

Exploring the Untapped Potential of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands:

Preliminary Results of Benefits Survey of U.S. Ramsar Sites



Western Wetlands Conference
October 2005



Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- Signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971
- Came into Force in 1975



What Ramsar Does/Does Not Do

Ramsar Does:

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

Ramsar Does **Not**:

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

Ramsar Worldwide

- More than 145 parties, including the U.S.
- Nearly 1500 sites designated covering over 300 million acres – 22 in U.S. with over 3 million acres
- Ninth Conference of the Parties in Uganda in November 2005



U.S. Government Cooperation



- U.S. became a party to Ramsar in 1987.
- U.S. Department of State handles policy issues.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provides technical focal point and expertise.

US/Ramsar Cooperation



- Annual voluntary contribution
- Coordination on issues worldwide such as threats to wetlands
- Participation in U.S. Ramsar National Comm. and Ramsar governing council and committees
- Promotion of World Wetlands Day – Feb. 2
- Interaction among international organizations

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 (FWS, State, EPA, Forest Service, NOAA)
- www.ramsarcommittee.us

Ramsar Benefits Survey

- In 1995 FWS conducted a survey of U.S. Ramsar sites to identify benefits associated with Ramsar designation.
- In 2005 USNRC is conducting a similar survey.
- Survey is available at www.ramsarcommittee.us.

Ramsar Benefits Survey

- All 22 U.S. Ramsar sites will be covered in the survey, including nine sites in western states that are the subject of this conference:

Ash Meadows NWR (Nevada)

Bolinas Lagoon (California)

Caddo Lake (Texas)

Cheyenne Bottoms (Kansas)

Grassland Ecological Area (California)

Quivira NWR (Kansas)

Sand Lake NWR (South Dakota)

Tijuana River National Estuarine

Research Reserve (California)

Tomales Bay (California)

Ramsar Benefits Survey: Preliminary Results

Increases Public Awareness of and Local
Pride in Site

- Raises level of awareness about coastal salt marsh habitat (Tijuana River – CA)
- Major point of honor for local support groups (Quivira NWR – Kansas)

Ramsar Benefits Survey: Preliminary Results

- Contributes to support for protection of the site and surrounding areas
- Designation is important in getting support to prevent conflicts with other uses (Quivira NWR – Kansas)
- To extent that state and county land-use controls affect the site, designation is used to urge more forceful enforcement of zoning laws (Tomales Bay – CA)

Ramsar Benefits Survey: Preliminary Results

Almost all site managers report using Ramsar designation when applying for grants and other funding opportunities.

Ramsar Benefits Survey: Preliminary Results

Can assist with acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands

- Ramsar designation helped state and county programs (Green Acres and Ocean County Open Space Program) to purchase properties within approved refuge acquisition boundary when FWS lacked funds for acquisition (Forsythe NWR – NJ)

For more information about the Ramsar Convention and the USNRC:

- Visit www.ramsar.org and www.ramsarcommittee.us
- Contact Prof. Royal C. Gardner, USNRC Chair, at gardner@law.stetson.edu

Thank you for your attention.

