

Wetlands Resolution VIII.40: Guidelines for rendering the use of groundwater compatible with the conservation of wetlands

"Wetlands: water, life and culture"
8th Meeting of the Conference of the
Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
Valencia, Spain, 18-26 November 2002

1. RECOGNIZING the importance of the whole water cycle and the link existing between ground and surface water for their use and management, not only in arid and semi-arid regions but also in humid regions;
2. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the urgent need to decrease the loss and degradation of aquatic ecosystems through policies of sustainable development and conservation of biodiversity;
3. ALSO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that maintenance of the ecological integrity of most wetlands, especially those located in arid and semi-arid zones, is closely linked to the supply of groundwater;
4. AWARE of the importance that the use of groundwater has had for the economic development and improvement of welfare in many regions (mainly because of irrigated agriculture);
5. EQUALLY AWARE of the negative impact that can be caused to wetlands because of uncontrolled development and lack of planning for groundwater; and RECOGNIZING the value of the *Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands*, adopted in Resolution VIII.1;
6. EMPHASIZING that examples of the solution of conflicts between the use of groundwater and conservation of wetlands (for example, in the Mediterranean basin) can serve as exportable models for other areas facing the same problems;
7. RECALLING that the Strategic Plan 1997-2002 of the Convention (Operative Objective 2.2) stresses the conservation of water and the need to protect wetlands dependent upon groundwater;

8. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that on occasions some regions suffer from inefficient management and regulation in the use of groundwater;

9. AWARE of the difficulties of rendering the interests of the users (primarily farmers) compatible with conservation criteria for those areas, due to the fact that environmental problems are not taken into account;

10. RECOGNIZING that many of these conflicts may be stimulated by certain subsidies for agriculture and other types of economic incentives, including for tourism; and

11. STRESSING that the analysis of these issues and the solution of conflicts require a completely transparent environment, scientific rigour and, above all, participation of all actors involved in the management and use of water resources;

THE CONFERENCE OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES

12. URGES the Contracting Parties to study the impact of the use of groundwater on the conservation of their wetlands in those territories where these conflicts exist;

13. RECOMMENDS that this analysis be carried out from an interdisciplinary point of view and with the participation of civil society;

14. INVITES Contracting Parties to review their respective programmes of subsidies in order to ensure that they do not have negative consequences for the conservation of wetlands;

15. ENCOURAGES Contracting Parties to continue their efforts aimed at implementing existing provisions in this field; REQUESTS the Ramsar Bureau to support these efforts as much as possible; and PROPOSES that the Scientific and Technical Review Panel advance in the study of the interaction between groundwater and wetlands, as requested in Resolution VIII.1, paragraph 19, and to develop guidance on the sustainable use of groundwater resources to maintain wetland ecosystem functions for discussion at COP9, in line with Action 3.4.7 of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008;

16. URGES the promotion of initiatives, supported by both the public and private sectors, for the participation of civil society in the management of groundwater, within the framework of integrated management of water resources;

17. ALSO ENCOURAGES recognition of the importance of the associations of users for the management of groundwater, and the creation of such associations where they do not exist, and the dedication of efforts towards the objective that these associations contribute to the sustainable development of this resource in order to make possible the efficient use of groundwater and the conservation of wetlands;

18. URGES public institutions to ensure that a more decisive effort is made, within the framework of wetland-related education, communication and public awareness (CEPA) activities, with regard to groundwater, placing emphasis on its hydro-geological, social, economic and environmental aspects; and

19. INVITES Parties to give more attention to the role of groundwater in maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands, in line with Operational Objective 3.4 of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008.

