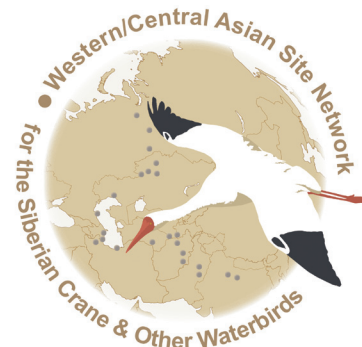




# Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds



## Guidelines for the Preparation of Site Nomination Documents

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# I. Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds

## 1.1. Introduction

The Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) is a critically endangered species that is dependent upon the existence of large open areas of shallow wetland habitats along its migration routes. Three routes are currently known - a West Asian flyway that leads from breeding grounds in Western Siberia around the western shore of the Caspian Sea to the Caspian Lowlands of northern Iran; a Central Asian flyway connecting Western Siberian breeding grounds to the wintering site in northern India; and an East Asian flyway leading from Yakutia to the central Yangtze floodplain lakes in China.

The flyways and habitats used by the Siberian Crane are shared with many other species of migratory waterbirds, including at least 32 globally threatened waterbird species, and thus have significance far beyond conservation of the Siberian Crane alone.

## 1.2. Summary

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP) implemented from 2003 to 2009 had a stated goal to develop flyway site networks with nomination procedures for sites harmonized with other site network schemes. On the other hand, the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to Conserve Migratory Waterbirds and their habitats (CAF Action Plan) was finalized in New Delhi in June 2005 by the Range States of the Central Asian Flyway. The CAF Action Plan includes a provision to establish a site network for migratory waterbirds in the CAF.

At the "Waterbirds Around the World" Meeting (Edinburgh, April 2004), side events were held to discuss steps needed to develop these two related initiatives. Joint discussions focused on exploring the best mechanisms to link these initiatives, identifying frameworks for cooperation and applying lessons learned from the successful North East Asia Crane Working Group (NEACWG) established under the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy, which now falls under the framework of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership.

Efforts for the conservation and recovery of the Siberian Crane gained momentum in recent years through the CMS Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane (the Siberian Crane MoU). The Siberian Crane MoU involves the Siberian Crane's 11 Range States and provides the basis to develop and implement Conservation Plans for the Western, Central and Eastern populations of the Siberian Crane.

The Fifth Meeting of Range States to the Siberian Crane MoU (Moscow, April 2004) agreed on the need to establish a network of sites critical for the Siberian Cranes of the Western and Central populations to promote protection of key wetlands and coordination among the Range States in the Western/Central Asian flyways. It also agreed with a proposal to introduce the site network concept into the next version of the respective Siberian Crane MoU Conservation Plans.

The preliminary conclusions of an Inter-sessional Working Group established by the Fifth Meeting of Range States were presented to the UNEP/GEF SCWP's Third Project Steering Committee Meeting (SCM3) in December 2004 in Iran. The process, title, objectives, site selection criteria, scope of activities to be conducted under the network, and opportunities for interaction and exchange were discussed throughout the course of the SCM3.

The SCM3 participants recommended that the site network be called the Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Crane and Other Waterbirds or WCASN.

The Meeting to Endorse the Proposed Western/Central Asian Site Network for the Siberian Cranes and Other Waterbirds (New Delhi, 13 June 2005) agreed on criteria and qualifiers for selection of sites for the network, the site information (datasheet) required for site nominations, and procedures to nominate, review and approve sites.

## 1.3. Goal of the WCASN

To ensure the long-term conservation of the Siberian Crane and other migratory waterbirds along the Western and Central Asian Flyways through recognition and appropriate management of a network of internationally important sites.

## 1.4. Principles of the WCASN

The initiative to establish a Siberian Crane site network under the CMS MoU will focus attention on:

- Sites important for the conservation, recovery and reintroduction of the Siberian Crane;
- Sites which are also important for other migratory cranes and waterbirds; and
- The importance of involving local people in conservation efforts at the sites.

## 1.5. Administrative Structure of WCASN

WCASN is served by the CMS Secretariat, the WCASN Committee and the WCASN Review Working Group (RWG).

At the Meeting to Endorse the Proposed WCASN (New Delhi, 13 June 2005), it was agreed that the vetting of nominations should be conducted by WCASN RWG, composed of the chair (elected at every MoU meeting) one representative from the breeding range (Russian Federation), two representatives (rotating) from the staging areas of each flyways (western and central), two representatives from the wintering range (Islamic Republic of Iran and India), as well as BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the International Crane Foundation.

The WCASN RWG has been operating on an interim basis. It considers nomination documents presented by Range States and makes recommendations to the WCASN Committee for approval. The WCASN Committee consists of one governmental representative of each Siberian Crane Range State of western and central flyways. Terms of References for the WCASN RWG (Annex 5) and the WCASN Committee (Annex 6) were developed and approved during the CMS MoU 6 meeting (Almaty, Kazakhstan, May 2007) and updated during the CMS MoU7 meeting (Bonn, Germany, June 2010).

## 1.6. Activities under the WCASN

The 2005 New Delhi Meeting to Endorse the Proposed WCASN agreed joint activities which would be conducted within the framework of the network as follows:

- Providing monitoring and management of the sites;
- Facilitating staff exchange programme;
- Participating in education and public awareness activities in the WCASN;
- Maintaining a regional Siberian Crane database;
- Providing training workshops for site managers and experts;
- Participating in communication and information exchange between site management bodies researchers, and other relevant agencies in the network and other global networks; and
- Fundraising.

These activities were integrated in Conservation Plans for western and central flyways under the CMS Siberian Crane MoU issued in 2008<sup>1</sup>. At the Seventh Meeting of the Signatories to the Siberian Crane MoU held in Bonn in June 2010 it was decided to develop a separate WCASN Action Plan which should constitute a subset of actions under the overall Siberian Crane MoU Conservation Plans.

<sup>1</sup>UNEP/CMS Technical Report Series 16. Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane, Fourth Edition. 2008.

## 1.7. List of Priority Sites

Range States representatives to the Meeting to Endorse the Proposed WCASN suggested a preliminary list of priority sites<sup>2</sup> for possible inclusion in the network.

During the 6th Meeting of the Signatories to the Siberian Crane MoU held in Kazakhstan in May 2007, the first ten sites were designated within the Site Network including five sites from Kazakhstan, two from Iran and one each from India, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Two sites from Pakistan were added to WCASN at the 7th Meeting of the Signatories held in Bonn, Germany, in June 2010.

Several other sites have been identified by Range States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia and Uzbekistan) for future nomination (**Annex 1**).

## 1.8. Criterion and Qualifiers for Site Selection<sup>3</sup>

For site selection, attention will be focused on sites important for the conservation, recovery and reintroduction of the Siberian Crane, including sites that are also important for other migratory cranes and waterbirds. Please see the Site Information Sheet (Annex 1) and Explanatory Notes (Annex 2) for details.

**Criterion 1** and its four temporal sub-criteria are designed to ensure that governments will select sites based on their current and past importance for Siberian Cranes.

**The Qualifiers** give an indication of the additional importance for other cranes and waterbirds of sites that have been selected primarily because of their importance for Siberian Cranes. They are also important to promote the future integration of the WCASN into the larger proposed waterbird site network for the Central Asia Flyway under the CMS Central Asian Flyway Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats.

The criteria and qualifiers are adapted from selected criteria to nominate Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Guidance for applying the Ramsar criteria can be found in the Convention's document: Ramsar Convention Handbook #7: Designating Ramsar Sites<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>The original preliminary list included two sites from Mongolia (Khuiten-Kurkh, and Gun Galuut and Ayagin Lakes), however it was clarified that the proposed Mongolian sites were outside the geographic remit of the network and that the populations in question fit completely into the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network.

<sup>3</sup>As agreed by the Meeting to Endorse the Proposed Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes (and other waterbirds) (New Delhi, 2005), with minor editorial revisions.

<sup>4</sup>Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2004. Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands. 2nd Edition. Ramsar Convention Secretariat, Gland, Switzerland. Can be downloaded free from [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org).

## 1.9. Site Information Sheet

The 2005 New Delhi Meeting to Endorse the Proposed WCASN discussed the information needed to nominate a site. The meeting agreed to a list 15 categories of information needed as part of the nomination procedure. However, during the process to develop these guidelines, the list of information categories was revised to reflect the last updated version of the Ramsar Information Sheet. The revised list now encompasses all comments from the meeting participants and the additional updates. This information is reflected in the Site Information Sheet (Annex 2).

## II. Procedure for Listing Sites<sup>5</sup>

The primary basis for a site's nomination to join the WCASN is the site's importance for Siberian Cranes. By nominating a site, the relevant site management body pledges to incorporate the conservation of Siberian Cranes, other waterbirds and their wetland habitats into management goals for the site in line with the aims of this site network.

In order to nominate a site to join the WCASN, a **Site Information Sheet** must be completed (**Annex 2**). A detailed description and a **Site Map** of the boundaries of the wetland or wetlands should be provided with the Site Information Sheet. The Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator, whose contact details are found below, can assist with completion of the Site Information Sheet.

The relevant site management body should send a **Nomination Letter** proposing the nomination to the national government agency responsible for administering the implementation of the CMS MoU on the Siberian Crane for endorsement. This will help to ensure that there is local support for the proposal. A sample Nomination Letter is given in **Annex 3**. Site nominations may originate from local site management bodies, including private landowners, however these entities are encouraged to send a letter proposing the nomination to the responsible national government agency for endorsement and final submission.

The responsible national government agency should then send the Site Information Sheet and Site Map together with an appropriate **Letter of Endorsement** to the CMS Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. A sample Endorsement Letter is given in **Annex 4**.

<sup>5</sup>This procedure is based on that used for nominations of sites to the site networks under the former Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy.

The Site Information Sheet standardizes the information needed for the site nomination procedure. Site management bodies will submit the Site Information Sheet along with a Site Map and provide the required details on a proposed site, without regard to whether:

- a. The site is currently listed as a national, provincial or local nature protection area or internationally important area (under the Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention, etc.); or
- b. Constant monitoring of birds is being undertaken at the site.

**The WCASN Review Working Group (RWG)**, serviced by the Siberian Crane Flyway Coordinator, will undertake a technical review of the nomination. The WCASN RWG may seek additional information from the site management body if required. **The Chair of WCASN RWG** will provide a report containing WCASN RWG recommendations to the CMS Secretariat. Terms of References for WCASN RWG are given in **Annex 5**.

The Secretariat will then seek final approval of the nomination from the **WCASN Committee**, comprising representatives of the Siberian Crane MoU Range States from the Siberian Crane western and central flyways. Once approved by the WCASN Committee, through its Chair, the site will be announced on the CMS and SCFC websites. Communications normally are conducted by email. Terms of References for WCASN Committee is given in **Annex 6**.

**A Site Certificate**, co-signed by the CMS Executive Secretary and the Chair of the SNC, will be provided to the site management body. Such agencies are encouraged to then conduct a **Dedication Ceremony** at the new network site. A suggested procedure for Network Site Dedication Ceremonies is given in **Annex 7**. Where possible, a member of the Site Network Committee will attend the ceremony to help promote the importance of the site locally.

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### III. References

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8. The Central Asian Flyway Action Plan to Conserve Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats can be downloaded from the CMS website. <[www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/caf/caf\\_meeting\\_report.htm](http://www.cms.int/bodies/meetings/regional/caf/caf_meeting_report.htm)>.