

7th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
29 October - 01 November 2006, Bern, Switzerland

ASSESSMENT OF AEWA'S CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

(Report by TC Working Group 10)

The Working Group was asked to assess the guidelines prepared under Action Plan paragraph 7.3 and formulate draft recommendations and/or resolutions relating to their development/update, content and implementation (Action Plan 7.6). Time has not allowed a full assessment, but the following notes may be helpful to structure a discussion at TC 7.

BACKGROUND

The relevant section of the Action Plan is as follows:

7.3 The Agreement secretariat, in coordination with the Technical Committee and with the assistance of experts from Range States, shall coordinate the development of conservation guidelines in accordance with Article IV, paragraph 4, of this Agreement to assist the Parties in the implementation of this Action Plan. The Agreement secretariat shall ensure, where possible, coherence with guidelines approved under other international instruments. These conservation guidelines shall aim at introducing the principle of sustainable use. They shall cover, *inter alia*:

- (a) single species action plans;
- (b) emergency measures;
- (c) preparation of site inventories and habitat management methods;
- (d) hunting practices;
- (e) trade in waterbirds;
- (f) tourism;
- (g) reducing crop damage; and
- (h) a waterbird monitoring protocol.

The Conservation Guidelines were initially drafted by Wetlands International and subject to wide consultation, including at the 1998 Wetlands and Development Conference in Dakar, Senegal. They were discussed at MoP 1 in 1999 (Resolution 1.10 http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/mop/mop1_docs/pdf/r10.pdf) and the Meeting adopted the guidelines "as initial guidelines in the sense of Article IV of the Agreement as guidance to the Contracting parties". They were subsequently revised, with input from the Technical Committee, adopted at MoP2 (2002) and published subsequently in AEWA's Technical Review series (No. 6, undated).

The Technical Committee is charged with keeping the guidelines under periodic review (para. 7.6 of the Action Plan).

- 7.6 The Technical Committee shall assess the guidelines and reviews prepared under paragraphs 7.3 and 7.4, and shall formulate draft recommendations and resolutions relating to their development, content and implementation for consideration at sessions of the Meeting of the Parties.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Profile and accessibility

- The Guidelines have a low profile on AEWA's website, being located deep within the structure of the site. As one of the major outputs from the Action Plan they should probably have a higher profile, with a dedicated 'page' linked directly from the web-site home-page.
- The guidelines are currently packaged as a single (unwieldy) 176-page document, although the nine guidelines cover a quite diverse range of subjects. In improving accessibility and profile there would seem to be benefits in separately packaging each of the guidelines in such a way that they can be separately downloaded and used. A model might be the Ramsar Handbook series, where a range of guidance is disseminated in a modular fashion: http://ramsar.org/lib/lib_handbooks_e.htm.
- Use of web-resources. The guidelines contain Appendices relating to processes operated by other organisations, notably The Ramsar Information Sheet – RIS (Appendix III) and Ramsar classification system for wetland types (Appendix IV). The Ramsar RIS reproduced in the guidelines is out of date, its structure having been revised at a number of CoPs since the guidelines' publication. For the future development of the guidelines it would seem better just to provide a web-link to the relevant definitive source of information (in this case to http://ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm). This would avoid the need for AEWA to try and keep track of updates to these sources of information, users being just directed straight to definitive sources of information.
- I couldn't find a French version of the Guidelines anywhere on the website. These would seem to be a priority if they really don't exist. See below.
- Opportunities should be sought to give the guidelines visibility through AEWA's communications strategy. Occasional items in the e-newsletter might pick up on issues related to guidelines and highlight their existence/value.

Structure

- A move to a more modular presentation (above) would also facilitate regular update and provision of other sources of information. For example, at present the section on references and web-links is separated from each of the guidelines. These should be brought together to make each of the guidelines much more stand-alone. There is certainly scope to update these further information sections in the light of recent publications. In particular, there are many papers in the *Waterbirds around the world* proceedings (Boere *et al.* 2006) that could usefully be given as examples/further reading in each of the nine guidelines.
- Where publications referred to in the reference lists exist on the web, it would be helpful to include web-links.

Guidelines on the preparation of National Single Species Action Plans

The main content seems substantially sound with a couple of points to note:

- Text should be updated to reflect the development of recent international plans and any good examples of national plans.
- Step 6 seems to skip over the single most important stage of action planning – the implementation of action plans. It is certainly not true that “no general guidelines can be given on implementation”! Indeed, one of the outcomes of the action planning workshop at the *Waterbirds around the world* conference was to derive just such general principles (circulated to TC 7 as TC Inf. 7.2¹; Hughes 2006). Indeed, all experience has been that implementation is the single most important aspect of action planning — and the reason why most plans fail. This is a crucially important area of the guidelines that should be further developed.

Guidelines on the identifying and tackling emergency situations for migratory waterbirds

This might usefully be updated to include some of the more recent thinking that has occurred concerning disease outbreaks in waterbird populations, notably in the context of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Guidelines on the preparation of site inventories for migratory waterbirds

Still looks substantially OK. Website might usefully link to the range of recently published regional IBA inventories.

Guidelines on the management of key sites for migratory waterbirds

It would be useful to make rather clearer linkages with material in Ramsar’s *Management Planning Handbook* (No 8² – and also Handbook No. 5 on *Participatory management*). Note that Ramsar will soon be publishing a *Wetland Management Planning Field Guide*, which is highly relevant here too.

Guidelines on sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds

This might usefully give links to the range of additional guidance related to non-toxic gunshot issues.

Guidelines on regulating trade in migratory waterbirds

CITES trade statistics should be updated.

Guidelines on the development of ecotourism at wetlands

This is an area where there has been and continues to be significant work. At least, those more familiar with this field might be able to provide links to most recent resources as case-studies.

¹ http://www.unep-aewa.org/meetings/en/tc_meetings/tc7docs/info%20docs/tc_inf7_2_conclusions_flyway_management2004.pdf

² http://ramsar.org/lib/lib_handbooks_e.htm

Guidelines on conflict reduction

This is certainly a guideline that could be updated given the outcomes of the *Waterbirds around the world* conference which had a workshop specifically on conflict reduction issues, at which a number of relevant case studies were given (Boere *et al.* 2006). There is recent relevant material related to air-strikes, and crop and fisheries damage that should be included.

Greater emphasis should be given to social-science aspects of conflict resolution, through stakeholder involvement, as is stressed in many papers within *Waterbirds around the world*.

Guidelines for a waterbird monitoring protocol

Looks pretty much OK.

References and useful web-sites

Incorporate within the individual guidelines as appropriate.

Appendix I. Populations of waterbirds requiring national single species action plans

Better to include this within the Guideline No. 1?

Appendix II. Globally threatened migratory waterbirds in AEWA states

Update with any recent additions to global red-list. Might also include Near-Threatened species?

Appendix III. Ramsar Information Sheet.

See above – just give web-link to definitive RIS and guidance on Ramsar's web-site: http://ramsar.org/ris/key_ris_index.htm.

Appendix IV. Ramsar wetland classification system

This is included with the RIS guidance (above) so does it need to be reproduced separately?

Appendix V. Status of waterbird populations covered by CITES and EC Trade Regulations

Check whether this needs update. As with Ramsar RIS, at least linkage should be made to the definitive sources of these listings:

CITES	http://www.cites.org/eng/app/appendices.shtml
EU	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/home_en.htm

DOES ANYONE ACTUALLY USE THE CONSERVATION GUIDELINES?

Do we have any information as to whether the Conservation Guidelines are used? Indeed, it is not really clear what audience(s) they are aimed at. Perhaps greater clarity should be sought on these issues.

If the intention is to give guidance to those in countries which have less developed conservation structures, then perhaps the priority for AEWA should less be on updating (continuing to fine-tune one

product), but to seek to enhance visibility and accessibility – *i.e.* create multiple products targeted directly at specific users.

In this regard, developing language versions for those areas where the guidelines are most likely to be used would seem important – thus, versions in Russian, French and Arabic would seem especially valuable.

REFERENCE

Boere, G.A., Galbraith, C.A. & Stroud, D.A. (eds.) (2006). *Waterbirds around the world*. The Stationary Office, Edinburgh. c. 900 pp.

Hughes, B. 2006. Flyway management for species of conservation concern. In: Boere, G.A., Galbraith, C.A. & Stroud, D.A. (eds.) *Waterbirds around the world*. The Stationary Office, Edinburgh.