

Key Documents of the Ramsar Convention

Classification System for Wetland Type

[français] [español]

Reprinted from the

Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance, Appendix A

The Ramsar Convention definition of "wetland" and classification system for wetland type

Definition

Under the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) "wetlands" are defined by Articles 1.1 and 2.1 as shown below:

Article 1.1:

"For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres."

Article 2.1 provides that wetlands:

"may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands".

Ramsar Classification System for 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.

Marine/Coastal Wetlands

A -- Permanent shallow marine waters in most cases 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 and humid dune slacks.

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.

Zk(a) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, marine/coastal

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 soils; 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 marshes, shrub carr, alder thicket on inorganic soils.

Xf -- Freshwater, tree-dominated wetlands; includes freshwater swamp forests, seasonally flooded forests, wooded swamps on inorganic soils.

Xp -- Forested peatlands; peat swamp forests.

Y -- Freshwater springs; oases.

Zg -- Geothermal wetlands

Zk(b) – Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, inland

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 forests. Floodplain wetlands are not listed as a specific wetland type herein.

Human-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 (including intensively managed or grazed wet meadow or pasture).

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.**

Zk(c) – **Karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, human-made**