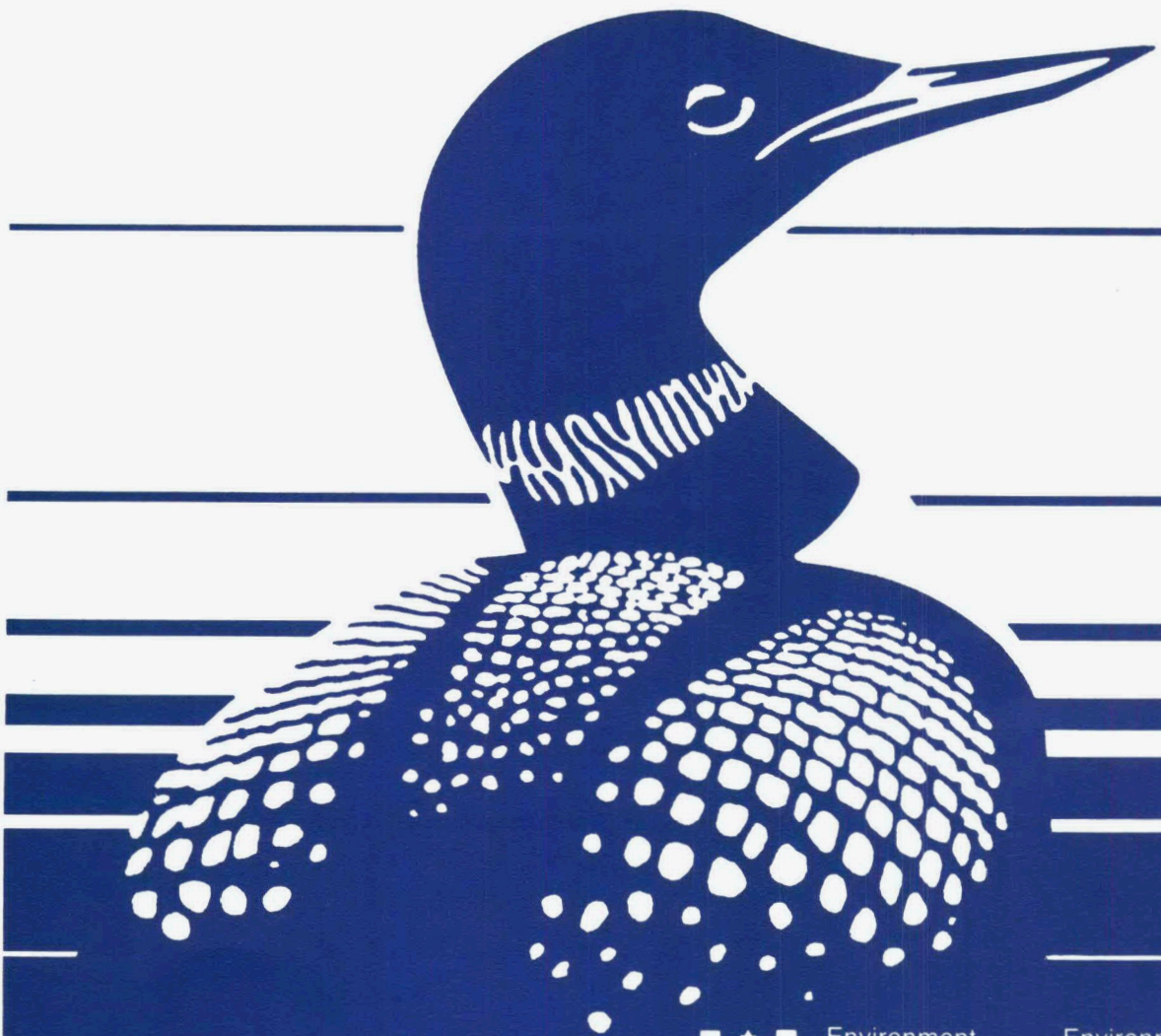


Canada

**STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF THE CANADIAN
RAMSAR PROGRAM**



*North American Wetlands
Conservation Council (Canada)*



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada

Canadian Wildlife
Service

Service canadien
de la faune

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This document, *Strategic Overview of the Canadian Ramsar Program*, has been produced as a discussion paper for Ramsar site managers and decision makers involved in the implementation of the Ramsar Convention within Canadian jurisdictions. The paper provides a general overview of the development, current status and opportunities for the future direction of the Ramsar program in Canada. Comments and suggestions on the content of this paper are welcome at the address below.

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***STRATEGIC OVERVIEW OF THE CANADIAN
RAMSAR PROGRAM***

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September 1996

**Habitat Conservation Division
Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment Canada**

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THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, known as the "Ramsar Convention", is a global conservation instrument that promotes the protection and wise use of wetland ecosystems that are important to flora and fauna as well as to a major segment of the World's population. The Convention has been in effect since 1971 and was named after the city in Iran where it was first signed. As of July 1996, 93 nations are Ramsar Convention Contracting Parties, making the Convention one of the most widely adopted conservation treaties in the World.

The Convention requires Contracting Parties to identify and nominate *Wetlands of International Importance* based on criteria developed by the Convention. As of July 1996, 808 wetland sites covering over 54 million hectares (ha) have been designated around the World. By signing the Convention Contracting Parties have agreed to the following conditions:

- (1) maintain the ecological character of their designated Ramsar sites;
- (2) report to the Convention on changes in the ecological character of sites;
- (3) secure these sites for long-term conservation through appropriate regulatory or land use management procedures;
- (4) develop management plans for the sites; and
- (5) implement wetland wise use principles in national land and water use programs and policies.

The Convention focuses on the development of sustainable use of wetland resources by people through its *Wise Use Guidelines* which were established in 1990. To accomplish this, the Convention facilitates the application of research and knowledge through international scientific panels. The Convention also administers the Small Grants Fund, a fund that promotes wetland conservation projects as well as the identification and protection of wetlands around the World. The Convention adopted a *1997-2002 Strategic Plan* in March 1996 charting a six-year course for its activities.

Opportunity No. 1: *The Government of Canada in cooperation with the provincial and territorial governments, should continue to play an active role in promoting the objectives of the Ramsar Convention internationally through advice and program assistance to other Contracting Parties.*

RAMSAR IN NORTH AMERICA

North America encompasses 16% of the World's land and freshwater surface area, including an estimated wetland area of 185 million ha. Of this total wetland area, over 14.9 million ha, or about eight percent of the continent's wetlands, are designated as "Wetlands of International Importance" under the Ramsar Convention. In North America, the designated area is comprised of 52 sites, 33 in Canada, 15 in the United States and four in Mexico.

Canada, Mexico and the United States are active partners in the Ramsar Convention, with the North American Ramsar region encompassing these three nations. Many of the North American Ramsar sites are focus areas of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). Examples within NAWMP's Canadian Habitat Joint Venture program are Quill Lakes in Saskatchewan, Lake Saint Francis in Ontario, and Malpeque Bay in Prince Edward Island. Other Ramsar sites, such as the Queen Maud Gulf and Rasmussen Lowlands in Canada's Northwest Territories, are focus areas for the Arctic Goose Joint Venture, another NAWMP program. The NAWMP and Ramsar Convention are complementary examples of international cooperation working to conserve wetlands. The three nations' joint delivery of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan is one of the continent's most successful international environmental initiatives. It is also an example of the delivery of the Wise Use Principles promoted by the Ramsar Convention.

Opportunity No. 2: Canada, in cooperation with the other North American Ramsar partners (Mexico and the United States), should expand the use of the Ramsar regional framework to promote improved management of continental wetland ecosystems and dependent wildlife populations as well as implement the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

RAMSAR IN CANADA

Canada acceded to the Ramsar Convention in 1981 and its subsequent amendments, the 1982 Paris Protocol and the 1987 Regina Amendments. With its accession, the Government of Canada committed itself to the implementation of the objectives and obligations associated with this international wetland conservation treaty. As a result of that commitment, 33 Ramsar sites have been designated across Canada; they are distributed throughout Canada's provinces and territories. These Canadian sites cover over 13 million ha of wetlands, about 10% of the total wetland area estimated to exist in the nation (National Wetlands Working Group 1988). Canada's contribution represents almost 25% of the wetland area designated world-wide under the Convention to date.

Guidance to Contracting Parties on the development of management plans for Ramsar sites has been the subject of several specific documents produced as a result of the meetings at the Conference of the Contracting Parties. A report entitled *Management*

of *Canadian Ramsar Sites* (Rubec 1994) describes the guidance provided by the Convention and summarizes the status of management and management plans for the Ramsar sites in Canada. A *Procedures Manual* for the nomination and designation of Canadian Ramsar sites has also been published (Environment Canada 1994). This publication discusses Canada's guidelines and procedures for nominating sites to the *List of Wetlands of International Importance* and summarizes the adopted international criteria for determining site eligibility. A national Ramsar information booklet entitled *Canada and the Ramsar Convention* has also been published (Environment Canada 1995).

CANADA'S RAMSAR DATABASE

A national Ramsar database, derived from the original and updated, standardized site descriptions of Canada's Ramsar sites was created in August 1996 by the Habitat Conservation Division of the Canadian Wildlife Service. Information on the location (within provinces, territories, ecozones and wetland regions), size, major ecological features, selection criteria, ownership and other information was transferred into a Microsoft Access database file. Five interrelated tables were created: Administration, Classification, Ecological Information, Landcover and Activities, and Tenure. The fields within all these five tables are listed in Appendix 1.

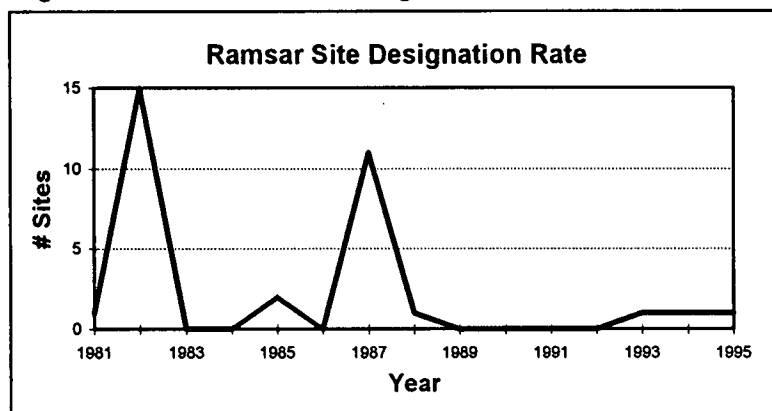
A wide variety of analyses may be performed with this database, a selection of which have been completed and discussed in this report. Although there are a few gaps in the database that will eventually be completed, it is a valuable data set on the distribution and representativeness of Canada's current Ramsar Site Network. Copies of the Ramsar database are available to those who are interested.

DISTRIBUTION OF CANADA'S RAMSAR SITES

Canada has not yet defined a systematic approach to the designation of its Ramsar sites. To date, sites have been predominantly chosen on the basis of their importance to waterfowl and migratory bird populations as well as their protected area status. Seventy-five percent of Canada's designated Ramsar sites' land area is on federally protected lands and waters such as in national wildlife areas, national parks and migratory bird sanctuaries. A broader basis of Canada's landscape for future Ramsar Sites should be encouraged, drawing upon both its ecological and jurisdictional characteristics.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the first Ramsar site in Canada was designated in 1981. The largest number of Ramsar site nominations occurred in 1982 and 1987 when 15 sites (10.5 million ha) and 11 sites (2.5 million ha) were nominated respectively. During these two years, the 26 designated sites represent 80% of the total number and 99% of the total area of Canadian Ramsar sites nominated to date. The progress made in this period was a result of a concerted cooperative effort by federal and provincial/territorial wildlife agencies to fulfil a national commitment that has ensured the establishment of Ramsar sites in all political jurisdictions.

Figure 1. Ramsar Site Designation Rate



Jurisdictional Distribution

By 1988, Ramsar sites had been designated in all Canadian provinces and territories. Today, with 59% of the national total, the Northwest Territories possess the largest percentage of land area designated under the Ramsar Convention, almost 7.7 million hectares. Ontario has the largest number of Ramsar sites; seven representing a total of almost 2.5 million hectares. The distribution of Canada's sites by province is summarized in Table 1.

Ecozonal and Ecoregional Distribution

Ecozones are large ecosystem units that contain distinctive sets of non-living and living resources that are ecologically related as a system (Wiken 1986). Ecoregions are subdivisions of these ecozones, representing a much smaller, more homogeneous ecosystem. As of 1996, Ramsar sites are present in 12 of Canada's 15 ecozones and 25 of the 217 ecoregions in Canada. The ecoregion framework used for this analysis was developed by Wiken *et al.* (1992) and the Ecological Stratification Working Group (1996).

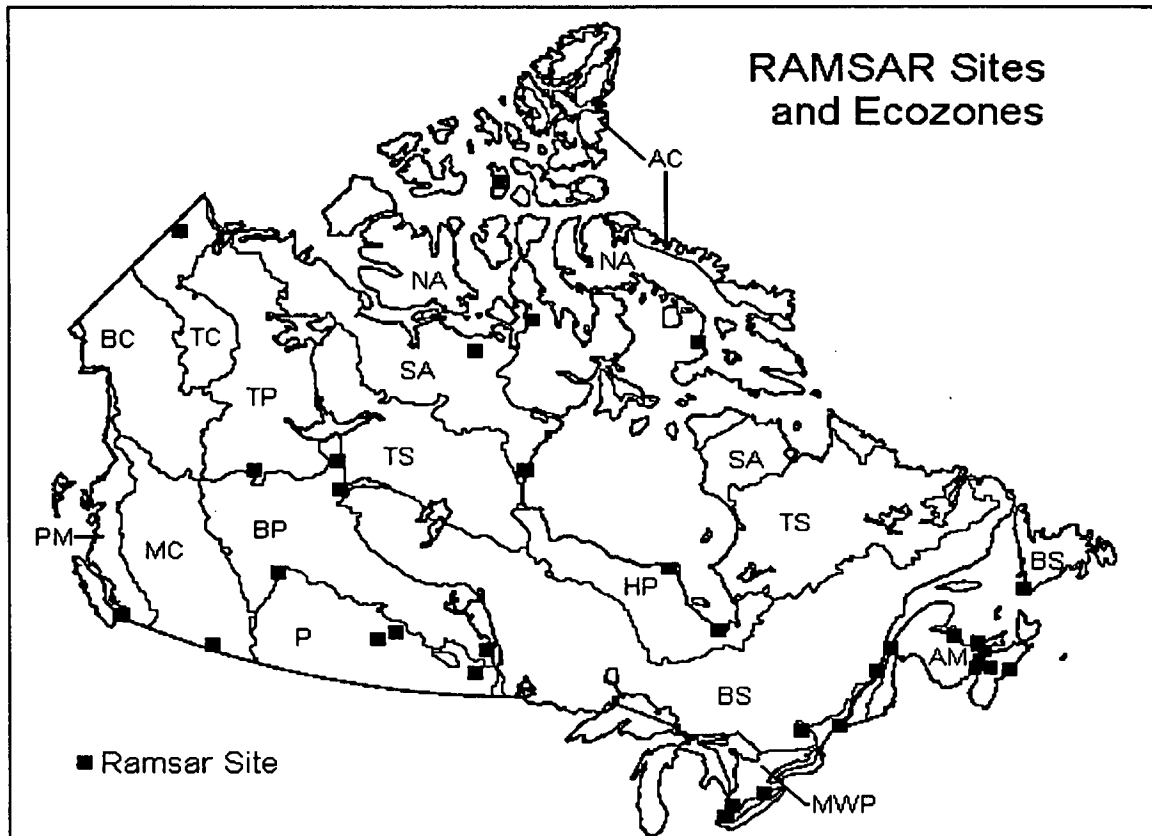
Figure 2 illustrates the spatial distribution of the current Ramsar Site Network within an ecozonal framework. The Southern Arctic ecozone (SA) has the largest total area of land designated under the Ramsar Convention, largely due to Queen Maud Gulf, the World's largest Ramsar site. Some 48% of Canada's total Ramsar designated area is encompassed in this site. The Montane Cordillera (MC) and the Boreal Plains (BP) ecozones include 19% and 16% of the total Ramsar area respectively.

Table 1. Distribution of Canada's Ramsar Site Network

PROVINCE / TERRITORY	RAMSAR SITE NAME	AREA (ha)	% OF TOTAL
Alberta	Beaverhill Lake	18 050	15.95
	Hay-Zama Lakes	50 000	
	Peace-Athabasca Delta	321 300	
	Whooping Crane Summer Range*	1 689 500	
British Columbia	Alaksen	586	0.06
	Creston Valley	6 970	
Manitoba	Oak Hammock Marsh	3 600	0.20
	Delta Marsh	23 000	
New Brunswick	Mary's Point	1 200	0.14
	Shepody Bay	12 200	
	Tabusintac River Estuary and Lagoon	4 382	
Newfoundland	Grand Codroy Estuary	925	0.01
Northwest Territories	Dewey Soper	815 900	59.01
	McConnell River	32 800	
	Polar Bear Pass	262 400	
	Queen Maud Gulf	6 278 200	
	Rasmussen Lowlands	300 000	
Nova Scotia	Chignecto	1 020	0.22
	Musquodoboit Harbour Outer Estuary	1 925	
	Southern Bight-Minas Basin	26 800	
Ontario	Long Point	13 730	18.82
	Mer Bleue	3 100	
	Point Pelee	1 564	
	Polar Bear Provincial Park	2 408 700	
	Southern James Bay*	25 290	
	St. Clair	244	
Prince Edward Island	Malpeque Bay	24 440	0.19
Quebec	Baie de L'Isle Verte	2 028	0.05
	Cap Tourmente	2 398	
	Lake Saint Francis	2 214	
Saskatchewan	Last Mountain Lake	15 602	0.61
	Quill Lakes	63 500	
Yukon	Old Crow Flats	617 000	4.74
TOTAL: 13 030 568 ha			

*Sites that lie partly in the Northwest Territories.

Figure 2. Ramsar Site Network within Canada's Ecozones

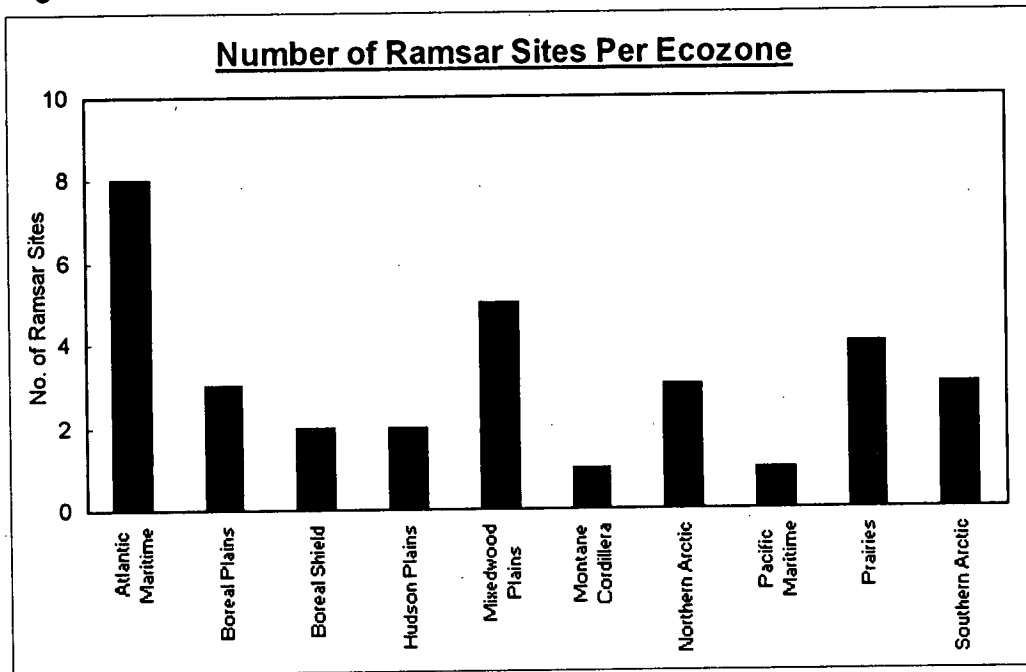


Legend:

AC	Arctic Cordillera	MWP	Mixedwood Plains
AM	Atlantic Maritime	NA	Northern Arctic
BC	Boreal Cordillera	P	Prairies
BP	Boreal Plains	PM	Pacific Maritime
BS	Boreal Shield	SA	Southern Arctic
HP	Hudson Plains	TC	Taiga Cordillera
MC	Montane Cordillera	TP	Taiga Plains
		TS	Taiga Shield

In terms of the number of sites per ecozone, Figure 3 shows that the Atlantic Maritime (AM), Mixedwood Plains (MWP) and Prairie (P) ecozones contain the most number of sites with eight, five and four respectively. It should be noted, however, that the combined total area of all these sites is less than two percent of the total Ramsar site area. Ecozones with only one Ramsar site, namely the Montane Cordillera (MC), Pacific Maritime (PM), Taiga Cordillera (TC) and Taiga Plains (TP) could be target areas for future Ramsar sites. No Ramsar sites are present in three ecozones, the Arctic Cordillera (AC), Taiga Shield (TS) and Boreal Cordillera (BC). All of these ecozones should be incorporated into the future Ramsar site network to ensure a general ecological representation of all wetlands in Canada's landscape.

Figure 3. Number of Ramsar Sites Per Ecozone



Ecoregions, a much more detailed ecological unit than ecozones, are expectantly less represented by Canada's current Ramsar Site Network. Less than 12% of Canada's ecoregions include designated Ramsar sites. Ecoregions 123, 132, 135, 136, 156 and 162 (as outlined by the Ecological Stratification Working Group 1996) each have at least two Ramsar sites and would not necessarily be focus areas for future site nominations. Although Canada could concentrate its efforts on achieving full ecozonal distribution, wetland sites in ecoregions not already represented should also be favoured.

Wetland Regions Distribution

The *Wetland Regions of Canada*, identified as a primary framework for implementing the goals and strategies of *The Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation* (Government of Canada 1991) would serve as a framework for implementing Ramsar goals equally as well as ecozones. One of the major considerations in developing the Policy was its delivery of Canada's commitments to the Ramsar Convention. Provincial wetland policies and programs also contribute to the delivery of these commitments.

Table 2 presents a summary of the distribution of Canadian Ramsar sites in terms of the *Wetland Regions of Canada* framework (National Wetlands Working Group 1986). This framework is a useful basis for an ecological gap analysis of the Ramsar Site Network's representativeness of Canada's diverse wetland forms. Of particular note should be the wetland regions that have no representative wetlands as well as those with only one. Only 15 of Canada's 39 wetland regions and subregions include Ramsar sites.

Table 2. Ramsar Distribution within Wetland Region Framework

No. of Sites	Wetland Region*
0	BAe, BA _g , BA _i , BA _n , BA _o , BHh, BMh, BMt, MCc, MCn, MCs, ME, Mlc, Mln, Mls, MRc, MRn, MRs, OA, OPn, OPs, PI, SAc, SAo
1	AH, AL, BA _c , BM _c , TP
2	BL, PCa, PCg, SH, SL
3	AM, BA _m , BHc
4	BA _a
5 (or more)	TE (6)

* Wetland Regions (National Wetlands Working Group 1986).

Legend. Canadian Wetland Regions*

A Arctic	BM Mid-Boreal	O Oceanic
AH High Arctic	BM _c Continental	OA Atlantic Oceanic
AL Low Arctic	BM _h Humid	OP Pacific Oceanic
AM Mid-Arctic	BM _t Transitional	OP _n North Coast
BA Atlantic Boreal	MC Coastal Mountain	OP _s South Coast
BA _a Acadian	MC _n North	PC Continental Prairie
BA _c Coastal	MC _c Central	PC _a Aspen Parkland
BA _e Eastern	MC _s South	PC _g Grassland
BA _g Gulf	ME Eastern Mountains	PI Intermountain Prairie
BA _i Interior	MI Interior Mountains	S Subarctic Arctic
BA _m Maritime	Mln North	SH High Subarctic
BA _n Northern	Mlc Central	SL Low Subarctic
BA _o Oceanic	Mls South	SA Atlantic Subarctic
BH High Boreal	MR Rocky Mountains	SA _c Coastal
BH _c Continental	MR _n Northern	SA _o Oceanic
BH _h Humid	MR _c Central	TE Eastern Temperate
BL Low Arctic	MR _s Southern	TP Pacific Temperate

* Wetland Regions (National Wetlands Working Group 1986).

WETLAND CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS

The *Canadian Wetland Classification System* developed by the National Wetlands Working Group (1987), classifies wetlands on the basis of their biotic and abiotic environment (flora, fauna, peat, hydrology, water quality, climate, bedrock, soil and basin morphology). The five main wetland classes (bog, fen, marsh, swamp and shallow open water) are further classified into 70 wetland forms. An analysis of the distribution of Canada's wetlands in the Ramsar Site Network indicates that all five of the wetland classes are represented, but all Canadian wetland forms are not. Of the 70 wetland forms present in Canada, 31 are represented within the Ramsar Site Network, 14 of which are listed as the dominant wetland forms on individual Ramsar sites. Table 3 lists the wetland forms as described by the *Canadian Wetland Classification System*, the number of Ramsar sites including examples of that wetland form and the frequency of each form's dominance in the

Ramsar Site Network. There are several wetland forms widely represented in Canada's Network. Coastal marsh, estuarine shallow water, shallow basin water, shore water and tidal water wetland forms are each found in 10 or more Ramsar sites in Canada.

Opportunity No. 3: *Additional Wetlands of International Importance should be identified and nominated in poorly represented wetland regions and subregions, or ecozones and ecoregions, for Canada's network of Ramsar sites.*

Opportunity No. 4: *Nomination priority should be given to wetland forms not yet represented as well as those represented in only one Ramsar site.*

Selection Criteria

Wetlands are selected for the *List of Wetlands of International Importance* due to their international importance established on the basis of ecological, botanical, zoological, hydrological, fisheries and human use criteria. Sites can be nominated based on their representativeness of rare or unusual wetland types in a biogeographical region or their being particularly good examples of wetlands in such a region. Selection criteria have been established by the Ramsar Convention and are summarized in the *Ramsar Procedures Manual* (Environment Canada 1994).

Opportunity No. 5: *In addition to sites supporting internationally important migratory species, Canadian Ramsar sites should be nominated focusing on the Ramsar criteria recognizing Canadian wetlands that are: examples of wetlands characteristic of Canada; common wetland types in wetland regions or ecozones; examples of wetlands that serve major roles in the hydrological, biological and ecological functioning of major river basin or coastal systems in Canada; and rare or unusual wetland types in these wetland regions.*

MANAGEMENT OF CANADIAN RAMSAR SITES

As illustrated in Figure 4, the current distribution of land tenure and management responsibility of Canadian Ramsar sites is heavily weighted on federal agencies. While this may create the impression that Ramsar is primarily a federal program in Canada, it must be recognized that this stems from the history of designation of sites to date. The majority of areas and sites designated thus far have been on federal land, largely in the northern territories. However, Ramsar sites do include lands owned by all provinces and territories as well as private groups including the First Nations community.

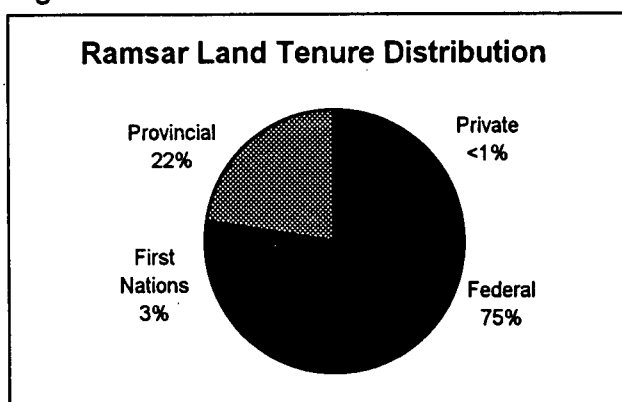
Table 3. Wetland Forms Represented in Canada's Ramsar Network¹

WETLAND FORM	# SITES		WETLAND FORM	# SITES	
	Pres.	Dom.		Pres.	Dom.
BOG			MARSH		
Atlantic Plateau Bog	0	-	Active Delta Marsh	4	2
Basin Bog	0	-	Channel Marsh	1	-
Blanket Bog	0	-	Coastal High Marsh	11	4
Collapse Scar Bog	0	-	Coastal Low Marsh	9	3
Domed Bog	7	1	Estuarine High Marsh	0	-
Flat Bog	0	-	Estuarine Low Marsh	1	1
Floating Bog	0	-	Floodplain Marsh	6	-
Lowland Polygon Bog	5	2	Inactive Delta Marsh	0	-
Mound Bog	0	-	Kettle Marsh	1	-
Northern Plateau Bog	0	-	Seepage Track Marsh	0	-
Palsa Bog	1	-	Shallow Basin Marsh	3	-
Peat Mound Bog	0	-	Shore Marsh	9	7
Peat Plateau Bog	3	2	Stream Marsh	2	-
Polygonal Peat Plateau Bog	0	-	Terminal Basin Marsh	2	-
Shore Bog	0	-	Tidal Freshwater Marsh	2	-
Slope Bog	0	-	SWAMP		
String Bog	0	-	Basin Swamp	2	-
Veneer Bog	0	-	Flat Swamp	0	-
FEN			Floodplain Swamp	5	1
Atlantic Ribbed Fen	0	-	Peat Margin Swamp	1	-
Basin Fen	1	-	Shore Swamp	8	-
Channel Fen	1	-	Spring Swamp	0	-
Collapse Scar Fen	0	-	Stream Swamp	0	-
Feather Fen	0	-	SHALLOW OPEN WATER		
Floating Fen	1	-	Channel Water	1	-
Horizontal Fen	0	-	Delta Water	4	-
Ladder Fen	0	-	Estuarine Water	11	3
Lowland Polygon Fen	1	-	Kettle Water	2	-
Net Fen	0	-	Non-tidal Water	5	-
Northern Ribbed Fen	1	-	Oxbow Water	0	-
Palsa Fen	0	-	Shallow Basin Water	19	1
Shore Fen	1	1	Shore Water	16	1
Slope Fen	0	-	Stream Water	3	-
Snowpatch Fen	1	-	Terminal Basin Water	0	-
Spring Fen	0	-	Thermokarst Water	1	-
Stream Fen	1	-	Tidal Water	12	2
			Tundra Pool Water	5	2
			Marine Waters ²	9	-

¹Forms as defined in National Wetland's Working Group (1987, 1988).

²"Marine Waters" are recognized as a wetland category by the Ramsar Convention and include waters out to 6 m depth at low tide.

Figure 4. Ramsar Land Tenure Distribution



In terms of the number of sites, almost half of the 33 sites designated to date in Canada are under provincial and non-government jurisdiction, yet these sites represent only about 25% of the total Ramsar area designated thus far. The Government of Canada has nominated at least 75% of the total Ramsar Site area, three times the combined designated wetland area under provincial, territorial, private and First Nations jurisdiction.

The federal government manages less than 30% of the wetlands of the nation, yet as noted above, it carries the greatest responsibility for Ramsar in Canada. Hence, to encourage broader representation of the full range of Canadian wetland types found in other jurisdictions, the gaps in the existing Ramsar Network should be examined. The national network of Ramsar sites could appropriately include a selection of new sites chosen from other (i.e. non-federal) jurisdictions and by groups with the dominant management authority and tenure of Canada's wetlands.

Despite the presence of Ramsar sites within each of Canada's provinces and territories, not all provincial governments have been actively involved in the management of the network. However, nomination of additional sites by provincial and non-government agencies is growing. Recent nominations in New Brunswick and British Columbia have been for sites entirely under provincial jurisdiction.

Opportunity No. 6: *Notwithstanding the significant lead role the federal government has taken in Ramsar to date in Canada, provincial, territorial, native and non-government agencies should represent the major "on-the-ground" initiators of a significant portion of the future Ramsar site designations and program implementation in Canada.*

Many Canadian Ramsar sites have management responsibilities shared between several co-operating parties. Land tenure or management responsibility, in whole or in part, for Canada's 33 Ramsar sites is outlined in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

Table 4. Provincial and Territorial Government Agencies

AGENCY	SITE NAME
Alberta Department of Environmental Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beaverhill Lake • Hay-Zama Lakes • Peace-Athabasca Delta
British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area
Long Point Region Conservation Authority (Ontario)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Point
Manitoba Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Marsh • Oak Hammock Marsh
New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary's Point • Shepody Bay • Tabusintac River Estuary and Lagoon
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Codroy Estuary
Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Musquodoboit Harbour Outer Estuary • Southern Bight - Minas Basin
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Point • Polar Bear Provincial Park • Southern James Bay Migratory Bird Sanctuaries
Prince Edward Island Department of Environmental Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malpeque Bay
Quebec Ministry of Environment and Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baie de L'Isle Verte
Saskatchewan Department of Environment and Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quill Lakes
Yukon Renewable Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Crow Flats

Table 5. Non-Government Agencies

ORGANIZATION	PROV.	SITE NAME
Delta Waterfowl Foundation	MB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Marsh
Ducks Unlimited Canada	MB BC SK ON QB NB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Marsh • Oak Hammock Marsh • Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area • Quill Lakes • St. Clair National Wildlife Area • Long Point • Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area • Mary's Point • Shepody Bay
Island Nature Trust	PEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malpeque Bay
Lennox Island First Nation	PEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malpeque Bay
Long Point Company	ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long Point
Nunavut Agreement	NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McConnell River Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Dewey Soper Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Queen Maud Gulf Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Rasmussen Lowlands
Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation	YK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Crow Flats
Other Private Landowners	MB ON PEI NS NB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Marsh • Long Point • Malpeque Bay • Southern Bight - Minas Basin • Tabusintac Lagoon and River Estuary • Shepody Bay

Table 6. Federal Government Agencies

AGENCY	PROV.	SITE NAME	
Canadian Wildlife Service	BC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaksen National Wildlife Area • Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area 	
	SK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area 	
	ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Clair National Wildlife Area • Long Point National Wildlife Area 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern James Bay Migratory Bird Sanctuaries (also in NWT) 	
	QB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baie de l'Isle-Verte National Wildlife Area • Cap Tourmente National Wildlife Area • Lake Saint Francis National Wildlife Area 	
	NB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary's Point • Shepody Bay 	
	NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chignecto National Wildlife Area • Southern Bight - Minas Basin 	
	NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dewey Soper Migratory Bird Sanctuary • McConnell River Migratory Bird Sanctuary • Polar Bear Pass National Wildlife Area • Queen Maud Gulf Migratory Bird Sanctuary 	
	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada	NWT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rasmussen Lowlands • Whooping Crane Summer Range
		YK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Crow Flats
National Capital Commission	ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mer Bleue 	
Parks Canada	ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point Pelee National Park 	
	AB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace-Athabasca Delta 	
	YK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whooping Crane Summer Range (also in NWT) • Old Crow Flats 	

Opportunity # 7: Communications to Ramsar partners in Canada should highlight the broad base of participation in the delivery of national Ramsar initiatives, as well as the mix of federal, non-federal government and non-government involvement.

Responsible Authorities for Ramsar in Canada

The federal Minister of the Environment has been delegated authority by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for the administration of the Ramsar Convention's responsibilities. The designated lead agency for the implementation of the Convention in Canada is the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada.

The Minister of the Environment has the following Ramsar responsibilities:

- Approving the nomination of Canadian sites as *Wetlands of International Importance* on behalf of federal, provincial, and territorial governments and non-government interests.

- Nominating, for the consideration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian Delegations to Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties which are held every three years.
- Facilitating interaction and development of agreements among Ramsar Contracting Parties to promote wetland conservation consistent with Canada's international strategy as articulated in *The Federal Policy on Wetland Conservation*.

The following Ramsar activities are delegated to Environment Canada officials:

- The Director of the Wildlife Conservation Branch, Canadian Wildlife Service, acts as the senior government official for all matters related to Canada's participation in the Ramsar Convention and for administering its implementation within Canada.
- The Director of the Wildlife Conservation Branch, Canadian Wildlife Service, is the current alternative representative for the North American Region on the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention for the 1997-1999 Triennium.

Considerations for a National Ramsar Committee for Canada

A variety of deliberations at the Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention have dealt with national Ramsar committees. Recommendation C.5.7 adopted in 1993 encourages Contracting Parties to establish national Ramsar committees according to the needs of each nation. The Convention felt that national Ramsar committees can:

- provide a focus at the national level for implementation of the Convention, serving to encourage input from both governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- establish a mechanism to facilitate reporting to the Convention on national activities;
- facilitate responses to requests for information by the Ramsar Bureau and other agencies.

To date, Canada has coordinated the nation's Ramsar initiatives through the Canadian Wildlife Service, and since 1990, the Canadian Ramsar Network in cooperation with the Secretariat to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada). This Network has acted to distribute Ramsar newsletters and publications as well as to gather information on the implementation of Ramsar goals within Canada. The formalizing of a national Ramsar Committee could serve to strengthen this network and provide continuity for participating agencies.

The creation of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCC)(Canada) in 1990 has facilitated coordination of wetland conservation and policy initiatives across Canada. The NAWCC (Canada) through its Secretariat has been mandated by the Minister of Environment to promote coordination of Canadian involvement in international wetland conservation initiatives. As most parties currently represented on the NAWCC (Canada) also hold management responsibility for Ramsar sites in Canada, there exists a natural opportunity for the NAWCC (Canada) to oversee a Canadian Ramsar Committee. A proposed terms of reference for this committee is presented in Appendix 2.

In consultation with the Canadian Wildlife Service, the NAWCC (Canada) would be well placed to provide timely and effective coordination of a Canadian Ramsar Committee and program. This would be established to complement and assist in the delivery of Canada's international obligations and responsibilities under the Convention. Such a committee, if constituted as a subcommittee of the NAWCC (Canada), would receive logistical support from the NAWCC (Canada) Secretariat and Environment Canada.

Opportunity No. 8: A Canadian Ramsar Committee should be established as a subcommittee of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada), chaired by the Director of Wildlife Conservation, Canadian Wildlife Service.

CONCLUSIONS

The Canadian Ramsar program and its network of 33 Ramsar sites has evolved progressively in Canada over the 1981 to 1996 period. This Network now involves many co-operating partners traversing all the provincial and territorial jurisdictions of Canada. It also represents a wide array of government and non-government interests.

The future direction of the delivery of the goals of the Ramsar Convention and Canada's commitments to this Convention can be well served by formalizing a Canadian Ramsar Committee in the near future, building upon the now well established Canadian Ramsar Network. This national committee could be organized under the leadership of the Canadian Wildlife Service and supported by the Secretariat to the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada).

Eight opportunities are identified in this paper to facilitate the future activities of the Ramsar program in Canada and create a National Ramsar Committee. These opportunities are summarized in Appendix 3.

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APPENDIX 1: Ramsar Database Description

The following is a listing of all the tables contained in the Ramsar database and their respective fields. Common fields (i.e. Reference Number) make the tables interrelated. The database is presently in Microsoft Access format. Copies of the Ramsar database are available to those who are interested.

ADMINISTRATION	CLASSIFICATION	ECOLOGICAL INFORMATION	LANDCOVER AND ACTIVITIES	TENURE
Reference Number	Reference Number	Reference Number	Reference Number	Reference Number
Name	Name	Name	Name	Name
Province	Total Area	Inclusion Criteria	Site Activities	Province
Geographical Region	Wetland Region	Application Criteria	Site Adverse Activities	Tenure - Federal
Lat. / Long.	Ramsar Wetland Types	Social Values	Total Area	Tenure - Provincial
Ecozone	Dominant Ramsar Wetland Type	Other Recorded Values	Land Cover (LC) - Wetland	Tenure - First Nations
Ecoregion				Tenure - Private
Wetland Region	Area of Dominant Ramsar Wetland Type	No. Recorded Invasive Plants	LC - Big Trees	Adjacent Tenure
Date Established			LC - Small Trees	
Total Area	Canadian Wetland Forms Represented	No. Recorded Fauna at Risk	LC - Crops	
Site Tenure			LC - Grass	
Contact Name	Dominant Canadian Wetland Form	No. Recorded Flora at Risk	LC - Moss	
Contact Number			LC - Rock	
Other Protection Status	Area of Dominant Canadian Wetland Form	Total No. Species at Risk	LC - Unconsolidated Material	
Mgmt. Plan Status			LC - Structures	
			LC - Water	
			LC - Ice	

APPENDIX 2: Potential Structure and Activities of a Canadian Ramsar Committee

Objectives:

The following objectives of a Canadian Ramsar Committee should be considered:

1. To foster the establishment of an effective set of program initiatives by Canadian jurisdictions that deliver Canadian commitment to the goals of the Ramsar Convention.
2. To establish and review every three years a strategic course of action for the delivery of the goals and commitments of the Ramsar Convention in Canada.

Organization:

- Act as subcommittee of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada) (NAWCC- Canada).
- Be chaired by the Director of Wildlife Conservation, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS).
- Receive logistical support from the NAWCC (Canada) Secretariat and CWS.

Activities:

A Canadian Ramsar Committee would establish a multi-year work plan including the following range of activities:

(1) Communication: Ensuring effective communication on the Ramsar program by:

- (a) **maintenance** of a comprehensive Canadian mailing and contact network of federal, provincial, territorial, academic and non-government managers, researchers and scientists (the "Canadian Ramsar Network") currently involved with and/or interested in the Ramsar Convention and Canadian Ramsar sites.
- (b) **distribution** of publications, newsletters and announcements from the Ramsar Bureau in Switzerland and other international wetland conservation agencies to Canadian interests.
- (c) **development and publication** of Canadian Ramsar Network working reports providing up-to-date information and advice on the management of Canadian Ramsar sites and implementation of Ramsar goals in Canada.
- (d) **sponsorship** of regional workshops to sensitize Canadian environmental and natural resources managers and agencies on the role and activities of the Ramsar Convention in Canada.
- (e) **promotion** of the value of the Ramsar Convention as a complementary tool to other international, national and regional wetland policy and management programs such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

(2) Network Responsibilities: Facilitating effective and timely national responses to requirements of the Ramsar Convention by synthesizing information in support of Canada's international commitments to the Convention by:

- (a) **expansion** of the role of the Canadian Ramsar Network to seek required information on sites, monitoring procedures, and advice on preparation of Canadian positions.
- (b) **publication** of periodic national reports on the status of Canadian wetland conservation programs, Ramsar sites and other relevant activities in consultation with the Canadian Ramsar Network for circulation to Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention.
- (c) **contribution** of Canadian information in cooperation with Mexico and the United States to North America Ramsar Region reports on the current status of wetland conservation programs, Ramsar sites and other relevant activities for circulation to Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention.
- (d) **facilitating** wider participation of Canadian interests in the Canadian delegations to Meetings of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention.
- (e) **promotion** of federal and provincial/territorial wetland policy initiatives that foster delivery of the commitments of the Ramsar Convention's Wise Use Principles.

(3) Designation of Canadian Ramsar Sites: Fostering the expansion of the number of Canadian Ramsar sites from the current network of sites designated by:

- (a) **distribution** of the report, *Nomination and Listing of Wetlands of International Importance in Canada: Procedures Manual* and the booklet *Canada and the Ramsar Convention*, to agencies considering nominating wetland sites in Canada for designation under the Convention.
- (b) **promotion** of the nomination of more Ramsar sites in Canada particularly on non-federal lands and waters and those of private and aboriginal tenure and under-represented wetland forms.
- (c) **identification** of internationally-important wetlands representative of all of the wetland regions or ecozones in Canada, particularly in wetland regions or ecozones where no Ramsar sites are currently designated.
- (d) **monitoring** of a list of potential Canadian Ramsar sites and providing assistance to bring forward nominations wherever possible.

APPENDIX 3: Summary of Opportunities

Opportunity No. 1:

The Government of Canada in cooperation with the provincial and territorial governments, should continue to play an active role in promoting the objectives of the Ramsar Convention internationally through advice and program assistance to other Contracting Parties.

Opportunity No. 2:

Canada, in cooperation with the other North American Ramsar partners (Mexico and the United States), should expand the use of the Ramsar regional framework to promote improved management of continental wetland ecosystems and dependent wildlife populations as well as implement the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

Opportunity No. 3:

Additional Wetlands of International Importance should be identified and nominated in poorly represented wetland regions and subregions, or ecozones and ecoregions, for Canada's network of Ramsar sites.

Opportunity No. 4:

Nomination priority should be given to wetland forms not yet represented as well as those represented in only one Ramsar site.

Opportunity No. 5:

In addition to sites supporting internationally important migratory species, Canadian Ramsar sites should be nominated focusing on the Ramsar criteria recognizing Canadian wetlands that are: examples of wetlands characteristic of Canada; common wetland types in wetland regions or ecozones; examples of wetlands that serve major roles in the hydrological, biological and ecological functioning of major river basin or coastal systems in Canada; and rare or unusual wetland types in these wetland regions.

Opportunity No. 6:

Notwithstanding the significant lead role the federal government has taken in Ramsar to date in Canada, provincial, territorial, native and non-government agencies should represent the major "on-the-ground" initiators of a significant portion of the future Ramsar site designations and program implementation in Canada.

Opportunity No. 7:

Communications to Ramsar partners in Canada should highlight the broad base of participation in the delivery of national Ramsar initiatives, as well as the mix of federal, non-federal government and non-government involvement.

Opportunity No. 8:

A Canadian Ramsar Committee should be established as a subcommittee of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (Canada), chaired by the Director of Wildlife Conservation, Canadian Wildlife Service.