

Minutes

US National Ramsar Committee Conference Call

November 12, 2008

Meeting Started at 2:00 PM (EST)

Members In Attendance: Chair, Suzanne Pittenger-Slear (Environmental Concern Inc.); Vice Chair, Kim Connolly (USC Law School); Immediate Past Chair, Royal Gardner (Stetson University College of Law); John Cecil (Audubon Society); Rick Lowerre (Caddo Lake), Deb Hahn (AFWA); Laura England (Wisconsin Wetlands Assoc.); Kathleen Kutschenreuter (EPA); Bruce Monroe; Katie Beilfuss (Wisconsin Wetlands Assoc); Marcia Hanscom (Wetlands Defense Fund); Bill Mitch (Olentangy River Wetland Research Park); and Beth Middleton (USGS).

Observers In Attendance: Herb Raffaele (USFWS), Jean Schlegel (USFWS)

1. Approval of Agenda: Suzanne requested a motion to accept the Agenda as presented. The Agenda was approved by consensus.
2. Approval of Minutes: Bruce Monroe made a motion to approve the minutes with two minor corrections and Laura England seconded. (Eugene Esposito was not listed and Roy van de Hoek's name was misspelled in two sections). The minutes were approved by consensus.
3. Treasurer's Report: There is no change in the balance of the account. The current account balance is \$6,417.15.
4. Announcements and updates
 - a. 2009 Annual Meeting at SWS/Wisconsin Wetlands Association Conference – The conference will be in Madison, Wisconsin on June 22-26, 2009. Currently, the field trips are on Friday (26th) so the Ramsar meeting will be held on Friday or in the evening during the week.
 - b. Ramsar Symposium – Roy Gardner submitted a proposal to do a workshop that would include an introduction to Ramsar, the benefits of becoming a site, and case studies to illustrate how to become a site. He will let the Committee know if the proposal is accepted.
 - c. Update on status of Palmyra Atoll – The nomination package has been reviewed and to Jean's knowledge they received no comments. It will be repackaged for official designation.
 - d. Update on status of Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary – The nomination package is missing a letter of support from a congressperson. The status of the letter is unknown at this time. Roy Gardner will contact the sight to request more information about the letter. Bill Mitch is available to assist sites with the RIS in December.
 - e. Congaree Swamp – Kim Connolly provided an update. They have a draft nomination package but the administrator that is required to sign off on the

package is out on maternity leave. She hopes to have it completed by the end of the year.

f. Francis Beidler Forest – On December 4 there will be a celebration of the Ramsar designation. Committee members are encouraged to attend.

g. Lodi Marsh – Beth Middleton informed the Committee that they are still in the discussion and education phase.

5. Old Business

a. Update on activities – Suzanne Pittenger-Slear received a letter from the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA) thanking the Committee for their support of the EPA grant they submitted. They received the \$990,000 grant and felt that the Committee's letter was influential. Suzanne will send them a congratulatory letter. This led to a discussion of how to streamline the letter writing process when letters are needed quickly because of grant applications. A framework/process will be developed. The Committee will be kept informed of all letters that are written.

b. Strategic Plan – A Strategic Plan was first developed in 2006-2007. This is the first revision. Bruce Monroe moved approval of the Plan with one minor revision. The date will be change to 2009-2010. Roy Gardner seconded the motion. The Strategic Plan was adopted by consensus.

c. USNRC Small Grants Program Update – Environmental Concern (EC) administers the small grants program. EC reminded recipients that their midterm reports are due. Final reports are due by February 2, 2009. The grant projects are being implemented and the sites that received grants to develop nomination packages are moving ahead.

d. National CEPA Action Plan Update – Environmental Concern, on behalf of the USNRC, has prepared a survey to be distributed to a database of interested parties. The survey will be used to complete the National CEPA Action Plan. Suzanne spoke with other countries that have CEPA Action Plans while in South Korea, and they provided sound advice that will be useful as the planning process continues. The schedule calls for the survey to be sent out before the end of the year.

e. USNRC collaboration with EPA on ecosystem services research – Roy Gardner reported that there are no updates at this time. They hope to reengage and would like to talk to Jean about what there role should be.

f. Website – Suzanne thanked Roy and Stetson University for hosting the Committee's website (www.ramsarcommittee.us). The site requires some revisions and an updated "look". Suzanne requested that Committee members send any news updates or photos from sites to Environmental Concern – admin@wetland.org or dir.educate@wetland.org. The USFWS also has a website (<http://www.fws.gov/international/DIC/global/wetlands.html>) that contains fact sheets and other pieces of information. Jean Schlegel also offered to update the fact sheets if needed. Bruce recommended that we put a link to the Committee website on www.wiserearth.org.

6. New Business

- a. World Wetlands Day 2009 – Materials were mailed out and most Committee members on the call received them. However, the list of people who receive materials changes from year to year. Jean Schlegel will look into the inconsistencies and make sure that Committee members receive materials. Committee members should email Suzanne if they are in need of additional materials. The Committee decided that they would like to have a coordinated communication approach for World Wetlands Day. A press release will be circulated to all Committee members 2 or 3 weeks in advance so that a consistent message can be sent to Committee member's constituents.
- b. U.S. Ramsar Threats Task Force – Rick Lowerre sent an email to Committee members on November 12, 2009 with information on and a draft letter for Cienega de Santa Clara. Development of a desalinization plant in the US threaten the Cienega de Santa Clara Ramsar site in Mexico. Rick was asked by partners in Mexico to have a letter sent to the Mexican Government and the BLM asking that they take into account the impacts to the Ramsar site in Mexico. Roy Gardner felt that more information on Ramsar and information on the international nature of Ramsar was needed in the letter. There was also some concern about endorsing the EDF letter. However, Rick explained that it was simply an effort not to repeat information from the EDF letter but not endorse it. Jean expressed a concern about writing a letter to the Mexican government. At the May 2008 Committee meeting, members were divided on whether the Committee should be political or not. Jean will see if Herb has any advice and report back to Suzanne. In May 2008, the Committee agreed to send letters that addressed the science and provided information about Ramsar but did not want to take a stand on regulatory or other issues. The Committee agreed that they needed to better clarify how they will address threats. Rick, Roy and John Cecil will redraft the Cienega de Santa Clara letter and resend it to the Committee.
- c. COP 10 – Suzanne Pittenger-Slear thanked the delegation and invited experts for their participation. She thanked Roy Gardner and Kim Connolly for hosting a successful side event and Jean Schlegel and Herb Raffaele for the opportunity to attend. It was an excellent experience and a wonderful opportunity to “compare notes” with attendees from other countries. The US delegation included Kelly Milton and Christine DeGuardia (State Department), Kathleen Kutschenreuter (EPA), Suzanne Pittenger-Slear (NGO Representative/US National Ramsar Committee Chair), Don McLaughlin (AFWA), and head of the delegation, Herb Raffaele (USFWS) and Jean Schlegel (USFWS). Kim Connolly and Roy Gardner attended as invited experts. Suzanne will send a report out within 2 weeks. Please forward any photos from the COP 10 to Suzanne for the US Ramsar website.