

**Society of Wetland Scientists' Ramsar Section**  
**Annual Meeting, 30 May 2019, Baltimore, Maryland, USA**

**Minutes**

Attendees:

Max Finlayson; Andy Herb; Suzanne Slear; Randy Milton; James Doyle; Jenny Davis; Kurt Kowalski; Line Rochefort; Jack Whitacre; Jamie Ong; Amanda Nahlik; Siobhan Fennessy; Steffanie Munguia; Dominic Uhelsk; Nick Davidson (Section Chair); and Matt Simpson (Section Vice-Chair).

Discussion items:

1. Chair Nick Davidson commented on the SWS **Wetlands of Distinction** programme and advised that in discussion with the WoD team he would review how best to align it with Ramsar Site processes.
2. Nick gave an update on the amendments to the 2012 **Section by-laws**, which have now been approved this month by Section ballot. These amendments include extending the Ramsar Section Committee to now be composed of Past Chair, Chair, Vice-Chair, Past Chair and two Ordinary Members. The by-laws have also been amended to remove anomalies regarding voting within the Section, and to delete an undeliverable provision in the Amendments text.
3. **Elections.** Ramsar Section Committee positions are aligned to the three-year Ramsar cycle to provide continuity with Ramsar, particularly representation on the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP). With a new Ramsar cycle and STRP now appointed starting in 2019 we need to hold Section Committee elections for the period 2019-2021. Nick indicated that he is willing and happy to continue as Chair for a second term, and Matt indicated likewise as Vice-Chair. We need to elect the two new Ordinary Members. Nick will soon contact all Section members to invite self-nominations for appointment to the Committee. If there are more candidates for any of the posts, an electronic ballot will be held.
4. **Ramsar COP13.** Nick reported on the participation of Beth Middleton and Rob McInnes representing SWS at the Ramsar's 13th Conference of Contracting Parties in Dubai in October 2018 on behalf of SWS. Nick and Matt also attended, in other capacities. SWS organized a successful side event on climate change and wetlands and a side event on the 2017 Citizen Science World Wetland Survey that the Ramsar Section helped deliver.
5. **SWS and Ramsar STRP.** SWS was re-affirmed by COP13 as a formal Observer Organisation to Ramsar STRP, and the Section Chairs Nick and Matt have been approved as SWS's representatives. Section member Siobhan Fennessy is an appointed STRP member. Matt attended the STRP meeting in Gland, Switzerland in March 2019. The meeting developed and agreed a draft workplan which will be approved in June 2019 by the Ramsar Standing Committee. Once the STRP work plan has been approved we will circulate it to Section members to invite offers from members help contribute SWS expertise for one or other of the STRP's 2019-2021 tasks.

6. The **Ramsar section** currently has **107 members** (the largest number since its establishment) and a **funds balance of \$1731.61**. This year funds were used to support attendance at the Baltimore conference for Matt to organize and deliver the Section's symposium. A discussion was had that supporting attendance at conferences for international speakers was a good use of the Section's funds.
7. Ideas for improved **communication with section members** were discussed. These included having teleconference meetings and twitter conferences in the future.
8. It was suggested that the section could apply for **SWS Section Development Grants** to fund the following:
  - a. Section presence and/or the organization of symposia at other organisation's conferences such as the INTECOL wetlands conference in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2020;
  - b. A Ramsar Section field visit at an annual meeting (potentially at Quebec City to help support the application of the site for Ramsar designation);
  - c. Sponsor a gift to a local Ramsar Site as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations for Ramsar; and
  - d. Speaker attendance at the Ramsar Section Symposium
9. It was discussed that an introduction to Ramsar and what it does - a sort of **'Ramsar 101'** - would be useful to organize at an SWS annual conference and could be included as part of the programme for Quebec City in 2020.
10. In follow-up to Gillian Davis' presentation in the Section's Symposium about the "Universal Declaration of the Rights of Rivers" (prepared by the Earth Law Centre), the idea of extending this to a **Universal Declaration of Wetland Rights** was discussed. It was agreed to further explore this idea and to contact the Earth Law Centre about it. It was discussed that for communication it might be good to link this to an actual wetland site and give the full story of the site as an example.