



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
ON THE CONSERVATION AND  
MANAGEMENT OF MARINE TURTLES  
AND THEIR HABITATS OF THE INDIAN  
OCEAN AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

CMS/IOSEA/AC9/Doc.10  
15 March 2021

Original: English

9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
*online*, 15-19 March 2021  
Agenda Item 10

**GUIDE TO COMMENTS/DECISIONS ON SITE NETWORK CRITERIA DESCRIPTIONS**

*(Prepared by an AC Member)*

Action Requested:

- Discuss open questions and develop a concrete plan how to proceed

## GUIDE TO COMMENTS/DECISIONS ON SITE NETWORK CRITERIA DESCRIPTIONS

According to Activity #35 of the IOSEA Work Programme 2020-2024, we have been asked to

- 1) revise the Site Information Template
- 2) refine evaluation criteria and scoring instructions
- 3) simplify the post-scoring process

We started to complete (1) in Viet Nam, but we really need to organise (2) first. The table below highlights the main issues in need of resolution.

### Fundamental issues related to numbers (1) and (2)

#### Scoring values and criteria

- Scoring criteria (mix of set scores, continuous scores, variable min/max and intervals) with no justification
- Scoring descriptions and guidance (use of subjective terms or descriptions)
- Weighting (or different max/min values)
- Reduce, or a more consistent use of, subjective terms

Based on these issues and the more detailed comments in the table below, I don't think we can defend the existing scoring system.

Question for discussion – Can we convert the scoring to be consistent (3 or 5 categories with same max score), a check box style approach may also work in some criteria to aid applications.

#### Scoring bias

Can we reduce bias if we design criteria to establish if the site is ecologically important for the conservation of turtles and has (or can have as a result of being in a network) management/governance/legal systems in place?

#### Units of conservation

The current version mixes species, RMUs and genetic management units. We need clarity on which to use. The bulk of the document refers to MUs and MUs. RMUs problematic, and probably should not use, MUs preferred but not all MUs are known.

Should we use MUs, and revert to species (sub-region) if no MU data are available?

Detailed comments and areas for refinement (initially circulated Nov 2020 to AC WG members.

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
<p><b>Generic</b></p> <p>Ensure the goal (text in Introduction) matches the goal in the founding documents:</p> <p><u>Resolution</u>            Recalling further that the Tenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (Bergen, November 2011) adopted Resolution 10.3 on the role of ecological networks, which calls upon Signatory States to CMS Memoranda of <u>Understanding to consider the network approach</u> (<a href="https://www.cms.int/es/node/13500">https://www.cms.int/es/node/13500</a>) in the implementation of their instruments;</p> <p>Agrees to establish the IOSEA Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles, as described in the annex to this resolution;</p>	<p>Note resolution 11.25 at CMS COP - Expressing satisfaction with the formal establishment and launch of a Network of Sites of Importance for Marine Turtles within the framework of the CMS Indian Ocean – South-East Asia Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding (IOSEA) with particular emphasis on the development of robust criteria intended to lend credibility to the site selection process;</p>	<p>A network is broadly defined in the CMS documents.</p>
<p>While the assessments should strive to be objective, criteria are inevitably be based on subjective judgments</p> <p>Use of subjective terms in an objective exercise</p>		<p>The score system can't really be objective, because heavily based on expert knowledge etc. as few sites will have the quantitative "data"</p> <p>What if in-country persons view of importance does not match the AC view?            How do we best provide guidance (use of tables with categories etc)?</p>
<p>Scoring numbers are confusing, mix of fixed, continuous, different ranges, use of zeros, different max scores</p>	<p>I cannot recall why there is so much variation and why different sections were weighted different (i.e. had different max). I recall this was a system designed by a contractor and Doug.</p>	<p>Can we resort back to a standard score (fixed 1-5 etc)?</p> <p>Removing weightings (ie different max scores in different categories) would also help reduce confusion.</p>

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
Units of assessment, which do we use RMU, genetic stock, or other. This is important for several criteria	<p>In EB1a we ask for levels of nesting based on values from the RMU paper (I recall these were added because we felt we needed more of a guide for SS)</p> <p>If it is to be a “network” of sites then MU or contribution to MU is important</p>	<p>If it is to be a “network” of sites then MU or contribution to MU (or if MU unknown contribution to sub-region) is important.</p> <p>In EB2 this is important because while species presence data might be available, few sites would have defined MU presence (i.e. &gt;1 MU of a species).</p>
	In EB1b we ask for local abundance at the “sites” foraging area (and its links to the outside world) so the scale differs between EB1a,b.	
	EB2 we ask for information on numbers of management units present	
	EB3 asks for information on rare species/management unit representation – and It was clear from the comments of the prior WG that “rare” was interpreted differently by people	
	G4 refers to using site-based data to identify management unit trends	
	N3 refers to the area used by the management unit	

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
Bias in scoring	A key comment made by the prior WG was that many of the criteria bias particular sites and the criteria need to be unbiased and applicable equally across all nominated sites – and stand the test of time. They currently don't do this because they are trying to capture all the potential meanings of 'value' of sites. It would be much simpler if the criteria just simply adhered to establishing if the site is ecologically important for the conservation of turtles	
<b>Criteria-specific</b>		
EB1a Nesting		This needs to be edited to make the scores less subjective (more guidance), and determine the unit of interest site/%site for MU etc
EB1b Foraging		Need to edit the score description to make the categories more distinct.  Is it density or presence?
EB2 species richness	Problems with context	We need a clearer definition (see JF comments) If you have 2 species they will be 2 management units, but to acknowledge the possibility of >1 MU the text could be changed to – regularly supports X species, or, in cases where MU are known, >1 MU of same species... then we can add text in the site information sheet to help guide the response

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
EB3	We need to provide clear advice about what is a rare species and what is the region.... Does rare mean rare to the IOSEA? Rare to the site (ie. Peripheral nesting habitats or occasional nesting)	Could we create a list and use sub-regions, and then assign each MU/species as rare-not rare?
EB4 resilience and resistance	The main issue with EB4 is the questionable link between level of disturbance and resilience/resistance. An undisturbed site may not have enough "pressure" from threats to alter its quality – thus its resistance has not been challenged and thus can't be resilient.	My idea is to switch EB4 to be either about relative levels of disturbance OR about how well the site has coped with change
G1 Legal framework	<p>Previous WG questioned Why should legal framework already be in place to assess importance of site? Great if that is the case but site could be equally important if no legal protection established yet?</p> <p>Noting here that there can be enormous difference between having a legal framework and having an effective legal framework.</p>	Do we remove, change and keep, or keep as it is?
G2 Conservation actions	Subjective criteria, need to be clear. "very high degree" "exemplary" etc especially to achieve the max score (which is, in all likelihood, unobtainable	We need to refine the definitions

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
G3 Collab management, Surveillance and enforcement	Prior WG suggest retain S&E but removal of collaborative management component because impossible to score consistently because different interpretations	Remove collaboration management OR be clear in text about the diverse types of collaborative management included  Refine G3
G4 Research and monitoring	Confusion about MU	Similar to EB1a, I suggest we can remove the reliance on the management unit and leave it as estimating trends. Because all trend data could be used to determine status (i.e. IUCN use as many sites as they can for an RMU)
G5 human and financial resources	This criteria was uniformly criticised by the previous WG and its importance and inclusion questioned. The relevance is not clear because we are designating sites because they are ecologically important for turtles.	Do we remove, change and keep, or keep as it is?
S1 cultural importance	This criteria was uniformly criticised by the previous WG. They saw its value but asked for a broader scope to include social (cultural and social) and to make it clear that it is being scored for links between turtles and cultural, and not for being just a site with general cultural importance.	Change the scope to include social and cultural and make it clear we are looking for links between turtles and people/culture

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
S2 compatible activities	Confusing because title is compatible but scores related to incompatible and why give any points if most activities incompatible. Perhaps flip this around as reward for compatible activities	Edit text accordingly
S3 educational value	Prior WG questioned Why is this a criteria for a site's importance. As they believed it should be rather in a list of categories for site's managers to aim for at a later stage?	Do we remove, change and keep, or keep as it is?
S4 history or recognition		Changes to text suggested
S5 national significance	<p>The guidance does not match the scores and the guide does not help if little is known about nesting site distribution in a country (or their importance)</p> <p>Scoring criteria include multiple components and are confusing.</p> <p>Guidance is confounding unexpressed and expressed objectives</p>	<p>Changes to text suggested</p> <p>S5 could be incorporated into Governance</p>
S6 perceived ancillary benefits...	<p>Prior WG - Highly subjective. On safer grounds if scoring against criteria that is evidence, not opinion, based.</p> <p>What is the intent of this criterion and the value of including it, can we make it more objective and less about perceptions which are hard to score</p>	<p>Do we remove, change and keep, or keep as it is?</p> <p>Could be incorporated into Governance</p>

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
<p>N1 representation</p>	<p>Important but can it even be scored against until more sites are in the network</p> <p>The purpose of the IOSEA site network proposal is to set up and maintain a NETWORK. It is, thus, remarkable that the lowest values for a criteria group is this one.</p> <p>Why is the lowest score for habitat types of the site already presented in the network? A LOT of turtles feed on seagrass or use coral reefs, thus it might be same habitat type but importance could be if a site has a different, or rare type?</p> <p>sites designated early in the process are more likely to score points here, for the simple reason that they were first in the cue. This is not a convincing argument for designation to the network.</p> <p>Does geography, not just habitat type, need to be considered?</p> <p>Guidance and definition paragraphs confuse objectives, priorities and procedures</p>	<p>If the aim is to develop a “network” then this needs to be elevated in its scoring range, at least to be equal</p>

Section, page, comment	Context	Questions/comments
N2 connectivity	Guidance and definition paragraphs confuse objectives, priorities and procedures and definition of a “network”	
N3 Area		The previous WG were very critical of this criterion and it needs careful thought about the intent. Percentages are hard to score without data. If area is important in a quantitative sense it is v.hard to score. If area is important in a qualitative sense then it could be simplified into a 2 part (yes/no) score asking for whether the site contains biologically important areas for the species (basically a bonus point for scoring high in EB1a,b)
Endnotes - A key comment made by the prior WG was that many of the criteria bias particular sites and the criteria need to be unbiased and applicable equally across all nominated sites – and stand the test of time. They currently don’t do this because they are trying to capture all the potential meanings of ‘value’ of sites. It would be much simpler if the criteria just simply adhered to establishing if the site is ecologically important for the conservation of turtles.	The prior WG and CMS comments suggested removal/refinement of G1, G5, S3 and S6, and editing others to make them clear they are about turtles/turtle habitats	