



Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change
Government of India

Identifying and Managing Wetlands of International Importance



Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 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. India ratified the Convention on the 1 of February, 1982.

Wetlands wise use is defined in the text of Ramsar Convention as “the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development”. Wise use can thus be seen as the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and all the services they provide, for the benefit of people and nature. Ecological character is “the combination of ecosystem components, processes and services that characterize the wetland at a given point in time”.

Ramsar List

A key commitment under the Ramsar Convention is to identify and place suitable wetlands onto the List of Wetlands of International Importance, also known as the Ramsar List. The Ramsar Sites, form a part of an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and services.

Benefits of Designating Wetlands to Ramsar List

Designating wetlands to the Ramsar list and meeting Ramsar Convention commitments is our contribution to global efforts for biodiversity conservation. Ramsar Sites are recognized as being of significant value not only for our country but for humanity as a whole. Designating Ramsar Sites and ensuring their conservation and wise use:

- presents an opportunity for a country to make its voice heard in the principal intergovernmental forum on the conservation and wise use of wetlands
- brings increased publicity and prestige for the Ramsar Sites and hence increased possibilities of support for conservation and wise use measures
- brings access to the latest information and advice on adoption of the Convention's internationally-accepted standards, such as criteria for identifying wetlands of international importance, advice on application of the wise use concept, and guidelines on management planning in wetlands
- brings access to expert advice on national and site-related problems of wetland conservation and management through contacts with Ramsar Secretariat personnel and collaborators and through application of the Ramsar Advisory Mission when appropriate
- encourages international cooperation on wetland issues and brings the possibility of support for wetland projects, either through the Convention's own small grants assistance programmes or through the Convention's contacts with multilateral and bilateral external support agencies

Designation Criteria

The Convention establishes that “wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology.” This reflects in the nine designation criteria, of which at least one should be met at the time of designation.

Criteria for the designation of Wetlands of International Importance

<p>Group A of the criteria</p> <p>Sites containing representative, rare or unique wetland types</p>		<p>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.</p>
<p>Group B of the criteria</p> <p>Sites of international importance for conserving biodiversity</p>	<p>Criteria based on species and ecological communities</p>	<p>Criterion 2: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities.</p>
		<p>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.</p>
		<p>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.</p>
	<p>Specific criteria based on waterbirds</p>	<p>Criterion 5: A wetland should be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.</p>
		<p>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.</p>
	<p>Specific criteria based on fish</p>	<p>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.</p>
		<p>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.</p>
	<p>Specific criteria based on other taxa</p>	<p>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.</p>

Process of Ramsar Site Designation

A five stage process, which involves actions at the end of State Government / UT administration and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is followed for designation of Ramsar Site.

Feasibility Assessment

01

- Wetland identification
- Brief document preparation
- Assessment against 9 Ramsar criteria

Lead Responsibility
State Government

Ramsar Site Designation Intent

02

- State Government to communicate Ramsar Site designation intent to National Focal Point, Ramsar Convention (Additional Secretary, MoEFCC)
- State Government to share details of Ramsar Site to proposal compiler

Lead Responsibility
State Government

Approval to Designate Site

03

- MoEFCC seeks approval of Ministry of External Affairs
- Upon approval, MoEFCC communicates site designation intent to Ramsar Secretariat
- Ramsar Secretariat allocates a Site ID and password to access Ramsar Site Information System

Lead Responsibility
MoEFCC

Proposal Preparation

04

- Ramsar Site compiler to prepare designation proposal in RSIS
- Ramsar Site compiler to upload map as per prescribed format

Lead Responsibility
State Government

Proposal Review and Finalization

05

- State Government to electronically forward finalized proposal along with cover letter to MoEFCC
- MoEFCC after review, to forward proposal to Ramsar Secretariat
- Ramsar Secretariat shares comments on proposal with MoEFCC
- Comments to be addressed by compiler
- Final proposal processed by Ramsar Secretariat
- Site is designated and Designation Certificate sent to MoEFCC

Lead Responsibility
MoEFCC

Designation Commitments

Designation of wetlands as Ramsar Site embodies commitment of the Government of India and State Government for wise use of these wetlands. Ramsar Sites are also regulated under Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.

Commitments of State Government

- Designating nodal agency within State Government/UT administration for site management
- Delineating wetland boundary and its zone of influence
- Notification under Wetlands (Conservation and management) Rules, 2017, which includes:
 - Preparing a brief document in the format recommended under the guidelines for implementation of rules
 - Enlisting activities prohibited, regulated and permitted
 - Enforcement of extant regulation as per the mandate
- Preparing an integrated management plan outlining specific actions for wetland wise use. The management plan should be prepared on the basis of diagnostic evaluation of wetland ecological character, and be sufficient to address any risks of adverse change.
- Updating Ramsar Information Sheet every 6 years
- Monitoring to assess the risk of adverse change in ecological character
- Providing status updates on the condition of Ramsar Site to the MoEFCC

To facilitate implementation of these commitments, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change shall:

- Support the implementation of management plans based on specific request from state government under the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)
- Conduct capacity development of wetland managers in different aspects of wetlands management
- Maintain oversight on the condition of Ramsar site through the State Wetlands Authority

Contact

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Prepared By

Wetlands International South Asia under the Global Environment Facility Funded
Integrated Management of Wetland Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IMWBES) Project.

