



## Minutes

### US National Ramsar Committee Meeting, March 25, 2015 At the National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV

**Meeting was conducted in person between 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm.**

**Members and Guests Participating in Person:** Chair, Bill Mitsch (Florida Gulf Coast University); Vice-Chair, Suzanne Pittenger-Slear (Environmental Concern); Treasurer, Ralph Tiner (Association of State of Wetland Managers); Deb Hahn (AFWA), Secretary; Doug Norris (Minnesota DNR); Ray Stewart (Ohio Wetlands Association); Tom Dahl (retired); Anne Garwood (Michigan DEQ); Rob Brooks (Penn State University); Brenda Zollitsch (Association of State Wetland Managers)

**Members Participating via Phone;** Li Zhang, (Florida Gulf Coast University); Erin Okuno (Stetson University); Dawn Orsak (Caddo Lake Institute); Katie Beilfuss (Wisconsin Wetlands Association)

**Observers Participating:** Kathleen Kutschenreuter (EPA); Carol Petro (EPA Region III); Brendan Tate (USFWS); Gil Cintron (USFWS, STRP focal point)

**Call the meeting to Order:** Bill Mitsch, Chair, called the meeting to order.

**Meeting minutes:** Minutes from the May 8, 2014 were approved with edits. The last meeting minutes, November 18, 2014, were approved with edits. Those minutes will be posted on the Committee's website.

**Membership:** (Suzanne Slear, Ralph Tiner) Based on past processes, the Committee proposes that the following.

- The Chair prepares a progress report letter that highlights recent accomplishments and the benefits of membership such as voting rights at Committee meetings, support on Ramsar designations, etc. The letter should also include a request to confirm that the contact, email address, and mail address are correct. The letter will be emailed to the Treasurer.
- The Treasurer will create an invoice. The Treasurer will send the letter from the Chair and invoice to past members. The invoice will include member addresses. The invoice will also provide the address in Washington DC since we can only accept checks. The first invoice will be sent via email. A hard copy letter will follow if we have not heard back after 1.5 months. The cost is \$100 for organizations and \$50 for individual memberships.
- We can use resources from the ASWM and Society of Wetland Scientists to reach out to more potential members.

- **ACTION:** The Chair will prepare a letter for members. The Treasurer will prepare an invoice and send it along with the letter from the Chair to potential members.

**Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs Ramsar Site Letter:** A letter was sent on behalf of the US. National Ramsar Committee to partners involved with the potential threat to the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs Ramsar Site. For numerous reasons, the developers have for the time being decided not to pursue development of the mine.

#### **Progress of Ramsar Site Designations:**

- **Red Lake Peatlands, Minnesota** (Doug Norris) – Partners are investigating the potential for a Ramsar designation for the Red Lake Peatlands in northwest Minnesota. They are fact finding and have drawn tentative lines on the map encompassing tens of thousands of acres. The site has unique hydrology and plant communities. Peatlands are an underrepresented Ramsar wetland type. The only way to have a successful designation is to work with the local community and have a locally driven process. To accomplish this, they will conduct outreach and have local meetings. They hope to garner local champions. There are other potential sites in Minnesota but they are only looking at the Red Lake Peatlands at the moment.
- **Sites in Ohio** (Ray Stewart) – The Ohio Wetlands Association does outreach and education. Part of that effort is promotion of Ramsar. They are interested in developing a program similar to Wisconsin Wetland Gems. That could serve as a springboard to determine what the priority Ramsar sites are in Ohio. Ideally, they would like to nominate one site per year. There is also the potential to expand the Olentangy River Wetland Research Park Ramsar site. There are other restorations going on in the river corridor that would complement the current designation. They presented this idea at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. Magee Marsh on Lake Erie is another important spot and potential Ramsar site.
- **Wisconsin Door Peninsula Coastal Wetlands** (Brendan Tate) – The USFWS has completed its review. It is now in Geneva at the Secretariat for final approval.
- **Other Wisconsin sites** (Katie Belfuss) – An application is pending for Chiwaukee Illinois site with USFWS. They are also developing an application for the Lower Wisconsin Riverway using the old RIS form. It abuts another Ramsar site.
- **Puerto Rican Site Designation** (Gil Cintron) – The USFWS wanted to promote new site designations. With mangroves and coral reefs underrepresented in the current list of Ramsar sites, they identified 10 potential sites in the Caribbean including 6 in Puerto Rico. They have identified boundaries and are preparing maps to engage local support for the designations. They include areas on Vieques and Culebra in Puerto Rico. They are valuable islands in terms of unique coral reefs and sea grass beds. The Cordillera reef system on the Northwest side of Puerto Rico and the SW corner of PR are 2 more unique spots. St. Croix has some islands including Buck Island one of which is a National Wildlife Refuge.
- **Sites in Maine and Pennsylvania** (Rob Brooks) – Schoodic Peninsula in Maine has 12-15 sites that are coastal and marine that could be combined into 1 application. The ownership of the land varies and includes land trusts, USFWS, National Park Service. In Pennsylvania there is a 50-60 acre site called the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center. It contains a fen and globally rare species. He believes it would be similar to the Olentangy River Wetland Research Park designation.
- **Sites in Michigan** (Anne Garwood) – Michigan currently has one Ramsar site. They are interested in designating a coastal site in the future.
- **Sites in New York** (Deb Hahn) – An application is being developed for the New York Niagara River Corridor.

**ACTION:** The Committee will develop a FAQ document about Ramsar, the nomination process, etc (E.g.,

the Ramsar convention is not an UN Convention; Does a Ramsar site designation have legal status in the U.S., What could a sample support letter look like). Suzanne Slear will take the lead with support from Katie Beilfuss and develop a first draft. It will collate information from USFWS FAQ documents and other Ramsar Committee documents. The objective is to provide easy access to information that is helpful for current sites and those wishing to nominate sites. The document will be housed on the US Ramsar Committee website.

#### **Other Business:**

- **Ramsar Conference of the Parties (CoP)** – The CoP will be held from June 1-9, 2015 in Uruguay. There are a number of resolutions and decisions that will be approved at the CoP. It would be good to have input on the resolutions from Committee officers, members, and interested wetland partners. Input especially from on the ground wetland managers will be critical. The CoP website has copies of the Resolutions for download and review.  
<http://www.ramsar.org/event/12th-meeting-of-the-conference-of-the-parties> **ACTION:** The Committee Officers are able to funnel comments and recommendations through the National Committee to the U.S. Delegation. **ACTION:** The Committee Officers will review the Resolutions and provide input to the U.S. Delegation.
- **Ramsar informational webinar** – Many partners want to build awareness of Ramsar and the importance of wetlands including EPA, Wetland Link International, Environmental Concern, ASWM etc. 2015 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ramsar. Americans wetlands month is in May. The recommendation is to have a May 2015 webinar on Ramsar. They anticipate it being 1.5 hours. Speakers would provide an introduction, the federal implementation perspective, and the state and local level implementation. Speakers could include Chris Briggs, USFWS, ASWM, state level wetlands managers. **ACTION:** Kathleen Kutschenreuter will get all the interested parties together very soon to discuss dates and line up speakers for the webinar.
- **ASWM webinars** – A follow up webinar could include a webinar on the designation process.
- **Next meeting** – The next meeting will be held at the end of June. The date is to be determined.

**Meeting adjourned at 5:35 pm (ET).**

**Respectfully submitted by Deb Hahn, Secretary**