

Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties
Regina, Canada
27 May - 5 June 1987

Recommendation 3.1: Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance and guidelines for their use

TAKING NOTE of the deliberations and conclusions of the Workshops on Criteria and on Flyways held at the present Meeting;

RECOGNIZING the concerns of the developing countries that further examination of the criteria and guidelines for identifying wetlands of international importance, and of application of the wise use provisions of the Convention, may be desirable;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

RECOMMENDS that the Criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance, as revised at Regina and included in the Annex to the Regina Recommendations [**not included here**], be used for identification of wetlands to be designated for the List under Article 2 of the Convention;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that a working group shall be established in order to examine the ways in which the criteria and guidelines for identifying wetlands of international importance might be elaborated, and the wise use provisions of the Convention applied, in order to improve the worldwide application of the Convention; and

FINALLY RECOMMENDS that the members of the working group shall be agreed by the Standing Committee of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, that the working group shall select its own Chairman, that the Convention Bureau shall act as coordinator of the group, that the working group may consult with appropriate technical advisors and shall report its findings to the Bureau within 18 months for circulation to the Contracting Parties and observers for comment, that the Convention Bureau shall prepare a report based on comments received and a draft recommendation for consideration by the next ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, both of which shall be circulated to Contracting Parties and observers no later than 12 months before the next ordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

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Recommendation 3.2: Need for further studies of flyways

RECALLING that the Conference of the Contracting Parties is competent to consider “reports and statistics on matters which are essentially international in character affecting wetlands”;

NOTING that Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat establish “nature reserves on wetlands, whether they are included in the List or not”;

TAKING NOTE of the conclusions of the Workshop on Flyways and Reserve networks at the present Meeting;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

RECOMMENDS that research be undertaken urgently to investigate the recent and severe decline in numbers of waders (shorebirds) in the Western Hemisphere;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that research on waders (shorebirds) be pursued in West Africa and at inland sites used by waders, with a view to determining population trends and migration routes;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that research efforts be intensified in East Asia to discover the cause of the severe decline in populations of ducks and large water birds;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that waterfowl hunting statistics be collected, to allow better management of flyway populations of waterfowl, in particular in the Western Palearctic region (and especially the Mediterranean) and in East Asia;

EMPHASIZES the urgent need for information on wader (Shorebirds) populations using the East Africa flyway; and

EMPHASIZES the need to establish reserves at wetlands linked by migratory birds as already begun in the Western Hemisphere.

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Recommendation 3.3: Wise use of wetlands

RECALLING that Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat “formulate and implement their planning so as to promote . . . the wise use of wetlands in their territory”;

EMPHASIZING the need to develop a definition of wise use, in order to guide Contracting Parties in their implementation of the Convention;

NOTING that Recommendations 1.5 of the First Meeting and 2.3 of the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties referred to the need for national wetland policies in order to promote wise use;

TAKING NOTE of the deliberations and conclusions of the Workshop on Wise Use at the present Meeting;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

RECOMMENDS that the Contracting Parties adopt the definition of wise use established by the Conference of the Contracting Parties at its Third Meeting, held at Regina, and included in the Annex to the Regina Recommendations;

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that the Contracting Parties give particular attention to the wise use of wetlands by promotion of wetland policies containing elements (a) to (f) from the first part of the Guidelines on wise use included in the Annex to the Regina Recommendations; and

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that, while detailed policies are being established, immediate action be taken to stimulate wise use, including actions (a) to (d) from the second part of the Guidelines on wise use included in the Annex to the Regina Recommendations.

[Note: the Annex to the Regina Recommendations consisted of three parts. The first was a version of the “Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance” which has been superseded by later versions. The third was an early version of the Guidelines on Wise Use which has also been rendered obsolete by the 1990 Guidelines. The second part of the Annex was the Definition of Wise Use that is included here.]

INFORMATION ON WISE USE OF WETLANDS SPECIFIED UNDER ARTICLE 3 OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

Definition of wise use:

“The wise use of wetlands is their sustainable utilization for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem”.

Sustainable utilization is defined as “human use of a wetland so that it may yield the greatest continuous benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations”.

Natural properties of the ecosystem are defined as “those physical, biological or chemical components, such as soil, water, plants, animals and nutrients, and the interactions between them”.

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Recommendation 3.4: Responsibility of development agencies toward wetlands

Note: For the purposes of this Recommendation the term “Development Agencies” will be taken to mean all banks, government institutions and international governmental agencies (such as the Development Fund of the European Economic Community) with a significant role in providing funds to countries for their development.

BEING CONVINCED that, as noted in the Preamble to the Convention, “wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable”;

NOTING the rapid destruction and loss of wetlands around the world due to development that neglects or underestimates the natural values and functions of wetlands, and that this development continues without taking adequate account of past experiences and traditional lifestyles;

CONSCIOUS of the potential of wetlands to provide the basis for sustainable development founded on the husbanding of self-renewing natural resources;

AWARE that Development Agencies can play a crucial role in enhancing the capacity of wetlands to contribute to the well-being of the people;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

URGES the Development Agencies

- a) to formulate and adopt coherent wetland development policies directed at sustainable utilization, wise management and conservation of wetlands;
- b) to create special regional wetland programmes in order to ensure the integration of this policy into all their activities;
- c) to coordinate their programmes at the international level to ensure that their independent activities do not in combination adversely affect wetlands;
- d) to strengthen the ecological expertise in all departments involved in development and implementation of projects affecting wetlands;
- e) to develop guidelines to ensure the integration of environmental aspects in all stages of the project cycle;
- f) to ensure that the funding of projects is preceded by an environmental impact assessment, and the implementation of the recommended measures;

- g) to take appropriate steps for an assessment of their policies at regular intervals; and
- h) to rehabilitate those wetlands which have become degraded through non-sustainable development;

URGES the Development Agencies to use their influence with borrowing or recipient governments

- a) to promote the formulation and adoption of national policies for wise use and conservation of wetlands;
- b) to strengthen the institutional arrangements and the ecological expertise both at the national level and among regional development authorities in the project regions, in order to implement these policies; and
- c) to train and educate personnel at project implementation level;

CALLS ON the Contracting Parties to the Convention to support conservation and wise use of wetlands by requiring their own appropriate agencies to adhere to the strategy recommended above.

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Recommendation 3.5: Tasks of the Bureau in respect to development agencies

Note: For the purposes of this Recommendation the term “Development Agencies” will be taken to mean all banks, government institutions and international governmental agencies (such as the Development Fund of the European Economic Community) with a significant role in providing funds to countries for their development.

RECOGNIZING that, as noted in the Preamble to the Convention, “wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable”;

AWARE that Development Agencies are in a position to promote the wise use and conservation of wetlands for the benefit of local communities in the developing countries;

CONSIDERING that the Convention Bureau is well placed to encourage funding agencies to give greater attention to projects for the conservation and sustainable development of wetlands in developing countries, and to act as a link between potential donors and recipients;

TAKING NOTE of the discussions in the Workshop held at the present Meeting on the Convention as a vehicle for linking wetland conservation and development, which suggested that the Convention Bureau should perform such a function;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

RECOMMENDS that the Convention Bureau should carry out the following activities:

1. assisting developing countries with the identification and design of projects for the conservation and wise use of wetlands; encouraging Development Agencies to fund such projects; and acting as a link between potential donors and recipients;
2. promoting the use of development assistance for demonstration projects that illustrate the principles of wise use of wetlands;
3. promoting wise use and conservation of wetlands among Development Agencies and appropriate authorities in developing countries;
4. requesting Development Agencies to provide the Convention Bureau with information on measures they have taken to integrate environmental aspects at all stages of projects affecting wetlands, including their planning and implementation, and monitoring the effectiveness of these measures; and
5. reporting annually on its activities in this respect to the Contracting Parties.

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Recommendation 3.6: Further Contracting Parties in Africa

RECOGNIZING the great importance of wetlands in Africa for conservation and sustainable use for the benefit of local communities;

AWARE that a number of North and West African countries are Contracting Parties to the Convention but that not many East, Central and Southern African countries are Contracting Parties;

NOTING the effective participation of observers from Botswana, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia in the 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

REQUESTS the Convention Bureau to approach the authorities of Botswana, Chad, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and other African states with the suggestion that they should give favourable consideration to becoming Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention as soon as possible.

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Recommendation 3.7: Further Contracting Parties in Central America, the Caribbean and South America

NOTING the participation of several states from the Western Hemisphere and in particular Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela, as observers at the 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention;

EMPHASIZING the advantages for a state of becoming a Contracting Party to the Convention;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

REQUESTS the Convention Bureau to approach the authorities of interested states of the Western Hemisphere that are not already Contracting Parties, with the suggestion that, like Chile, Mexico, Suriname and Uruguay they should become Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention as soon as possible.

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Recommendation 3.8: Conservation of Azraq Ramsar site

NOTING that Jordan has designated the Azraq wetland for the List of wetlands of international importance established under the Ramsar Convention;

AWARE that under Article 3 of the Convention, Contracting Parties “formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List”;

INFORMED that the Amman Water Authority is currently pumping 16 million cubic metres of water per annum from Azraq to supply drinking water for the Jordanian capital;

CONCERNED that extraction at this rate is likely to provoke serious changes in the natural properties of the Azraq wetland and, in particular, may increase the salinity of the remaining water there;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

CALLS for a proper assessment of the environmental impact of the pumping;

SUGGESTS that pumping be reduced by at least 50%, as demanded by conservation bodies in Jordan, at least until the environmental impact study is completed; and

URGES that there be established a long-term water resources plan guaranteeing the maintenance of the natural properties of this wetland of international importance.

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Recommendation 3.9: Change in ecological character of Ramsar sites

WELCOMING the increased number of wetlands included in the Ramsar List;

APPLAUDING Contracting Parties which have employed Ramsar listing as a means of securing protection for previously unprotected sites;

ACKNOWLEDGING the efforts made by Contracting Parties to ensure that listed internationally important wetlands within their territory are protected;

NOTING WITH REGRET that, notwithstanding protective measures instituted to implement the requirements of the Convention, a number of listed sites have been severely damaged or are under imminent threat of degradation;

COMMENDING Contracting Parties for bringing such information to the attention of the Convention Bureau and the Conference of the Contracting Parties to assist the work of the Convention;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

URGES all Contracting Parties to take swift and effective action to prevent any further degradation of sites and to restore, as far as possible, the value of damaged sites; and

REQUESTS IN PARTICULAR that Contracting Parties in whose territory are located the sites identified in Conference Document C.3.6 as having incurred or being threatened by damage, to report to the Convention Bureau the actions undertaken to safeguard these sites.

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Recommendation 3.10: Further Contracting Parties in Asia and the Pacific

NOTING the participation of several states from the Asian and Pacific Regions, and in particular China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, as observers at the 3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention;

EMPHASIZING the advantages for a state of becoming a Contracting Party to the Convention;

NOTING that the following nations from the Asian and Pacific regions are Contracting Parties: Australia, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand and Pakistan;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

REQUESTS the Convention Bureau to approach the authorities of states in the Asian and Pacific Regions not yet Contracting Parties to the Convention, with the suggestion that they give favourable consideration to becoming Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention as soon as possible.

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Recommendation 3.11: Recommendation of thanks

RECOGNIZING the outstanding results of the present Meeting of the Conference which have created a solid base for more effective operation of the Convention;

APPRECIATING the extensive support provided for the Meeting by both the Canadian Federal authorities and the Province of Saskatchewan;

EMPHASIZING the significance of the support provided by Canada for the participation of delegates and observers from developing countries, as well as Canada's role in the work of the Task Force established at the Groningen Meeting of the Conference;

RECALLING that before the Regina Meeting, Canada had already designated 17 wetlands for the Ramsar List covering more than 10 million hectares, a larger area than any other Contracting Party;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

EXPRESSES its thanks and appreciation to its Canadian hosts, in particular the Federal Minister of the Environment, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Saskatchewan Minister of Parks, Recreation and Culture, and the many public and private organizations from Saskatchewan which provided support;

NOTES with appreciation the further listing by Canada of 11 new wetlands for the List; and

EXPRESSES ITS CONVICTION that the Regina Meeting will prove to be a milestone in the development of the Convention, by establishing a solid administrative and legal basis for further progress and by broadening the scope of the Convention's operations so that it is more relevant to the needs of developing countries.