

# The Designation & Management of RAMSAR SITES



A practitioner's  
guide





**Citation:**

Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia. (2017). The Designation and Management of Ramsar Sites – A practitioner’s guide. Available at [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org) and [www.rrcea.org](http://www.rrcea.org)

**Disclaimer:**

The Information and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the policy or views of any organizations supporting this work. No use of this publication may be made for resale or for any other commercial purpose whatsoever without the prior written permission of the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia.

**Acknowledgements:**

The Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Convention, attendees of the 8th Regional Level Training Workshop for Wetland Managers in East and Southeast Asia, 10-14 October 2016 and WWF-Hong Kong.

**Ramsar Convention:**

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, also known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources as a contribution towards sustainable development. [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

**Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia:**

The Center aims to enhance the implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the East, South and Southeast Asia regions through training, research, advocacy and public awareness programmes. Its objective is to support implementation activities of the Contracting Parties for effective management and conservation of wetlands

Published by Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia

Written by WWT Consulting

Cover photograph: © Bena Smith. Suncheon Bay Ramsar Site





## CONTENTS

Introduction	4
C1. Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness	6
D1. Identification of a Wetland of International Importance ('Ramsar Site')	8
D2. (Rapid) Assessment of ecosystem services	8
D3. Site designation	8
M1. Site description	10
M2. Planning	12
M3. Manage and monitor	20
M4. Evaluate and review	21
Summary	21
Appendix 1. Reference section	22



Local stakeholder meeting at the Moeyungyi Ramsar Site (Myanmar)

## INTRODUCTION

This guide is aimed primarily at those involved in the management of Ramsar Sites, to help promote better understanding of the processes involved based on guidance provided by the Ramsar Convention and good practices identified by the Convention's experts and partners. The guide also includes simplified information on the process to designate Ramsar Sites in order to highlight the various linkages between the designation and management stages. It is written in a simple, non-technical language so that it can reach out to, and be adapted by the many Ramsar stakeholders working on the ground.

The document provides guidance on how management of Ramsar Sites can contribute to implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 – 2024 and other international processes. It also identifies key information sources, including non-Ramsar publications, to help site managers, administrators and partners. This information is provided in Appendix 1.

The process to designate then manage Ramsar Sites is depicted in Figure 1. The process includes three designation steps and a cyclical four-step management stage. There is also one continuous step that is applicable throughout the designation and management process.

CONTINUOUS

DESIGNATION

**C1. Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)**

- C1.1 Stakeholder Engagement
- C1.2 Education and Public Awareness
- C1.3 Capacity building

START →

**D1. Identification of a Wetland of International Importance ('Ramsar Site')**

↓ Assess against the 9 Ramsar criteria

**D2. (Rapid) Assessment of ecosystem services**

↓ Assess the provisioning, supporting, regulating and cultural services provided by the site

**D3. Site designation**

Gain support from local stakeholders through community consultations, then the National Ramsar Authority can begin formal designation process

**M1. Site description**

- M1.1 Complete and regularly update the Information Sheet for the site (RIS)
- M1.2 Assess the wetland value / importance of the site
- M1.3 Assess the threats to the site

**M4. Evaluate and review**

- M4.1 Carry out regular reviews of the site



**M2. Planning**

- M2.1 Establish a cross-sectoral site management committee
- M2.2 Draft a site management plan
- M2.3 Establish a long-term financing mechanism for the site
- M2.4 Establish a CEPA programme

**M3. Manage and monitor**

- M3.1 Management of the Ramsar Site
- M3.2 Monitor effectiveness

**Figure 1. Steps in the designation and management of Ramsar Sites**

## **C1. COMMUNICATION, CAPACITY BUILDING, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS**

Support from a range of stakeholders helps to support better implementation of wetland conservation at your site. To achieve this, communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) activities are encouraged by involving the different stakeholders at all stages of the designation and management process.

CEPA activities can be carried out during any stage of the designation and management process; however, some sites find it useful to have a separate CEPA programme (Step M2.4), especially if the activities are numerous. Alternatively, it is preferable that CEPA is integrated into the different programs and activities of the management plan (Step M2.2). This will allow the CEPA program to reach out to a broad range of site users, stakeholders, and persons / organizations who have an influence on your site.

### **C1.1 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Many wetlands support local stakeholders who play key roles in the management of the site and who in turn, are dependent on the site for their livelihood or well-being. These stakeholders may be affected by decisions on the designation and management of the site and hence it is important to involve them as early as possible in the process (Case study #1).

Including the different stakeholders from the beginning helps to build trust and ensures that the views of the site staff and stakeholders are shared and taken into consideration. It also contributes to the achievement of wise use at the site, a core philosophy of the Ramsar Convention (wise use is the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and all the services they provide, for the benefit of people and nature). Engagement with stakeholders can be informal or formal, such as through workshops and other events.

### **CASE STUDY #1 : STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION (STEPS C1.1 AND C1.2)**

Designated as a Ramsar Site in 1981, Chilika lagoon is the largest brackish water lagoon of South Asian sub-continent. A massive outreach programme was launched by Chilika Development Authority (CDA) in collaboration with the local NGOs and Community Based Organizations to raise environmental awareness among the local villagers. It has a specific objective to save the Chilika lagoon from degradation and involves free distribution of seedlings, establishment/construction of waste bins at important places, awareness rallies, boat rallies etc. CDA also launched a massive environmental education programme for school children in and around Chilika lagoon. The programme covers 103 secondary schools where programmes such as tree-planting, green fencing around the school campus, establishment of waste bins, compost pits, vermi-compost, celebration of important environmental days, rallies, debates, essay and drawing competitions are organized. A Visitor Centre has been developed with multimedia facilities; touch screen, exhibits, diorama, aquarium, observatory and a discovery room for the children. This centre is open to tourists throughout the year giving a holistic overview of the Chilika lagoon.

[Adapted from: (2008) Ramsar Sites of the World: Exemplary sites demonstrating delivery of the Ramsar goals across the world. Published by MOE Korea.]

## C1.2 EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Your site is an important resource for education institutions to undertake environmental education activities, and raise awareness of the importance of the wetland to members of the public, decision-makers, business sectors, media etc. (Case study #1). Example activities include:

- Formal learning linked to school curricula using outdoor and internal spaces,
- Training of trainers which aims to increase wetland conservation related skills and knowledge for education professionals,
- ‘Quiet’ seasonal activities to stimulate visitors in periods when the wildlife spectacles may be more subtle,
- Special activities which take visitors into ‘wilder’ or not normally accessible parts of your wetland, and
- Events which mark seasonal cultural or religious festivals and include wetland-related messages in the celebrations.

A significant event in the annual calendar is World Wetlands Day, usually celebrated on 2 February. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Celebrations involve taking actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. The Ramsar Secretariat ( [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org) ) provides publicity and promotional materials.

Wetland Link International ([wli.wwt.org.uk](http://wli.wwt.org.uk)) is a well-established support network for wetland education centres to help improve engagement activities on-site. The network has over 350 members from across 5 continents and shares best practice on wetland education and awareness-raising activities, and provides moral support to its members.



**Information Centre managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature at the Phobjikha Conservation Area (Bhutan)**

### **C1.3 CAPACITY BUILDING**

It is important to raise and then maintain the level of knowledge and skill sets of people connected to your site through capacity building activities. An example may be 'on-the job' or other forms of regular training for the manager, rangers and other stakeholders as appropriate.

## **D1. IDENTIFICATION OF A WETLAND OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ('RAMSAR SITE')**

A Wetland of International Importance ('Ramsar Site') is identified by demonstrating that it meets at least one of the nine qualifying criteria (Figure 2). The criteria are based on representative, rare or unique wetland types; important ecological communities; as well as a wide range of wetland dependent species.

To determine if your site meets the criteria, appropriate data needs to be collected and analysed over a number of years or at repeated intervals. In most instances this is ecological data from field surveys.

## **D2. (RAPID) ASSESSMENT OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES**

Your site may be important in providing a range of ecosystem services, e.g. provisioning, supporting, regulating or cultural (refer to Step M1.2 for further details). Local stakeholders should be involved in assessing the services provided by the site (Step C1.1).

Rapid assessments can range from desk studies, expert group meetings and workshops to field surveys. They can include compiling existing expert knowledge and information as well as traditional and local knowledge and information.

## **D3. SITE DESIGNATION**

If your site is found to meet at least one criterion of the nine for Ramsar Site designation (Step D1) and the designation is supported by local stakeholders through the community consultations, then the Ramsar Authority can begin the formal designation process; with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. Ideally, some form of committee or working group (Step M2.1) should be formed for this purpose.



## **Group A. Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types**

Criterion 1: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region.

## **Group B. Sites of international importance for conserving biological diversity**

### *Criteria based on species and ecological communities*

Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.

Criterion 3: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region.

Criterion 4: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions.

### *Specific criteria based on waterbirds*

Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.

Criterion 6: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.

### *Specific criteria based on fish*

Criterion 7: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish subspecies, species or families, life-history stages, species interactions and/or populations that are representative of wetland benefits and/or values and thereby contributes to global biological diversity.

Criterion 8: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend.

### *Specific criteria based on other taxa*

Criterion 9: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

**Figure 2. The nine criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance**

## M1. SITE DESCRIPTION

### M1.1 COMPLETE AND REGULARLY UPDATE THE RAMSAR INFORMATION SHEET (RIS) FOR THE SITE

At the time of designation, and then at least every six years, a 'Ramsar Information Sheet' (RIS) for your site should be completed by the national Ramsar Authority and submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat.

A RIS requires information on the criteria under which the site qualifies as a Ramsar Site, the physical, ecological, hydrological, social and cultural aspects of the site, ecosystem services, as well as current laws / regulations and conflict management together with a site boundary map. Much of this information would have been gathered during the designation process (Steps D1 and D2) and can be built upon and updated. A completed RIS meets the basic requirement of the Ramsar Convention, however a more comprehensive Ecological Character Description with information on ecosystem components, processes, benefits and services that characterise the wetland, is recommended if resources are available.

Understanding and documenting the baseline condition of your Ramsar Site at the time of designation is essential. This is because it forms the baseline from which monitoring will then show whether the site is changing negatively or positively, so that appropriate management action can then be taken to maintain the services and benefits that the site provides.

### M1.2 ASSESS THE WETLAND VALUE/IMPORTANCE

The importance of your wetland is determined by a combination of its ecology (e.g. the number of Ramsar designation criteria it meets), the various services it provides, and the benefits that people receive from the wetland ecosystem. Economic value (Case Study #2) can be given to some but not all of these.

Ecosystem services benefit humans both directly and indirectly over time. The four key services are:

- Provisioning – products obtained from the ecosystem such as food, fuel and fresh water,
- Regulating – benefits obtained from the regulation of ecosystem processes such as climate regulation, water regulation and natural hazard regulation,
- Cultural – benefits people obtain through spiritual enrichment, recreation, education and aesthetics, and
- Supporting – services necessary for the production of all other ecosystem services such as water cycling, nutrient cycling and habitat and biota.

An assessment:

- Can lead to a greater appreciation of the wetland, particularly from site stakeholders government departments, the business sector, the public etc.,
- Can contribute to the decision-making process when your site is threatened e.g. from water extraction or encroaching urbanization,
- Can be used to resolve conflicting interests in wetland use and the over-exploitation of some services (e.g. fisheries or waste disposal) at the expense of others (e.g. biodiversity conservation and flood-control), and
- Should identify if site stakeholders have adequate access to, and are benefiting from, the different ecosystem services provided by your wetland.

## CASE STUDY #2 : EXAMPLES OF MONETARY VALUES OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES DELIVERED BY WETLANDS (STEP M1.2)

### Water supply

The Te Papanui Conservation Park (Lammermoor Range) provides the Otago region, New Zealand, with ecosystem services valued at around US\$96 million (which is the avoided cost of outsourcing the water that is currently provided for free by Te Papanui). The most important ecosystem service is the water supplied for the city of Dunedin (calculated at around US\$65 million of net present value in 2005) for electricity (around US\$22 million), and for irrigation water (around US\$8.5 million).

### Storm protection and erosion control

The storm protection and erosion control services performed by the 1,800 ha of mangroves in the Ream National Park, Cambodia, were valued at US\$300,000/year. Moreover, the mangroves provide habitat, nursery and breeding grounds for fish, as well as firewood, medicinal plants and construction materials. All these subsistence goods were valued at almost US\$600,000 per year.

[Source: Russi D., ten Brink P., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013) *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands*. IEEP, London and Brussels; Ramsar Secretariat, Gland.]



Community members making their livelihood from wetland products at the Tonle Sap Great Lake (Cambodia)



Members of the public participating in a wetland bird survey (Singapore)

### **M1.3 ASSESS THE THREATS TO THE SITE**

Threats to your wetlands can vary in scale, seriousness and can be actual or perceived. Major examples might include: water extraction upstream, drainage, invasive species, urban development, climate change and pollution.

In identifying the threats, focus on the components, processes, benefits and services that most strongly influence the ecological character of your wetland and where possible, relate these to the criteria on which your site was designated.

Identify:

- The actual or likely threats to the ecological character of your wetland,
- The likely impacts or potential effects of those threats on the ecological character, and
- The likelihood and likely timing of the threat (if possible).

If there are possible or actual threats to the site, then this should be reported to the Ramsar Secretariat.

## **M2. PLANNING**

### **M2.1 ESTABLISH A CROSS-SECTORAL SITE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

A site management committee can take responsibility for the decision-making process and future management of your site with the intention to maintain a balance of all the services for which the site is important (Case Study #3) and the criteria which it was designated for. Meeting frequency should be determined by the needs of your site e.g. a higher frequency during a phase of major development or change.

Committee membership should include persons who can represent or support the services and features for which the site is important. A typical committee might include site management and programme staff, site stakeholders including local people, funders (e.g. commercial sector), researchers, government department staff (e.g. planners, conservationists), interest groups and NGOs.

The committee can serve as an effective and authoritative communication mechanism between site staff and your country's Administrative Authority and National Focal Point for the Ramsar Convention. For example if site staff need to report changes or likely changes in the ecological character of your Ramsar Site.

### CASE STUDY #3 : SUNCHEON BAY RAMSAR SITE - MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (STEP M2.1)

#### Suncheon Bay Wetland Conservation Committee

In the early 1990s, Suncheon Bay was seen simply as barren land. People dumped trash at Suncheon Bay and the local government allowed developers to extract aggregates for construction. Some of the local NGOs and professors from the academic sector, in particular Suncheon National University, realized the need to immediately address these issues to prevent further deterioration of Suncheon Bay. They began an information campaign to seek the support from the general public and persuade officials from the city government to take positive actions.

In 1998, after years of advocacy and public pressure, the city government decided to formulate a policy on waste management and cancel the approved development plan that stopped the operations for aggregate extraction. Subsequently, through an ordinance, the city government also established the “Suncheon Bay Wetland Conservation Committee” as a participatory governance mechanism that aims to ensure the effective management and conservation of Suncheon Bay. The Committee is an invaluable achievement of Suncheon citizens and is now considered as an indispensable part of Suncheon Bay conservation.

The Committee is composed of 20 representatives from the city government, city council, experts, media, citizens, local communities, and local NGOs. It does not act as a policy making body, but it plays an important role in the process of decision making on the conservation and management of Suncheon Bay with clear roles and responsibilities specified in the city ordinance. The Committee is responsible for:

- Advising on the efficient conservation and sustainable use of Suncheon Bay,
- The development of a management plan for Suncheon Bay,
- Decisions on the range of participation of local NGOs in the Ecosystem Conservation Area,
- Implementation of the Ramsar Convention in Suncheon Bay,
- Decisions on proposed projects on the conservation of Suncheon Bay,

(cont.)



Meeting of the Suncheon Bay Wetland Management Committee (Republic of Korea)

- Decisions on the entrance fee for Suncheon Bay, and
- Other issues on the conservation and management of Suncheon Bay.

The management plan developed by the committee includes the following specific activities:

- Development of Suncheon Bay Conservation Masterplan,
- Research on the ecosystem of Suncheon Bay,
- Research on sources of pollution, water quality and quantity of inflowing streams to Suncheon Bay,
- Survey of the changes in awareness of local communities on wetlands, especially on Suncheon Bay,
- Research on the productivity of Suncheon Bay,
- Financial support for participatory conservation projects with local NGOs and local communities such as monitoring program, clearing activities and so on,
- Capacity building programs for eco-guides and education programs for visitors,
- Publication of monitoring data book for information sharing,
- Symposiums for the improvement of biodiversity in Suncheon Bay,
- Cooperation with national and international organizations for information exchange, and
- Other necessary projects or activities for the conservation of Suncheon Bay.

[Source: Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia]

## **M2.2 DRAFT A SITE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

A management plan is an essential document to guide all aspects of the site operation and administration. It is used to ensure that your site is managed to maintain or improve those essential ecological and hydrological functions which ultimately provide its benefits and services.

Management plans generally follow a standard structure, and are drafted by following a logical step-by-step process (Figure 3) with the involvement of a management committee (Step M2.1), and local stakeholders, ideally through meetings and workshops (Step C1.2).

The plan should capture the current status of the site (Figure 3, Sections 1 & 2), establish realistic goals and achievable objectives for the future (Section 3), articulate how those goals and objectives are prioritized and how they will be met in a prescriptive action plan (Section 4). They should ideally include a timetable for management activities, a monitoring program to assess the success of the activities, a budget for those activities and an indication of financial resources.

Management plans can improve the management of your site in many ways:

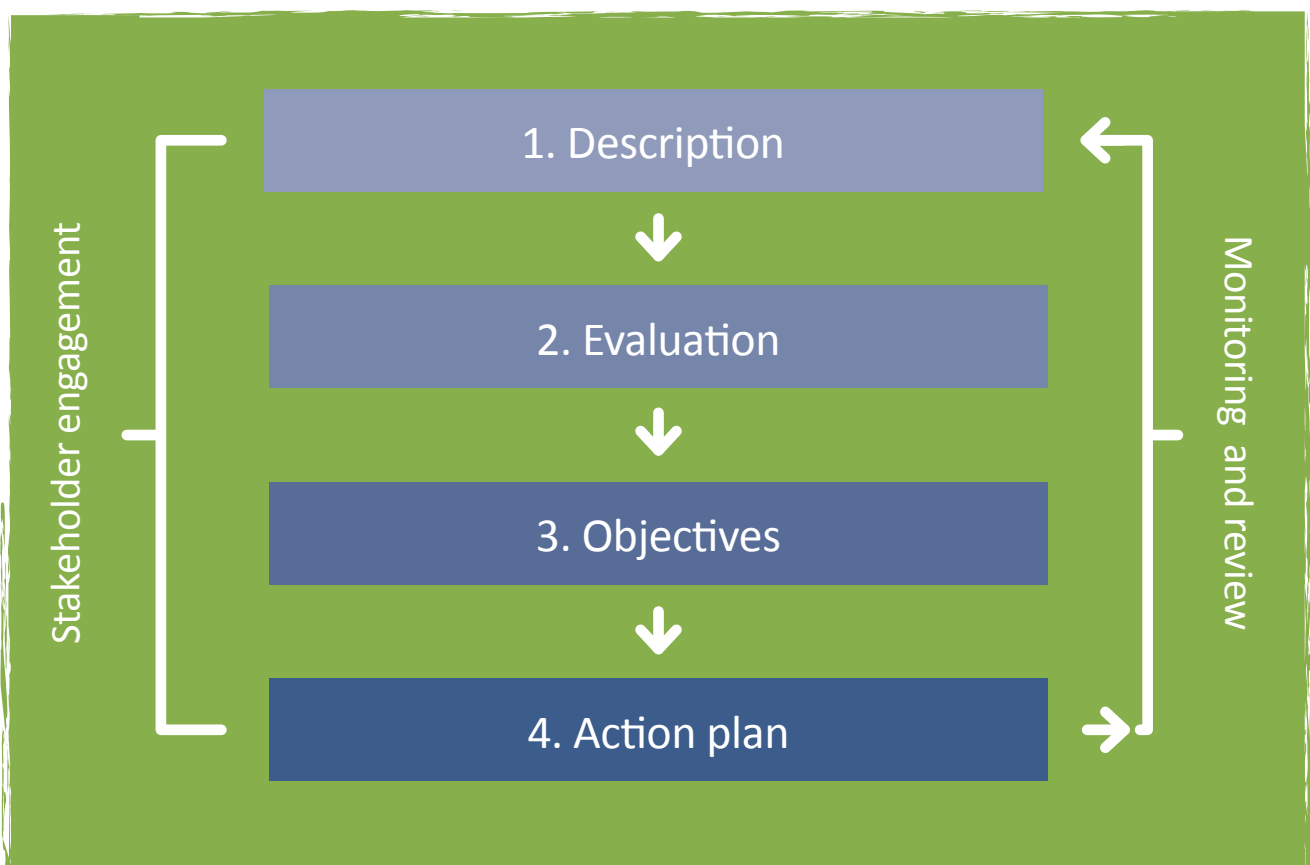
- Facilitate prioritization of management actions,
- Better use of financial and staff resources,
- Increase accountability,

- Improve communication (e.g. the management plan provides a means of communication with the public, to explain policies and proposals and to promote and publicize the site to a wide range of stakeholders), and
- Ensure continuity of site operations when there are changes in key management staff.

A management plan should:

- Include the full range of the functions and services that wetlands provide, e.g. socio-economic and cultural values, ecological, etc.
- Adopt a precautionary approach,
- Integrate wetland site management within broad scale environmental management planning, including river basin and coastal zone management,
- Consider zonation to take into account the different habitats, landscapes and activities taking place inside, with management of each zone agreed with relevant stakeholders (Case Study #4),
- Be a living document which can accommodate changing circumstances i.e. an adaptive plan,
- Set a lifespan of at least 5 years and a vision for at least 10 years, and
- Have a clear review and renewal mechanism coinciding with the lifespan of the plan (Step M4.1).

When a full management plan cannot be prepared e.g. due to insufficient resources, a management brief can serve as an interim document.



**Figure 3. Main sections of a site management plan and process.**

[Adapted from Chatterjee *et al.* 2008]

## CASE STUDY #4 : MAI PO AND INNER DEEP BAY RAMSAR SITE - ZONATION (STEP M2.2)

The Mai Po Inner Deep Bay is a 1,500 ha Ramsar Site in the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (S.A.R.), People's Republic of China. Following designation in 1995 the Hong Kong Government produced a management plan for the site which was updated in 2011. The plan set the broad framework for the conservation of the Ramsar Site and divided the site into management zones, each with its own management objective(s) and guidance statements. These are:

### Core Zone

- To maintain natural processes, and
- Access is generally limited to essential management, monitoring and research purposes.

### Wise-use Zone

- To encourage maintenance and operation of fish ponds in an ecologically sustainable manner, and
- Acts as buffer zones outside the Core Zone of the Ramsar Site.

### Biodiversity Management Zone

- To provide refuge for waterbirds, and
- A focus for biodiversity conservation, education and training.

### Private Zone

- To recognize private lands status, and
- Cooperate with owners concerned to manage their land in ways that are ecologically sustainable and consistent with the adjacent management zone.

Surrounding the Ramsar Site is a Wetland Conservation Area (WCA). It covers all existing continuous and adjoining active/abandoned fishponds mostly in the landward part of the Ramsar Site with the planning intention to conserve the ecological value of the fishponds which form an integral part of the wetland ecosystem in the Deep Bay area. On the landward side of the WCA is a ~500m wide Wetland Buffer Area, to protect the ecological integrity of the fishponds and wetlands within the WCA and to prevent developments that would have a negative off-site impact on the ecological value of fishponds.

The Biodiversity Management Zone is managed by the World Wide Fund for Nature-Hong Kong and to meet the management objective set in the Ramsar Site plan, is divided further into seven subzones, each managed with a specific biodiversity or habitat aim.

Furthermore, to manage birdwatchers, students and public tour groups inside the Biodiversity Management Zone, a broad zonation according to disturbance / impact level is applied to inform decisions on visitor planning and movements.

[Source: The World Wide Fund for Nature - Hong Kong]





Effective zonation at the  
Mai Po Inner Deep Bay Ramsar Site  
(Hong Kong S.A.R.)

### **M2.3 ESTABLISH A LONG-TERM FINANCING MECHANISM FOR THE SITE**

If your site needs to grow to meet its potential or sustain its core operations during periods of economic instability, a rigorous business plan is an essential document. A strong business plan should:

- Be based on the activities outlined in the management plan, with an indication of the cost of each activity and the required funding necessary,
- Be backed up by market research,
- Identify a diversity of income streams to avoid over reliance on a single income source,
- Not commit to major capital projects until secured funding is in place (Case Study #5),
- Ensure all long-term operational costs can be met,
- Consider using volunteers to minimize costs,
- Ensure that routine financial management is undertaken to control budgets, and
- Identify marketing activities and opportunities.

## CASE STUDY #5 : SUNCHEON BAY RAMSAR SITE (STEP M2.3)

### Cooperative management with local communities

Suncheon City has a unique cooperative management system that involves the local communities living adjacent to Suncheon Bay and those dependent on wetland resources for livelihood. The city government recognizes that assistance and cooperation from citizens, in particular from local communities, is important to achieve long term conservation of Suncheon Bay. Thus, the city government has introduced a program as a means to empower local communities by providing livelihood opportunities.

The program started in 2008 with the objective of developing a cooperative management system where the city government, local communities, and the migratory birds can all enjoy mutual benefits. Certain areas of Suncheon Bay have been designated as “Hooded Crane Farming Areas” where rice farming is allowed and where migratory birds can seek suitable shelter and food. The city government and local communities removed 282 electric poles as part of clearing operations and for the safety of wintering migratory birds.

The scheme is dependent on the seasonal cycle to implement a proper timing to plant, harvest and distribute rice as the major commodity, and to provide for the needs of migratory birds. Planting of rice is done during spring time, harvesting in autumn, and sharing and distribution for sale during the winter season. When planting rice, the city government requires farmers to use organic materials only and prohibits the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This approach makes Suncheon Bay into a more environment-friendly wetland.

*(cont.)*



School students learning about the Hooded Crane Farm Areas (Republic of Korea)

There exists an agreement between the city government and the local communities on the sale of rice. The city government buys the harvested rice from the farmers at a higher price compared to the average market price. This serves as an incentive for farmers and as a guarantee that all produce will be sold. Portions of the rice purchased by the city government is set aside and fed to the migratory birds settling at Suncheon Bay for winter. Also during autumn and after rice harvesting, the farmers convert the rice fields into flooded areas to make these into more suitable wintering grounds and habitats for migratory birds. Farmers also receive remuneration in exchange for such labour under biodiversity contract projects.

When farming stops during winter, the city government hires members of local communities, through the Hooded Crane Farmers' Association, to feed the wintering migratory birds. This arrangement assists farmers in earning continuous income. Up to six persons per day are hired as "migratory bird rangers" to manage and control access of the public to Suncheon Bay. Farmers act as security guards and implement road blocks. Fences made of reed are erected along the boundaries of Suncheon Bay that are near roads to minimize disturbance of migratory birds from strong vehicle lights.

The Hooded Crane Farmers' Association is also engaged in educational outreach. The Association was able to transform an "endangered" elementary school into a popular institution for students by assisting in the development and implementation of an Ecological Education Program for elementary schools in Suncheon City. Through this program, students learn more about the importance of wetlands and are exposed to actual field work by planting rice.

Citizens of Suncheon City play an active role in monitoring the population of Hooded Cranes in Suncheon Bay. Since 2006, when Suncheon Bay was declared as a Ramsar Site, the number of Hooded Cranes visiting the wetland soared from 219 to 1,432 in 2015. This number translates into more tourists and, subsequently, more revenues for Suncheon City. From January to December 2016, a total of 5.5 million tourists visited Suncheon Bay and Suncheon Bay National Garden, which generated about 10 million USD entrance fee revenues. Today, plans are underway to expand the migratory bird farming area from 59 ha to 110 ha. An adjustment of the farming schedule is also being proposed to be from late October to early October for increased productivity.

[Source: Ramsar Regional Centre – East Asia]

## **M2.4 ESTABLISH A CEPA PROGRAMME**

A communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) program is any set of activities that influences people so that they take action to conserve wetlands.

Whilst some Ramsar Sites may find it useful to have a separate set of CEPA activities, it is preferable that CEPA is integrated into the different programs and activities of the management plan (Step M2.2). This is so that the CEPA program can target a broad range of site users, stakeholders, and persons / organizations who have an influence on your site.

## M3. MANAGE AND MONITOR

### M3.1 MANAGEMENT OF THE RAMSAR SITE

The activities required to effectively manage your Ramsar Site can be quite diverse and range in scale. In general, management should focus on implementing those activities needed to maintain the services that the site provides. A key document is the management plan (Step M2.2) and major activities will likely include:

- Restoration of degraded wetlands and their functions, management of existing habitats for wetland wildlife, monitoring the success of management activities,
- Management of priority invasive alien species,
- Regulation of natural resources,
- Management of stakeholders and their activities, and
- Installation of site infrastructure such as a wetland education centre and outdoor facilities for access and viewing wildlife.

### M3.2 MONITOR EFFECTIVENESS

It is important to put in place mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of management activities so they can be assessed and reviewed later (Step M4.1).

It is highly recommended to monitor the baseline condition of your site as mentioned during preparation of the Ramsar Information Sheet (Step M1.1). Typically, species and their habitats or physical and environmental variables are monitored through repeated surveys. Monitoring may also cover important ecosystem components, processes, benefits and services that characterize your wetland.

It is common practice to select a handful of performance indicators for later assessment (Step M4.1). If a target is expected to vary e.g. due to natural conditions, limits of acceptable change can be set.



Restoration of a degraded area of wetland (Hong Kong S.A.R.)

Broader monitoring of management activities can be achieved by using the Ramsar Site Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (R-METT), refer to Ramsar Resolution XII.15. It is a relatively quick and simple tool to use, and easily understood by non-specialists.

## M4. EVALUATE AND REVIEW

### M4.1 CARRY OUT REGULAR REVIEWS OF THE SITE

The monitoring data (Step M3.2) should be collated and the performance indicators assessed, then presented to the management committee (Step M2.1) or a working group for review. An annual review of the data is recommended.

Evaluation may lead to suggestions for revision of management activities and these should be reported to the Administrative Authority.

Formal plans such as the management plan need to go through a regular review e.g. on an annual basis or even more frequently if needed, to assess the success of management. However, a thorough review of the management plan is normally undertaken by the management committee in the final year of the plan. The review findings feed directly into the renewal process for the next plan.

## SUMMARY

This booklet lays out a simple step-by-step process to guide site managers, administrators and partners through the correct process to designate then manage their Ramsar Site within the Ramsar Convention framework. It should not be regarded as a definitive or exhaustive guide but instead as a starting point to understand the process and a reference to identify key information sources for further reading.

Through learning about the process and implementing the steps, your Ramsar Site should be on the right track towards being managed effectively, with strong governance and plans to make decisions, supported by a range of stakeholders, and with review mechanisms in place to improve management. By doing so, you are contributing to the aims of the Ramsar Convention and helping your country fulfil its obligations under the Convention.

If you require further information on any aspect of the designation and management process, please contact either the Administrative Authority for your country, or the Ramsar Officer for your region. Contact information for both can be found on the Ramsar website [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org).

## Appendix 1 - Reference Section

Step	Ramsar document and resources				Suggested other resources
	Strategic Plan 2016-2025 (Target) and [Indicator]	Article / Resolution / Recommendation	Relevant handbook(s)	Other Ramsar publication or webpage	
C1. Communication, Capacity Building, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)	(Target 10) ALSO REFER TO STEP M2.4	Art 4.5 Rec 6.3 Rec 4.5 Res VII.8 Res VII.9 Res VI.19 Res XII.9 Res XII.15	Wise-use of wetlands Wetland CEPA Participatory skills	CEPA Action Plan for the Secretariat 2016 – 2018 triennium Ramsar CEPA webpage - <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/activity/the-ramsar-cepa-programme">http://www.ramsar.org/activity/the-ramsar-cepa-programme</a>	IUCN Handbook No. 11: Indigenous and local communities and protected areas IUCN Handbook No. 17: Protected area staff training : guidelines for planning and management Wetlands Link International – <a href="http://wli.wwt.org.uk/">http://wli.wwt.org.uk/</a> CEPA for wetland site managers: Brief guidance to assist site managers in using CEPA tools to assist in effective site management
D1. Identification of a Wetlands of International Importance ('Ramsar Site')		Rec 1.4 Rec 3.1 Rec 4.2 Res 5.9 Res VI.2		The Ramsar Sites Criteria <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/document/the-ramsar-sites-criteria">http://www.ramsar.org/document/the-ramsar-sites-criteria</a>	
D2. (Rapid) Assessment of ecosystem services	ALSO REFER TO STEP M1.2	Res IX.1 Annex Ei		Ramsar Technical Report 1	
D3. Site designation	(Target 6) [Number of Ramsar Sites that have been designated] [Total hectares of Ramsar Sites that have been designated]		Designating Ramsar Sites		
M1.1 Complete and regularly update the Information Sheet for the site (RIS)	(Target 5) [% of Ramsar Sites that have updated Ramsar Information Sheets] (Target 1) [% of Parties have made an assessment of ecosystem services of Ramsar Sites] (Target 11)	Res X.15 Res VI.1	Wetland inventory	Ramsar Technical Report 3 Ramsar RIS <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/document/ramsar-information-sheet">http://www.ramsar.org/document/ramsar-information-sheet</a> Tutorial notes for completing the RIS online <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ris_tutorial_e_1.pdf">http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/ris_tutorial_e_1.pdf</a> Wetland ecosystem services factsheets 1-10 Wetland Values and Functions Information Pack (6 series)	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (2008), National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands. Module 2 of the National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia. Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, Canberra.
M1.2 Assess the wetland value / importance	(Target 10) (Target 11) [% of Parties that have made an assessment of ecosystem services of Ramsar Sites]	Res VIII.19		Cultural Heritage Information Pack: 1-11 Russi D., ten Brink P., Farmer A., Badura T., Coates D., Förster J., Kumar R. and Davidson N. (2013) The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands. IEEP, London and Brussels; Ramsar Secretariat, Gland Integrating multiple wetland values into decision-making. Ramsar Policy Brief No. 2.	IUCN Handbook No. 11: Indigenous and local communities and protected areas Schaaf, T. & Clamote Rodrigues, D. (2016) Managing MIDAs: Harmonising the management of Multi-International Designated Areas: Ramsar Sites, World Heritage sites, Biosphere reserves and UNESCO Global Geoparks. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xvi + 14-pp.

M1.3 Assess the threats to the site	General			Impact assessment		
	Invasive species	(Target 4)	Res VII.14 Res VIII.18	Addressing change in ecological character		<a href="https://www.iucn.org/regions/europe/our-work/invasive-allen-species">https://www.iucn.org/regions/europe/our-work/invasive-allen-species</a>
	Climate change		Res VIII.3 Res X.24 Res XI.14		Ramsar Technical Report 5 Briefing Note 5: Evaluating the risk to Ramsar Sites from climate change induced sea level rise	
M2.1 Establish a cross-sectoral site management committee		(Target 7) [Number of Ramsar Sites reported by Parties to the Ramsar Secretariat of change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites pursuant to Article 3.2.]	Art 3.2 Art 3.2 Res X.16	Addressing change in wetland ecological character		
	M2.2 Draft a site management plan	[Number of Ramsar Sites that have effective, implemented management plans] [Number of Ramsar Sites that have effective, implemented management planning]	Res 5.7 Res VIII.14 Res VIII.16 Res VIII.19 Res IX.1 Annex Cii Res IX.21 Res X.23 Res XI.11	Managing wetlands	<a href="http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/managing-ramsar-sites">http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/managing-ramsar-sites</a>  Change in ecological character - <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/change-in-ecological-character">http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/change-in-ecological-character</a>	Chatterjee, A., Phillips, B. & Stroud, D.D. (2008). Wetland Management Planning. A guide for site managers. WWF, Wetlands International, IUCN and Ramsar Convention.  Alexander, M. (2010). A Management Planning Guide. CMS Consortium, Talgarth, Wales, UK.  AEWA Conservation Guidelines No. 12. Maclean, I. & Rehfish, M. (2008). Guidelines on the measures needed to help waterbirds adapt to climate change, AEWA Technical Series No. 27, Bonn, Germany.  IUCN Handbook No. 10: Guidelines for management planning of protected areas  AEWA Conservation Guidelines No.4. Guidelines on the management of key sites for migratory waterbirds, AEWA Technical Series No.18, Bonn, Germany.  Conservation Measures Partnership. The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation.
M2.3 Establish a long-term financing mechanism for the site				Best practices for planning, design and operation of wetland education centres	<a href="http://www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day">World wetlands Day - http://www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day</a>	IUCN Handbook No. 5: Financing protected areas

M2.4 Establish a CEPA program	(Target 16) CEPA programs [% of Parties with a) a governmental CEPA National Focal Point and b) a non-governmental National Focal Point] [% of Parties that have established national action plans for wetland CEPA] (Target 16) Visitor centres [Number of centres (visitor centres, interpretation centres, education centres) have been established in Ramsar Sites] (Target 16) World Wetland Day [% of Parties that have branded World Wetlands Day activities]	Rec 5.8 Res X.8 Res VI.19 Res XIII.9	Wetland CEPA Best practices for planning, design and operation of wetland education centres	Wetland Link International - <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/managing-ramsar-sites">http://www.ramsar.org/sites-countries/managing-ramsar-sites</a> EAAFP CEPA Working Group – <a href="http://www.eaaflyway.net/our-activities/working-groups/cepa-working-group">http://www.eaaflyway.net/our-activities/working-groups/cepa-working-group</a>
M3.1 Management of the Ramsar Site	(Target 12) [% of Parties that have established restoration plans [or activities] for sites] [% of Parties that have implemented effective restoration or rehabilitation projects] (Target 4)	Rec 4.1 Rec 6.15 Res 5.7 Res VIII.1 Res VIII.14 Res VIII.16 Res VIII.18	Managing wetlands Coastal	Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project and Ramsar Regional Centre for Central and W Asia. (2011). Towards a community of practice of wetland project managers: lessons learned from Central and West Asia and the Mediterranean. 96 pp. Published by Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project and Ramsar Regional Centre for Central and W Asia, Islamic Republic of Iran.
M3.2 Monitor effectiveness	(Target 5) [% of Parties that have made assessments of effective management of Ramsar Sites]	Art 4.3 Rec 3.9 Rec 4.8 Res VIII.16 Res IX.1 Annex A Res XII.15 Res VIII.16	Addressing change in ecological character	IUCN Handbook No. 14: Evaluating effectiveness : a framework for assessing management effectiveness of protected areas (2006)  R-METT <a href="http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res15_management_effectiveness_e.pdf">http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/cop12_res15_management_effectiveness_e.pdf</a>
M4.1 Carry out regular reviews of the site			Best practices for planning, design and operation of wetland education centres	





Local fisherfolk at the  
Guangdong Haifeng Ramsar Site  
(People's Republic of China)

