

18th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
14-16 March 2023, Bonn, Germany

**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE ON A RAPID ASSESSMENT OF
SUSTAINABILITY OF HARVEST OF AEWA WATERBIRD POPULATIONS**

1. Project title

Undertaking a Rapid Assessment of Sustainability of Harvest of AEWA Waterbird Populations

2. Background

According to the AEWA Strategic Plan 2019-2017 (Target 2.4), adaptive harvest management regimes should be in place and effectively implemented at a flyway level in accordance with Species Action or Management Plans for all prioritised declining quarry populations and ‘conflict’ species¹. As a first action to achieve this goal, a rapid assessment of sustainability of harvest of declining quarry populations in the AEWA Region shall be conducted by MOP9, to be used to identify priority species/populations for inclusion in adaptive harvest management processes coordinated at flyway-level.

This project is part of a suite of tasks mandated to the Technical Committee to provide an assessment of the status quo with waterbird harvesting methods, scale, management, sustainability and best practice. The outputs of these tasks will also provide a foundation for the continued enhancement of sustainable waterbird harvest management going forwards, for example through the provision of best practice guidance and tools for assessing and reporting national waterbird harvests. The other tasks are:

- A review of the nature and extent of waterbird harvest and its socio-economic importance in the AEWA Region;
- Developing Guidance on Methods and Tools for Waterbird Harvest Data Collection.

3. Duties of the contractor

The contractor shall undertake in consultation with the AEWA Technical Committee a rapid assessment of sustainability of harvest of declining quarry populations in the AEWA Region. The task is composed of the following modules:

1. For each waterbird population listed on AEWA Annex 3 Table 1 Columns A or B that has been prioritised by the Technical Committee, compile existing knowledge and uncertainties, at flyway scale, population sizes, demography (or species-specific traits), and at scale of range states, legal harvest (any legal taking, including derogation and unretrieved harvest, such as crippling loss), anthropogenic pressures other than legal harvest causing additional mortality or reduced reproduction (including illegal killing);

¹ Declining quarry populations listed in Column B of AEWA Annex 3 Table 1 are identified and prioritised by the AEWA Technical Committee following the adoption of the amendments to Table 1 by MOP8. In addition, rapid assessment of the sustainability of harvest is also necessary for declining quarry populations listed in Column A of Table 1 but subject of reservation by one or more Contracting Parties and that are not covered by a coordinated harvest management mechanism yet.

2. For each priority population, estimate the probability that current harvest exceeds the maximum sustainable yield of the species at the current population size (i.e., in general, approximately one-half of (1 minus the maximum growth rate of the species) multiplied by the observed population size)².
3. Develop an indicative geographic and temporal map of exposure to harvest in the overall flyways used by populations with sufficient information, combining available data sources (bag statistics and recovery data from ringing schemes);
4. Identify how and where to improve data collection to assess sustainability.

It is anticipated that the contractor will draw on available species-specific literature and reports, databases as well as on the knowledge by the wide pool of waterbird harvest experts and, if needed, national authorities from different parts of the AEWA Region.

The contractor shall ensure coordination with other similar assessment activities, for example under the EU Call ENV/2022/OP/0015: Supporting the recovery of bird species of Annex II of the Birds Directive in non-secure conservation status.

Deliverables will be:

Module 1. In a database format, an overview of the status of each biogeographic waterbird population included, *at the flyway scale*: overall population size and available demographic information, *at the scale of range states*, hunting status, derogations, hunting bags, anthropogenic pressures other than harvest and data sources all with appropriate metadata as to uncertainties and sources. A draft format will be agreed after two months and before data collection commences. A draft interim database will be circulated for review to the Technical Committee Project Advisory Group (see below) after [12] months, and a draft final database after [18] months.

Modules 2 & 3. A scientific report providing estimates of the probability that current harvest exceeds the maximum sustainable yield, and which includes geographic and temporal maps of exposure to harvest in the population specific flyways (for a subset of populations with sufficient information). A draft interim scientific report will be circulated for review to the Technical Committee Project Advisory Group (below) after [14] months, and a draft final scientific report after [20] months.

Module 4. A summary report describing the outcomes of the rapid assessment of sustainability, including a proposal for prioritisation of species/populations for inclusion in adaptive harvest management processes coordinated at a flyway-level, which takes into account the conservation status of populations, historic population sizes and other pertinent factors (e.g. rate of decline). These criteria for prioritisation shall be agreed in advance with the Technical Committee Project Advisory Group. The report shall also provide priorities for how and where to improve data collection to assess sustainability. A draft interim summary report will be circulated for review to the Technical Committee Project Advisory Group (below) after [14] months, and a draft final summary report after [20] months.

The final products should be translated into French as part of the final delivery of the project.

4. Management of the project

In order to benefit from the wide geographic and other experience of members, observers and other experts of AEWA's Technical Committee (TC), the work will be steered by a Project Advisory Group established by the TC (although ultimately project management is the responsibility of the AEWA Secretariat).

² For example, using 'popharvest': An R package to assess the sustainability of harvesting regimes of bird populations (published in Ecology and Evolution. 2021;11:16562–16571)

This Advisory Group will be available to guide the contractors at any time through the project's duration – including establishing relations with other stakeholders as necessary and appropriate, and in providing peer review of both draft and final products as specified above.

The timeline should allow for time to convene at least four meetings of the Project Advisory Group indicatively timed, after project commencement, as follows:

1. After [two] months with the purpose of reviewing the draft database structure for Module 1;
2. After [eight] months to review progress in data collation;
3. After [15] months to review the draft scientific and summary reports for Modules 2, 3 and 4;
4. After [21] months to review the draft final scientific and summary reports Modules 2, 3 and 4;

Other meetings may be convened at either the request of the contractor, the Project Advisory Group or the Secretariat.

The contractor shall be responsible for circulation of the agenda and papers for these meetings as well as taking minutes drafts of which will be circulated within a month of each meeting.

Contacts with AEWA National Focal Points will be facilitated by the AEWA Secretariat, as required.

5. Duration of the project

The work will be conducted over a two-year period. A final report shall be delivered by 28 February 2025.