Explanatory Note and Guidelines
for the
Site Description form of the African Waterfowl Census

NB: this text is largely based on the text of the Explanatory Notes and Guidelines for the Ramsar Information Sheet of the Ramsar Convention.

Compiler's name and address: The full name, address and institution/agency of the person who compiled the Information Sheet, together with any telephone, fax, telex and e-mail numbers.

Date: The date on which the Site Description Form completed (or updated).

Country: The name of the country.

Name of site: The name of the site

Province/State and Nearest large town: Names of state or region where the site is localised, and the name of the nearest large town.

Site code: A code for the site, to be designated by the National Coordinator or by Wetlands International (code is nine characters when designated by Wetlands International).

Altitude: The average and/or minimum and maximum elevation of the wetland in metres above mean sea level.

Area: The area of the designated site, in hectares.

Geographical coordinates: The geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) of the approximate centre of the wetland, expressed in degrees and minutes.

Brief description of the site: A brief text summary of the type of wetland (limited to not more than three sentences), also mentioning principal physical and ecological features.

Wetland Type: Please first specify the position of the site as a **Marine or coastal wetland** and/or an **Inland wetland**. Also note if the site includes or is a **Man-made wetland**. Circle the codes representing all of the wetland habitat types which are present within the site. Refer to the Ramsar Classification of "Wetland Type" in Annex I. Then list the selected wetland types from the most to the least dominant. It is recognised that this may be difficult for large sites with a variety of habitats, but a general indication of dominance is important for properly managing information on the site.

Physical features: A short description of the principal physical characteristics of the site, covering the following points where relevant:

- geology and geomorphology
- origins (natural or artificial)
- hydrology (including seasonal water balance, inflow and outflow)
- soil type and chemistry
- water quality (physico-chemical characteristics)

- depth, fluctuations and permanence of water
- tidal variations
- catchment area
- downstream area (especially in the case of wetlands that are important in flood control)
- climate (only the most significant climatic features, e.g., annual rainfall and average temperature range, distinct seasons, and any other major factors affecting on the wetland).

Hydrological values: A description of the principal hydrological values of the wetland, e.g., its role in the recharge and discharge of groundwater, flood control, sediment trapping, prevention of coastal erosion, and maintenance of water quality.

Ecological features: A description of the main habitats and vegetation types, listing the dominant plant communities and species, and describing any zonation, seasonal variations and long-term changes. Mention plant species that have been introduced (accidentally or on purpose) and species which are invasive. Include a brief note on the native natural plant communities in adjacent areas, as well as the present plant communities (including cultivation) if different from the native vegetation. Information on food chains should be included in this section.

Current land use: principal human activities in (a) the Ramsar site itself and (b) in the surroundings and catchment. Give information on the human population in the area, with a description of the principal human activities and main forms of land use at the wetland, e.g., water supply for domestic and industrial use, irrigation, agriculture, livestock grazing, forestry, fishing, aquaculture and hunting. Some indication of the relative importance of each form of land use should be given whenever possible. In section (b) summarize land use in the catchment which might have a direct bearing on the wetland, and land use in any downstream areas likely to be affected by the wetland.

Factors Adversely affecting the site's ecological character: This could include changes in activities, land uses and major development projects at the site or in the catchment or elsewhere which have had, are having, or may have a detrimental effect on the natural ecological character of the wetland (e.g., diversion of water supplies, siltation, drainage, reclamation, pollution, over-grazing, excessive human disturbance, and excessive hunting and fishing). When reporting on pollution, special notice should be taken of toxic chemical pollutants and their sources; these should include industrial and agricultural based chemical effluents and other emissions. Natural events including vegetative succession, which have had, are having or are likely to have an impact on the ecological character of the site should be detailed, so as to facilitate monitoring. Please distinguish between potential and existing adverse factors and where possible, between adverse factors occurring in the site and those external to, but (possibly) affecting, the site. List introduced exotic species and give information on why and how they were introduced.

Conservation measures: Details of any protected areas established at or around the wetland, and any other conservation measures taken at the site, such as restrictions on development, management practices beneficial to wildlife, closures of hunting, etc. Include information on any monitoring and survey methods and regimens in place at the site. If a reserve has been established, please give the date of establishment and size of the protected area. State whether a management plan exists, if it is officially approved and whether it has been implemented. Involvement of local communities and indigenous people in the management of site should also be described.

Current scientific research and facilities: Details of any current scientific research and information on any special facilities for research.

Current conservation education: Details of any existing programmes and facilities for conservation education and training and comments on the educational potential of the wetland.

Current recreation and tourism: Details of the present use of the wetland for recreation and tourism, with details of existing or planned facilities. Please state the annual number of tourists. Indicate if tourism is seasonal, and of what type.

Management authority: The name and address of the body responsible for the direct *local* conservation and management of the wetland.

Bibliographical references: A list of key references relevant to the wetland, including management plans, major scientific reports and bibliographies. When a large body of published material is available on the site, only the most important references need be cited, with priority being given to recent literature containing extensive bibliographies.

Outline map of site: The best possible and up-to-date map of the wetland available should be appended to the Site Description Form. The "ideal" map will clearly show the area boundaries of the count unit, scale, latitude, longitude and compass bearing, administrative boundaries (e.g., province, district, etc.), and display basic topographical information, the distribution of the main wetland habitat types and notable hydrological features. It will also show major landmarks (towns, roads, etc.). Indications of land use activities are especially useful.
The optimum scale for a map depends on the actual area of the site depicted. In simplest terms, the site should be depicted in some detail.

ANNEX I

RAMSAR WETLAND TYPE

The codes are based upon the Ramsar **Classification System for "Wetland Type"** as approved by Recommendation 4.7 and amended by Resolution VI.5 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties. The categories listed herein are intended to provide only a very broad framework to aid rapid identification of the main wetland habitats represented at each site.

RAMSAR WETLAND TYPE

Marine/Coastal

A -- Permanent **shallow marine waters** less than six metres deep at low tide; includes sea bays and straits.
B -- Marine **subtidal aquatic beds**; includes kelp beds, sea-grass beds, tropical marine meadows.
C -- **Coral reefs**.
D -- **Rocky marine shores**; includes rocky offshore islands, sea cliffs.
E -- **Sand, shingle** or **pebble shores;** includes sand bars, spits and sandy islets; includes dune systems.
F -- **Estuarine waters**; permanent water of estuaries and estuarine systems of deltas.
G -- **Intertidal mud**, **sand** or **salt flats**.
H -- **Intertidal marshes**; includes salt marshes, salt meadows, saltings, raised salt marshes; includes tidal brackish and freshwater marshes.
I -- **Intertidal forested wetlands**; includes mangrove swamps, nipah swamps and tidal freshwater swamp forests.
J -- **Coastal brackish/saline lagoons**; brackish to saline lagoons with at least one relatively narrow connection to the sea.
K -- **Coastal freshwater lagoons**; includes freshwater delta lagoons.

Inland Wetlands

L -- **Permanent inland deltas**.
M -- **Permanent rivers/streams/creeks**; includes waterfalls.
N -- **Seasonal/intermittent/irregular rivers/streams/creeks**.
O -- **Permanent freshwater lakes** (over 8 ha); includes large oxbow lakes.
P -- **Seasonal/intermittent freshwater lakes** (over 8 ha); includes floodplain lakes.
Q -- **Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes**.
R -- **Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline lakes and flats**.
Sp -- **Permanent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools**.
Ss -- **Seasonal/intermittent saline/brackish/alkaline marshes/pools**.
Tp -- **Permanent freshwater marshes/pools**; ponds (below 8 ha), marshes and swamps on inorganic soils; with emergent vegetation water-logged for at least most of the growing season.
Ts -- **Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools** on inorganic soil; includes sloughs, potholes, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes.
U -- **Non-forested peatlands**; includes shrub or open bogs, swamps, fens.
Va -- **Alpine wetlands**; includes alpine meadows, temporary waters from snowmelt.
Vt -- **Tundra wetlands**; includes tundra pools, temporary waters from snowmelt.

W -- **Shrub-dominated wetlands**; Shrub swamps, shrub-dominated freshwater marsh, shrub carr, alder thicket; on inorganic soils.
Xf -- **Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands**; includes freshwater swamp forest, seasonally flooded forest, wooded swamps; on inorganic soils.
Xp -- **Forested peatlands**; peatswamp forest.
Y -- **Freshwater springs; oases**.
Zg -- **Geothermal wetlands**
Zk -- **Subterranean karst and cave hydrological systems**.

Note : "**floodplain**" is a broad term used to refer to one or more wetland types, which may include examples from the R, Ss, Ts, W, Xf, Xp, or other wetland types. Some examples of floodplain wetlands are seasonally inundated grassland (including natural wet meadows), shrublands, woodlands and forest. Floodplain wetlands are not listed as a specific wetland type herein.

"**Man-made**" **wetlands**

1 -- **Aquaculture** (e.g., fish/shrimp) **ponds**
2 -- **Ponds**; includes farm ponds, stock ponds, small tanks; (generally below 8 ha).
3 -- **Irrigated land**; includes irrigation channels and rice fields.
4 -- **Seasonally flooded agricultural land**.*
5 -- **Salt exploitation sites**; salt pans, salines, etc.
6 -- **Water storage areas**; reservoirs/barrages/dams/impoundments; (generally over 8 ha).
7 -- **Excavations**; gravel/brick/clay pits; borrow pits, mining pools.
8 -- **Wastewater treatment areas**; sewage farms, settling ponds, oxidation basins, etc.
9 -- **Canals and** drainage **channels**, ditches.

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* To include intensively managed or grazed wet meadow or pasture.