



## Appendix 7. Ramsar Wetland Definition, Classification and Criteria for Internationally Important Wetlands

### Ramsar Definition of a Wetland

#### Definition

Under the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) 'wetlands' are defined by Articles 1.1 and 2.1 as shown below:

#### Article 1.1:

*'For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.'*

Article 2.1 provides that wetlands:

*'may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands'.*

### Ramsar Wetland Classification

The wetland types listed below are from the

'Ramsar Classification System for Wetland Type as approved by Recommendation 4.7 and amended by Resolution VI.5 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The categories listed herein are intended to provide only a very broad framework to aid rapid identification of the main wetland habitats represented at each site.'

**Marine/Coastal Wetlands** – not listed here

#### Inland Wetlands

L -- Permanent inland deltas.

M -- Permanent rivers/streams/creeks; includes waterfalls.

N -- Seasonal/intermittent/irregular rivers/streams/creeks.

O -- Permanent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes large oxbow lakes.

P -- Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes (over 8 ha); includes floodplain lakes.

Q -- Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes.

R -- Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes and flats.

Sp -- Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools.

Ss -- Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools.

Tp -- Permanent freshwater marshes/pools; ponds (below 8 ha), marshes and swamps on inorganic soils; with emergent vegetation water-logged for at least most of the growing season.

Ts -- Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools on inorganic soils; includes sloughs, potholes, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes.

U -- Non-forested peatlands; includes shrub or open bogs, swamps, fens.

Va -- Alpine wetlands; includes alpine meadows, temporary waters from snowmelt.

Vt -- Tundra wetlands; includes tundra pools, temporary waters from snowmelt.

W -- Shrub-dominated wetlands; shrub swamps, shrub-dominated freshwater marshes, shrub carr, alder thicket on inorganic soils.

Xf -- Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands; includes freshwater swamp forests, seasonally flooded forests, wooded swamps on inorganic soils.

Xp -- Forested peatlands; peat swamp forests.

Y -- Freshwater springs; oases.

Zg -- Geothermal wetlands

Zk(b) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, inland

Note : ‘floodplain’ is a broad term used to refer to one or more wetland types, which may include examples from the R, Ss, Ts, W, Xf, Xp, or other wetland types. Some examples of floodplain wetlands are seasonally inundated grassland (including natural wet meadows), shrublands, woodlands and forests. Floodplain wetlands are not listed as a specific wetland type herein.

### **Human-made wetlands**

1 -- Aquaculture (e.g. fish/shrimp) ponds

2 -- Ponds; includes farm ponds, stock ponds, small tanks; (generally below 8 ha).

3 -- Irrigated land; includes irrigation channels and rice fields.

4 -- Seasonally flooded agricultural land (including intensively managed or grazed wet meadow or pasture).

5 -- Salt exploitation sites; salt pans, salines, etc.

6 -- Water storage areas; reservoirs/barrages/dams/impoundments (generally over 8 ha).

7 -- Excavations; gravel/brick/clay pits; borrow pits, mining pools.

8 -- Wastewater treatment areas; sewage farms, settling ponds, oxidation basins, etc.

9 -- Canals and drainage channels, ditches.

Zk(c) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, human-made

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**Reprinted from the ‘Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance’.**

## **Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)**

The Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance as adopted by the 4th, 6th, and 7th Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) to guide implementation of Article 2.1 on designation of Ramsar sites. [Note: This is just a simple list of the Criteria themselves out of their explanatory settings. They should properly be used as part of the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance adopted by COP7, 1999.]

### **Group A of the Criteria. 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 of the Criteria. 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.