or equivalent body) in place and operational? {18.1.2} [If "Yes", please summarise in Additional implementation information its membership and frequency of meetings]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.8.1 – 4.8.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.8.2: [.. additional information …]"

4.8.2: The U.S. National Ramsar Committee (USNRC) supports Ramsar-related initiatives within the United States and internationally. The USNRC is composed of voting members, organizations that have an interest in wetland conservation, and observers, federal agencies such as FWS, the Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Geologic Survey, the Forest Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Meetings are held several times per year, at various locations across the United States.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.8 national implementation:

The USNRC conducted a survey of all US Ramsar sites to assess the benefits of Ramsar designation. The survey found that Ramsar designation did produce specific benefits (varying from site to site), including increased public support for protection of the site and surrounding areas, increased funding opportunities, and increased interest in scientific research and ecotourism at the sites. Royal C. Gardner and Kim Diana Connolly discussed the survey results in an article published in the Environmental Law Reporter, which was posted on the Ramsar website. The survey and article have led to increased interest in Ramsar designations, within the US and prompted Canada to conduct a similar survey. The USNRC is currently working with the Ramsar Secretariat on a survey of selected African Ramsar sites (see http://www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.ramsar_survey_2007.htm)

STRATEGY 4.9 *Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs*) and others.*

Indicator question:

4.9.1 Has your country received assistance from one or more of the Convention's IOPs* in its implementation of the Convention? [If "Yes", please provide in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of assistance provided]	B - No
4.9.2 Has your country provided assistance to one or more of the Convention's IOPs*? [If "Yes", please provide in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of assistance provided]	A - Yes

* The IOPs are: BirdLife International, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Wetlands International, The World Conservation Union (IUCN), and WWF International.

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.9.1-4.9.2

The U.S. has provided financial assistance to most of the Convention IPS through its various grants programs.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.9 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.10 *Identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, and implement appropriate responses.*

Indicator questions:

4.10.1 Has your country provided support to, or participated in, the development of regional (i.e., covering more than one country) wetland training and research centres? [If "Yes", please indicate in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the centre(s)]	A - Yes
4.10.2 Has an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention, including in the use of the Wise Use Handbooks, been made? {20.1.2}	B - No
4.10.3 Have opportunities for wetland site manager training in the country been provided? {20.1.6}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.10.1 – 4.10.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.10.3: [.. additional information …]"

4.10.1: The U.S. has been an active supporter of the Ramsar Regional Training Center in Panama, providing financial and technical assistance, as well as serving in its Board of Directors.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.10 national implementation: