



CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

1 (4)

Date
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Final version

Conclusions and recommendations

The 2nd Nordic - Baltic Wetlands Conference

- The role of protection and wise use of wetlands in securing biodiversity and ecosystem services

13-15 April, 2010, Ørland, Norway

The Nordic Council of Ministers' report "Nordic Wetland Conservation" (TemaNord Report Environment 2004/506) and the 1st Nordic Wetland Conference, 2004 were key starting points for the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative (NorBalWet). This initiative was established in Trondheim, Norway, in 2005 in line with Ramsar Resolution VIII.30 on Regional initiatives for the further implementation of the Convention from the eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands, in Spain, 2002.

Since then NorBalWet has matured as a key regional initiative and developed as a network of competent experts and organisations from the region. This has included regular meetings of the NorBalWet Coordination Group and annual expert seminars on important wetland topics in the region. NorBalWet was formally recognised as a Ramsar regional initiative at the 40th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention, in 2009.

With financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, the 2nd Nordic – Baltic Wetland Conference was organized by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management from 13-15 April, 2010 at Brekstad in Ørland Municipality, Norway. Sixty participants from 10 countries were gathered (Denmark, Estonia, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Russia, Sweden), representing national Ramsar administrative authorities, regional authorities, research institutions, Ramsar site and Protected Areas management staff, NGOs, and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

This document outlines the main conclusions and recommendations from the Conference, drawing upon the presentations that were made and the discussions that were held.

The Ramsar Convention & NorBalWet

Regional initiatives are increasingly important for implementation of the Ramsar Convention, as they can build upon bio-geographic commonalities, shared wetland systems and wetland-dependent species, and solidly established common social and cultural links. NorBalWet should continue to develop with this in mind, focusing on cooperation on wetland-related issues of common concern



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and drawing on the Ramsar Convention's guidance for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention on Wetlands.

Participants agreed that the NorBalWet initiative has been significantly developed during recent years, and were pleased to see that it has obtained much more clear structure and ideas. Many participants mentioned that they recognise NorBalWet as an important opportunity for sharing ideas, learning best practices, receiving news etc., and they would like to continue to participate in this network. There is a need for further meetings and seminars, developing website, emailing list etc, to keep current participants and involve new ones. The regional cooperation is much needed, since it allows to unite countries with similar climatic, cultural, natural conditions.

The Ramsar Convention streamlines wetland conservation and is a spatial planning tool. The challenge is to make wetland conservation and the convention more visible. The role of the NorBalWet is to provide effective support for and improved implementation of the objectives of the Convention and its Strategic and CEPA (Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness) plan.

Values of wetlands - ecosystem services and biodiversity

It was recognized that the Ramsar Secretariat has provided countries fact sheets of Ecosystem services and that Estonia has completed their work of assessment of ecosystem services providing best practices for other countries. Updated info from The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study and process was welcomed. It was found that TEEB is a major international initiative to draw attention to the global economic benefits of biodiversity, to highlight the growing costs of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, and to draw together expertise from the fields of science, economics and policy to enable practical actions moving forward. The Norwegian Ministry of the Environment has launched a programme of Creating Values from Nature empowering local stakeholders, municipalities and private sector. Participants encouraged countries to assess their values of wetlands.

Communication, Education, Participatin and Awareness (CEPA)

Being aware of the important role of CEPA in wetland conservation. CEPA provides information and advice on how to raise awareness and enhance knowledge and skills for action. Participants urged countries to nominate active CEPA national focal points and prepare CEPA action plans for NorBalWet and their countries. Special attention should be resourced in finding key target groups.

The visibility of the Ramsar Convention is low and the understanding of the Ramsar Convention's goals is poor, even within the environmental sector. Good examples of providing knowledge of species, such as a **Species observation system**, were presented both from Sweden and Norway. As the system is easily exported to other countries, the possibilities of funding such a project should be explored.

Participants urged countries to add visibility of wetland conservation by celebrating the **World Wetlands Day**, which it was agreed to be celebrated within Nordic- Baltic countries both on the 2nd of February and 2nd of September (week 35). The NorBalWet initiative is encouraged to provide customized material for countries, if possible.



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Management of Ramsar sites

It was recognized that a number of NorBalWet countries currently work on the planning and designation of new Ramsar sites, to contribute to the implementation of the global aim to extend the network of Ramsar sites to at least 2500 sites covering 250 million hectares by 2015. The participants agreed to work towards developing a representative network of Ramsar sites in Nordic and Baltic Countries applying the Ramsar criteria, being aware of the WWF report “The representation of wetland types and species in Ramsar sites in the Baltic Sea Catchment Area” (2008), and recognising the need for a revision of representativeness of the existing network of Ramsar sites in the NorBalWet countries.

Participants noted the importance of holistic/landscape approach in planning site management and restoration and assessing ecosystem services. There is a need to find-out the way how to use scientific knowledge in practical nature conservation work (including site management, restoration etc.).

The participants agreed to pay special attention to peatlands, since this wetland type is under-represented on the global Ramsar List, and taking into account important role of peatlands in climate change mitigation. Another highlighted example of an under-represented wetland type was sea cliffs with bird colonies, that was discussed in connection with potential Ramsar sites on the Faroe Islands. This wetland type is however well represented in other NorBalWet countries.

The NorBalWet countries also work on development and implementation of management plans for Ramsar sites, as well as on improvement of management practices for Ramsar sites and other wetlands. The participants agreed to continue this work, paying special attention to description of wetland ecological character and establishment of management objectives for its maintenance, and recognizing the need for increased use of scientific knowledge and introduction of best modern technologies (e.g. video observation systems successfully used on “Teici and Pelecares bogs” Ramsar site, Latvia) in wetland management.

The participants of the Conference presented a number of monitoring methods applied on Ramsar sites and other wetlands. The participants agreed to develop further monitoring methods paying particular attention to selection of objectives, objects/parameters and area of monitoring.

Ramsar sites in NorBalWet countries have a number of international and national conservation statuses. The participants agreed to work towards harmonisation of boundaries and protection measures applied according to international and national legislation to achieve better conservation and wise use of the concrete wetland areas, and in particular to strengthen links between Natura 2000 and Ramsar conservation networks.

In the NorBalWet region there is one formally designated Transboundary Ramsar Site (composed of individual Ramsar sites “Nigula Nature Reserve” and “Sookuninga Nature Reserve” in Estonia and “Northern Bogs (Ziemelu purvi)” in Latvia), as well as a number of existing transboundary Ramsar Sites without a formal joint designation and only unilaterally designated but potentially



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transboundary Ramsar sites. The participants agreed to strengthen collaboration in joint management of transboundary Ramsar sites, as well as in management of other Ramsar sites that have common characters (e.g. wetland types, common species, etc.). Participants also recognised importance of involvement in this cooperation, where relevant, of identified internationally important wetlands not yet formally designated as Ramsar sites.

Restoration

The need for a holistic landscape perspective on wetlands and catchment areas including river restoration and river management was emphasized. A binder with examples of how different restoration measures in watercourses may be carried out was presented. The binder is only available in Swedish but it seems, according to the meeting participants, to be a need for translating relevant parts into English.

Ramsar municipality

The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (DN) and County Governor of Sør-Trøndelag presented an idea of the concept of "Ramsar municipality" that could be realised in Norway following successful implementation of the concepts of National Park Municipalities and National Park Villages. The first candidate to this title could be the Ørland Municipality, in recognition of its achievements in coastal wetland conservation and wise use, and in particular active long-term support to the Ramsar site "Ørland Wetland System" hosted by the Municipality. The participants highly appreciated this approach as a good tool of empowerment of local community in wetland management and as a much needed opportunity for active communication of the Ramsar message beyond boundaries of Ramsar sites, that may be considered for realisation also in other NorBalWet countries. They advised the Norwegian Ramsar authority (DN) to establish clear guidelines at national level prior to formally designate the first "Ramsar municipality", in order to avoid contentious issues at a later stage re the criteria to be fulfilled to obtain, and keep (or renew) such a distinction.

Thanks

Participants thanked the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment for the financial support for the Conference, and the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management for organizing the 2nd Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Conference (in cooperation with the Governor of Sør-Trøndelag County, Ørland Municipality and the Norwegian State Nature Inspectorate).

Participants also appreciated the participation and contributions made by Nadia Alexeeva and Tobias Salathe from Ramsar Secretariat, and requested participants and the organizers to ensure that the closing statement be distributed to relevant stakeholders in each country.
