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| **Project “Conservation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage in Wetlands”** |
| **Ramsar Culture Network Development in the Carpathian Region** |

The Carpathian Wetland Initiative (coordinated by the State Nature Conservancy of the Slovak Republic) has signed a Consultancy Agreement with the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on undertaking the Ramsar Culture Network development in the Carpathian Region.

The basic task is to undertake inventory of the cultural aspects in wetland sites (cultural heritage and/or traditional knowledge, innovations, practices of local communities etc., relevant for the wise use of wetlands in general, not necessarily in designated Ramsar Sites) and their potential for sustainable tourism development in the Carpathian countries. The activities planned include possible development of proposals for cultural trails in wetlands and promotion of sites identified as suitable for sustainable tourism and publication on the relevant web sites.

The first step to develop the list of wetlands with cultural heritage in the Carpathian region is to collect and compile information with relatively detailed description of cultural heritage in each of the Carpathian countries, including supporting materials (photos, maps) using a questionnaire based on standardised guidance of the Ramsar Convention.

Thank you for your willingness to support this small project and to contribute to development of the Ramsar Culture Network in the Carpathians.

**Please, read the text below before you start to fill in the Questionnaire**

**INTRODUCTION**

The inventory of cultural aspects of wetlands in the Carpathian region is based on Ramsar Guidance on Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands (2016)[[1]](#footnote-1).

The aim is to identify, document and make available information about notable cultural values and practices associated with wetlands in the Carpathian countries. The information collected will support both the conservation of cultural heritage and the Ramsar Convention’s aim of integrating cultural aspects in the management of Ramsar sites and other wetlands.

Due to short-term project and limited budget there is no possibility for in-depth research and comprehensive study and database on the culture and wetlands in the region. Therefore we will make a rapid inventory, collating information that is readily available and doing it in an uncomplicated way to produce fast and easy-to-use results and to bring them to the attention of everyone in a position to influence their fate.

The term **“wetland”** includes all wetland habitat types as defined by the Ramsar Convention (“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…”) – this includes natural and semi-natural springs, streams, creeks, rivers, waterfalls, inland deltas, lakes, oxbow lakes, floodplain lakes, marshes, pools, swamps, seasonally flooded meadows, sedge marshes, non-forested and forested peatlands, bogs, fens, alpine meadows, shrub swamps, alder thickets, swamp forests, seasonally flooded forests, peatswamp forests, geothermal wetlands, karst and other subterranean hydrological systems, as well as human-made wetlands, like aquaculture ponds, farm ponds, irrigated land, wet pastures, salt exploitation sites, water storage areas, reservoirs, dams, impoundments, excavations, gravel/brick/clay pits, mining pools, canals and drainage channels, ditches, etc.

The **“culture”** in this context is interpreted as a property of human groups or societies which expresses aspects of their identity, shared values, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge systems, creativity and other practices. It conditions the way in which people interact with each other and with their environment. Culture can be exhibited in both material and non-material ways, and it is constantly evolving.

Material examples would include protection and management of wetland habitats in ways designed to maintain a particular human social structure or uphold faith-based principles; use of wetland products for purposes that maintain cultural identities and represent place-specific skills; and heritage values associated with co-evolution of particular societies and the ecosystems with which they have interacted. Non-material examples would include sense of belonging; sense of continuity; aesthetic inspirations; and ecological ethics.

Culture in many of these forms contributes directly to the maintenance of wetlands. It also represents a key suite of benefits provided by wetlands to people; and this is recognised in the concept of “cultural ecosystem services”, of both tangible and intangible kinds.

Benefits

The inventory will help to make knowledge and information more available and more usable for supporting improved conservation and wise use of wetlands. Better integration of understanding about cultural factors with understanding about ecological factors leads to more effective wetland management, as well as improved safeguarding of cultural heritage. Better awareness also helps in building stronger public support for these aims.

The information compiled will be incorporated into Ramsar’s global data on culture and wetlands.

Inventory process and method

A simple step-wise approach will be used, beginning with desk-studies and consultation, and then organising the information to be documented into five key categories, followed by recommendations for action.

The inventory is applicable at the level of the Carpathian region as defined in previous projects implemented with the Carpathian Convention, in case of countries with small coverage of the Carpathian mountains it can be made also at areas influenced by Carpathians (or their waters), or at national level.

The scope of the values and practices covered can include those of either historical or contemporary interest (but ideally should cover both). We will use any relevant information already recorded (e.g. in Ramsar Information sheets where listed Ramsar Sites are concerned, or data on cultural values and practices relating to World Heritage Sites), as well as any existing studies and publications that may be relevant. Consultations with local residents, site managers, statutory authorities, voluntary groups, heritage bodies, academics and other experts will supplement these sources.

The cultural values should be identified in all wetland types and in wetlands generally, not only in Ramsar Sites or other designated/protected wetland sites.

Original source materials can form part of the compilation of information that goes to make up the inventory.



**STAGE 1: DESK STUDY**

* 1. Screen existing studies

A first step before embarking on new data collection is to identify whether any existing studies or relevant data sources exist for the area.

This step will also provide a picture of the nature of gaps in coverage of the issue for the area concerned, which in turn may help to define the scope and objectives of the inventory.

Part of this “desk study” stage is therefore in the nature of a literature-search. The other main part of this step consists of isolating and extracting the relevant information from the sources concerned, so that it may be reorganised for consistent compilation according to the simple inventory structure suggested in Stage 3 below.

**STAGE 2: CONSULTATION**

2.1 Identify potential stakeholders

Input to an inventory may need to be drawn from a range of people who have knowledge that has not been published. Stakeholder consultation is also important for involving people who are affected by the issue or are in relevant positions of influence.

In this context the stakeholders concerned are primarily those who may be in a position to contribute their input to the inventory. They may be researchers with expertise in the subject, inhabitants or users or managers of the area(s) concerned.

It is also important to identify those individuals, groups or organisations who are stakeholders in the sense of being intended recipients, end-users and advocacy targets for the results.

2.2 Contact and consult key stakeholders

Consultation with stakeholders may take place through correspondence, telephone interviews, one-to-one meetings, focus groups/workshops, public meetings, or by general invitations issued via websites and social media.

Ground-rules about permissions to edit, publish or otherwise use the information exchanged should be made clear at the outset, and valid restrictions requested by stakeholders in this regard should be respected.

**STAGE 3: DOCUMENTATION**

3.1 List and describe significant cultural values/practices

The main part of the content of the inventory consists of a description of the values and practices of interest, noting various features of importance about them, and categorising them according to a recognised typology.

This section will be the main part of the content of the inventory. The description will comprise the most notable cultural values and practices that are relevant to the area(s) concerned.

The answers should be provided in the questionnaire, which includes

* **A categorisation of the values and practices according to a typology** contained in the questionnaire below.
* **A description of the area to which each identified value or practice relates**. This should be supported by **maps**.
* **A description of the time period to which each identified value or practice relates**.
* **The main exponents, practitioners or beneficiaries of the documented values and practices.**
* **A note of any specialised or vernacular terms used locally** to refer to the values and practices concerned.
* **A comment on the relative significance of the values and practices concerned**.
* **A transcription of any pertinent officially-adopted descriptions of the values and practices concerned**, specifying the source in each case.

3.2 Note any conservation implications of the cultural values/practices for the wetland(s)

Particular cultural values and practices may or may not be an important influence on the ecological status of the wetland(s) to which they relate; and where there is such a link, the link may be either positive or negative. Where applicable, information on this aspect should be recorded.

3.3 Summarise the status of the cultural values/practices

This will be the section of the inventory in which to include comments on whether the values and practices concerned are past, present, changing or vulnerable to change.

It should be clarified whether the values or practices being documented relate to a former period of history or whether they are continuing. If they relate to a former period of history, the time of their cessation and the reasons of it (if known) should be noted.

If they are continuing, it should further be clarified whether any changes have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in relation to the values or practices concerned. If no changes are occurring, it would be useful to note (if known) the factors that will be necessary or helpful to ensure the continuation of the values/practices in future. If a change is occurring or is likely to occur, the nature of it in terms of conservation objectives should be described; and options for remedial or preventative measures identified where possible.

3.4 Include supporting materials

The descriptive parts of the inventory should be accompanied by any other materials. This may include lists of reference sources (and links to them where relevant), images, illustrations, maps, data tables, interview results, further detail on case examples, useful contacts and anything else deemed appropriate.

**STAGE 4: ACTION**

4.1 Recommend any actions to integrate cultural values/practices more strongly in management, as appropriate

The inventory will likely pull together or generate useful suggestions for conservation actions; for example to address threats, restore or enhance values, improve integrated management or strengthen policy.

This section will include a summary of recommendations made about the issues covered in the inventory.

The main category of recommendations will concern actions to improve the integration of the cultural values and practices in the protection and management of the wetland systems concerned. This might involve adjusting a particular cultural heritage conservation regime (such as a site management plan) to give better attention to its wetland dimension; or adjusting a wetland conservation regime to give better attention to its cultural dimension. Actions may relate to the measures necessary to safeguard the interests at stake; or to ways of celebrating and capitalising on them more fully (e.g. through public awareness and education activities); or both.

In addition to management issues, recommendations may address any other matter which is deemed appropriate and which can realistically be acted upon. This may include interpretation, promotion, funding, policy, legislation or other matters.

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| **Questionnaire** |

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| I. | **Name of the wetland site** with cultural aspect(s)  In case of the designated Ramsar site or World Heritage Site (or part of it) please add its reference number from the relevant database |
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| II. | **Location details** (country, general location, administrative region, municipality, geographical coordinates) |
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| III. | **Time period** to which identified value or practice relates (historical dates/earliest known origins, date at which it ceased to be present, or specify that it is still of continuing relevance if this is the case) |
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| IV. | **Typologies of cultural values and practices** |

*Please select for each identified site*

□ The site provides a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland.

□ The site has exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilisations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland.

□ The site where the ecological character of the wetland depends on the interaction with local communities.

□ The site where relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland.

*Please describe of what type is the site (Wetland related human activities)*

1. **Habitation**
   1. Cultural landscapes
   2. Cultural heritage sites (including religious heritage – monasteries, sanctuaries, hermitages, chapels)
   3. Settlements and structures
      1. Ancient sites and structures (up to 1599)
      2. Traditional and modern settlements and structures
   4. Wetland archaeology
   5. Infrastructure
      1. Terrestrial transportation networks
      2. Water management and facilities and networks
2. **Primary uses of wetland resources**
   1. Wetland related agriculture
   2. Stock-breeding
   3. Fishing and aquaculture
   4. Management of forest wetland types
   5. Hunting
   6. Salt extraction, mineral extraction, mining
   7. Water use
      1. Irrigation
      2. Domestic use
      3. Water transfer infrastructure
      4. Energy production
      5. Other water uses (water mills, saw mills etc.)
   8. Use of other wetland natural resources
      1. Biomass extraction
      2. Sustainable use of medicinal plants
3. **Secondary use of wetland resources**
   1. Food processing
      1. Traditional methods of food preservation
      2. Culinary heritage
   2. Craftsmanship
      1. Artefacts (of ancient origin – up to 1599 / traditional and modern artefacts)
      2. Handicrafts and tools (of ancient origin / traditional and modern)
      3. Transportation means (boats etc.) (ancient / traditional and modern)
   3. Traditional building construction
      1. Dwellings
      2. Utilitarian buildings
      3. Public buildings
   4. Wetland-based traditional marketing
   5. Tourism – eco-tourism and cultural tourism
   6. Leisure and sports
      1. Nature appreciation
      2. Hiking, climbing
      3. Rafting and kayaking
      4. Sailing and boating
      5. Diving
      6. Speleology
   7. Social practices and methods
   8. Festivals, fairs, celebrations and events
4. **Knowledge, belief systems and social practices**
   1. Scientific research and education
   2. Traditional knowledge
      1. Oral traditions and expressions, sayings
      2. Languages, dialects and special terms
      3. Relevant place names and their etymologies
      4. Practice of traditional medicine
   3. Spirituality and belief systems (including processions, pilgrimages, nature rituals and ceremonies)
   4. Sacred natural sites or landscapes (e.g. caves, islands, rivers, springs, mountains…)
   5. Artistic expression
      1. Dances and traditional rural games
      2. Music and traditional songs
      3. Nature photography
      4. Literature of wetlands nature, traditional legends and stories\*
      5. Movies and TV shows
      6. Painting landscapes and nature

*Please provide details and comments if necessary.*

\* Please send the text of legend/story identified relevant to the aims of this project in English (Word format) to be published in the final publication.

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| V. | **The main exponents, practitioners or beneficiaries of the documented values and practices.**  Particular values may be held in common by a particular community of stakeholders or a social group who derive benefits (tangible or intangible) from the wetland systems (or stories) concerned. In the case of cultural practices, there may be details to record concerning roles played by particular members or groups in the community |
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| VI. | **Specialised or vernacular terms used locally** (including in local languages) to refer to the values and practices concerned |
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| VII. | **Relative significance of the values and practices concerned** (e.g. in terms of rarity, magnitude, degree of formal recognition, or diversity in combination with other values) |
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| VIII. | **Transcription of any pertinent officially-adopted descriptions of the values and practices concerned**, specifying the source in each case |
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| IX. | **Conservation implications of the cultural values/practices for the wetland(s)** |
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| X. | **Status of the cultural values/practices**  Clarify whether the values or practices relate to a former period of history or whether they are continuing. If they relate to a former period of history, the time of their cessation and the reasons of it (if known) should be noted. If they are continuing, it should be clarified whether any changes have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in relation to the values or practices concerned. |
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| XI. | Current **touristic use** and potential for **sustainable tourism** development in the area, tourism influence in the area |
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| XII. | **Suggestions for conservation actions**  (for example to address threats, restore or enhance values, improve integrated management or strengthen policy) – see 4.1 above |
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| XIII. | **Ongoing management activities** at the site (if any) |
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| XIV. | **Please include reference sources** (and links to them where relevant), images, illustrations, maps, data tables, interview results, further detail on case examples, useful contacts and anything else deemed appropriate |
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| Name of compiler |  |
| Organization / Address |  |
| E-mail |  |
| Phone number |  |

*Please send the completed questionnaire to* [*natalia.kubicova@sopsr.sk*](mailto:natalia.kubicova@sopsr.sk) *and* [*jan.kadlecik@sopsr.sk*](mailto:jan.kadlecik@sopsr.sk)*.*

1. Pritchard, D., Ali, M. & Papayannis, T. 2016. Guidance: Rapid Cultural Inventories for Wetlands. Ramsar Culture Network. <http://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/guidance_-_rapid_cultural_inventories_for_wetlands.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)