

# Supporting the goals and objectives of the Ramsar Convention within the United States and internationally:

The Role of the US National Ramsar Committee

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# U.S. National Ramsar Committee

- Mission: Support the goals and objectives of the Ramsar Convention within the U.S. and internationally
- Members: NGOs that have an interest in Ramsar issues
- Observers: Representatives of U.S. agencies (USFWS, State Dept., USEPA, Forest Service, NOAA)
- Meetings: Quarterly meetings, with phone conference connections for those who cannot attend in person



# Obligations of countries that have ratified the Ramsar Convention—the “three pillars”

1. Member countries shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the “wise use” of all wetlands in their territory, and develop national wetland policies.
2. Member countries shall designate at least one wetland in their territory for the “List of Wetlands of International Importance.” The so-called Ramsar sites should be developed based on their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology, or hydrology.
3. Member countries shall cooperate internationally over shared species and development assistance affecting wetlands.



# U.S. National Ramsar Committee

## Recent Activity

Meetings of the USNRC in the last year

- May 8, 2014 Washington DC (Mitsch, Pittenger-Slear, Hahn, Tiner nominated and voted in as officers)
- August 6, 2014 Phone conference meeting
- November 18, 2014 Naples, FL
- March 25,, 2015 Shepherdstown, WV (at ASWM annual meeting)

## Accomplishments

- Discussions on Pending and Future Ramsar Sites in MN, FL, OH, WA, MN
- Established an address, bank account, and improved web page of USNRC
- Wrote letter of concern regarding mining activity near Sloughs Ramsar Site in Wisconsin: Kakagon and Bad River
- Assisted with establishment of this Webinar
- Coordinated events for Wetland Month including Photo Contest
- Refining procedures for Ramsar wetland designation in the USA
- Coordinating mailing list/call for membership and dues



The Ramsar Convention has a broad definition of wetlands, much broader on the wet side than any definition in the USA:

“... 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 6 meters. [Wetlands]... may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands and island or bodies of marine water deeper than six meters at low tide lying within the wetlands.”



as of May 17, 2015,

**168** contracting parties have registered  
**2,193** wetlands of international importance  
covering **209 million ha (2.1 million km<sup>2</sup>)**



<http://www.ramsar.org/>





# USA Wetlands of International Importance

- **37 Wetlands of International Importance in USA** ranging from 21 to 610,000 ha
- By comparison, United Kingdom has 170; Mexico has 142; Denmark has 43
- In 24 states (4 East, 8 Midwest, 7 South, 5 West)
- First Ramsar sites in USA (3) were designated in Dec 1986; 36<sup>th</sup> announced April 2014; 37<sup>th</sup> just announced in May 2015.





# USA Wetlands of International Importance

Ramsar Sites in the United States of America as of June 2015

| Name of Site                                       | Date of Designation, day/mo/yr | State          | area, ha | coordinates             |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------------------|
| Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge               | 18/12/86                       | Nevada         | 9,509    | 36°25'N 116°20'W        |
| Bolinas Lagoon                                     | 01/09/98                       | California     | 445      | 37°55'N 122°41'W        |
| Cache-Lower White Rivers                           | 21/11/89                       | Arkansas       | 99,166   | 34°17'N 91°09'W         |
| Cache River-Cypress Creek Wetlands                 | 01/11/94                       | Illinois       | 24,281   | 37°17'6"N 89°02'18"W    |
| Caddo Lake   | 23/10/93                       | Texas          | 7,977    | 32°45'N 094°08'W        |
| Catahoula Lake                                     | 18/06/91                       | Louisiana      | 12,150   | 31°30'N 092°06'W        |
| Chesapeake Bay Estuarine Complex                   | 04/06/87                       | Virginia       | 45,000   | 38°00'N 076°20'W        |
| Cheyenne Bottoms                                   | 19/10/88                       | Kansas         | 10,978   | 38°29'N 098°40'W        |
| Congaree National Park                             | 02/02/12                       | South Carolina | 10,539   | 33°47'22"N 080°45'34"W  |
| Connecticut River Estuary & Tidal Wetlands Complex | 14/10/94                       | Connecticut    | 6,484    | 41°15'N 072°18'W        |
| Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary                          | 23/03/09                       | Florida        | 5,261    | 26°24'N 081°31'W        |
| Delaware Bay Estuary                               | 20/05/92                       | DE, NJ         | 51,252   | 39°11'N 075°14'W        |
| Door Peninsula Coastal Wetlands                    | 10/06/15                       | Wisconsin      | 4630     | 45°13'20"N 86°59'44"W   |
| Edwin B Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge          | 18/12/86                       | New Jersey     | 18,800   | 39°43'45"N 074°11'43"W  |
| Everglades National Park                           | 04/06/87                       | Florida        | 610,497  | 25°33'N 080°55'W        |
| Francis Beidler Forest                             | 30/05/08                       | South Carolina | 6,438    | 33°15'N 080°22'W        |
| Grassland Ecological Area                          | 02/02/05                       | California     | 65,000   | 37°10'N 120°50'W        |
| Humbug Marsh                                       | 20/01/10                       | Michigan       | 188      | 42°06'N 083°11'W        |
| Horicon Marsh                                      | 04/12/90                       | Wisconsin      | 13,355   | 43°30'00"N 088°38'00"W  |
| Izembek Lagoon National Wildlife Refuge            | 18/12/86                       | Alaska         | 168,433  | 55°18'55"N 162°53'08"W  |
| Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs                      | 02/02/12                       | Wisconsin      | 4,355    | 46°39'N 090°41'W        |
| Kawainui and Hamakua Marsh Complex                 | 02/02/05                       | Hawaii         | 414      | 21°24'N 157°45'W        |
| Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetland Complex               | 16/04/10                       | California     | 1,576    | 38°24'N 122°47'W        |
| Missisquoi Delta and Bay Wetlands                  | 20/11/13                       | Vermont        | 3,102    | 44°57'19"N, 073°10'09"W |

# USA Wetlands of International Importance

|   |          |               |         |                         |
|---|----------|---------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Missisquoi Delta and Bay Wetlands                             | 20/11/13 | Vermont       | 3,102   | 44°57'19"N, 073°10'09"W |
| Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge                           | 18/12/86 | GA, FL        | 162,635 | 30°48'N 082°20'W        |
| Palmyra Atoll National Wildlife Refuge                        | 01/04/11 | Hawaii        | 204,127 | 05°52'N 162°06'W        |
| Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge                       | 14/03/93 | Florida       | 2,203   | 27°47'46"N 080°25'56"W  |
| Quivira National Wildlife Refuge                              | 12/02/02 | Kansas        | 8,958   | 38°05'N 098°29'W        |
| Roswell Artesian Wetlands                                     | 07/09/10 | New Mexico    | 917     | 33°27'N 104°23'W        |
| San Francisco Bay/Estuary (SFBE)                              | 02/02/13 | California    | 158,711 | 37°52'N 122°23'W        |
| Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge                            | 03/08/98 | South Dakota  | 8,700   | 45°45'N 098°15'W        |
| Sue and Wes Dixon Waterfowl Refuge at Hennepin & Hopper Lakes | 02/02/12 | Illinois      | 1,117   | 41°13'20"N 089°20'17"W  |
| The Emiquon Complex   | 02/02/12 | Illinois      | 5,729   | 40°21'22"N 090°03'10"W  |
| Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve             | 02/02/05 | California    | 1,021   | 32°33'N 117°07'W        |
| Tomales Bay   | 30/09/02 | California    | 2,850   | 38°09'N 123°23'W        |
| Upper Mississippi River Floodplain Wetlands                   | 05/01/10 | MN, WI IA, IL | 122,357 | 43°03'N 091°10'W        |
| Wilma H. Schiermeier Olentangy River Wetland Research Park    | 18/04/08 | Ohio          | 21      | 40°01'N 083°01'W        |



# Criteria for Identifying Wetlands of International Importance

## **GROUP A. SITES CONTAINING REPRESENTATIVE, RARE, OR UNIQUE WETLAND TYPES**

or provides refuge during adverse conditions.

*Specific criteria based on waterbirds*



a population of one species or subspecies of wetland-dependent non-avian animal species.

only one criterion is necessary to  
become a Ramsar wetland of  
international importance



# What Ramsar Does/Does Not Do

## Ramsar **Does**:

- Provide wise use guidelines, training opportunities, and access to financial resources
- Encourage nations to promote wetland conservation and list wetlands of international importance

## Ramsar **Does Not**:

- Impose restrictions on nations and landowners
- Act as a regulating entity or a UN convention
- Affect sovereignty rights – site listing is voluntary



# U.S. National Ramsar Committee Officers

## Contacts for Inquires Regarding Ramsar Wetland Designations

- Bill Mitsch, Chair <wmitsch@fgcu.edu>  
FL, GA, KY, WV, OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, MN, IA, MO, AR, ND, SD
- Suzanne Pittenger Slear, Co-Chair <sslear@wetland.org>  
MD, VA, NC, SC, TN, LA, CA, WA, OR, NV
- Ralph Tiner, Treasurer <rtiner@eco.umass.edu>  
ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, NY, CT, NJ, PA, DE, NM, CO, MT, ID, WY, KS, AK
- Deborah Hahn, Secretary <DHahn@fishwildlife.org>  
AZ, UT, NE, OK, TX, HI, MS, AL



*Please contact us if you have any questions  
and especially if you have a potential Ramsar  
wetland site!*





Thank you!

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<http://usnrc.net/>

