

ELEVENTH MEETING OF PARTNERS OF THE EAST ASIAN – AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, 12-17 March 2023



Draft Decision 5

Proposed amendments to improve the use of the Flyway Site Network Site Information Sheet (FNS SIS)

Submitted by EAAFP Secretariat and Technical sub-Committee

Summary

At MOP10 questions were raised as to whether the Flyway Network Site Information Sheet (SIS) could be simplified to make easier its application by Partners.

In the course of a review of this matter, the Secretariat and members of the TsC have also identified several further issues concerning the current (2017 version) structure and content of the SIS which need to be addressed.

Proposals for Partners' consideration for restructuring the SIS, and improving its structure and content in relation to the issues identified, are provided in this Draft Decision.

A supporting Information Paper with further information and rationale the for each of these proposals will be issued prior to MOP11.

Background and issues to be considered by MOP11

1. Identification and designation by EAAFP Partners of Flyway Network Sites (FNSs) for migratory waterbirds is a key element of the implementation of the EAAFP.
2. The tool provided for making such FNS designations is the EAAFP Site Information Sheet (SIS). The current version of the SIS is the 2017 version. This is closely modelled on the Ramsar Convention's Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands (RIS) – 2012 version.
3. However, questions arose before and during EAAFP MOP10 (2018) as to whether the SIS-2017 version could be simplified to make it easier for EAAFP Partners to use it in their designations and updates to FNSs.
4. Members of the EAAFP Technical sub-Committee and the EAAFP Secretariat have considered this matter, and in addition to the issue of possible SIS simplification have identified a number of other issues and problems with the current SIS (2017 version) and its supporting guidance which could

valuably to be improved so as to facilitate the use of the SIS by Partners. This has been informed by the experience of handling and reviewing recently submitted SISs.

5. From these assessments, proposals for improving the current (2017 version) of the SIS are summarized below. A supporting Information Paper setting out each of the identified issues and the detailed rationale for each SIS improvement to address them will be made available to all Partners in advance of MOP11 so as to inform Partners' consideration of these matters.
6. **Issue 1: SIS structure and content**
7. The current SIS format (2017 version) has 30 data and information fields. Fifteen of these fields (fields 1-14 and field 30 (threats)) are marked with an asterisk (*) indicating that these are essential fields for Partners to complete, but this is not very obvious in the current SIS structure.
8. Three options can be considered for the future SIS structure and content:
 - a. Keep the structure and content as the current 2017 version;
 - b. Simplify the structure and content to be only the identified essential information fields (current fields 1-14);
 - c. Restructure the SIS to have two clearer sections: Section 1 Essential fields (fields 1-14); and Section 2 additional (optional) fields (fields 15-30).
9. **Recommendation:** agree option 8.c so as to ensure that the essential data and information is provided for all FNSs, but also to not preclude Partners who so wish to provide additional information on the character and management of their FNSs, but to not require this additional information.
10. **Issue 2: Absence of an SIS field to identify if the SIS submitted by a Partner is for a new FNS or an SIS update of an existing FNS**
11. With the increasing maturity of the FNS network, and the expectation that partners will update their FNS SISs at regular intervals, this is becoming increasingly important to include in a revised SIS.
12. **Recommendations:** add a Required field in the SIS to request this information on new FNSs or updates. Re-affirm that SIS updates for designated FNSs should be provided at intervals of not more than six years.
13. **Issue 3: What are the correct FNS Designation Criteria to apply?**
14. This issue is at the core of the FNS designation process. However, currently in the SIS there are two different versions of the FNS designation Criteria. One is provided in Annex 1 of the SIS 2017 version, reproduced from Annex IV of the Partnership document. The other is provided in Section 20 of the SIS (Justification of the Criteria). This is very confusing for Partners as to which Criteria to correctly apply. Also, there are issues with wording of each of these current formulations of the Criteria in relation to their application for FNS processes.

15. The Partnership text version of the Criteria reproduces three of the Ramsar Site designation Criteria (Criteria 2, 5 and 6) but does not specify that for the scope of EAAFP application these should be applied only for “migratory populations of waterbirds”. The Partnership text version then has the EAAFP-specific migratory staging site Criteria (>0.25% of a [biogeographic] population and/or >5,000 waterbirds) as two separate Criteria. Finally, the Partnership text Criteria includes a qualitative Criterion concerning the importance of the site for maintaining the life-cycles of flyway populations (derived from the equivalent Ramsar Criterion 4).
16. The version of the Criteria listed within current “SIS field 10” correctly limits their application to migratory waterbirds only. However, the formulation of the Criterion concerning populations of globally-threatened species incorrectly omits the IUCN Red List category of “Critically Endangered”. The two migratory staging Criteria in the Partnership text are elided into one Criterion, which is inconsistent with the separate treatment of the Criteria for >20,000 waterbirds and >1% of a biogeographic population. Finally, the SIS field 10 list does not include the qualitative Criterion (c.) listed in the Partnership text version of the Criteria.
17. **Recommendations:**
18. i. delete current Annex 1 (Partnership text Criteria) from the SIS; and
19. ii. it is suggested that Partners agree a single consistent and harmonized formulation of the designation Criteria for FNSs for inclusion in the SIS, to read as follows:
20. “For inclusion of a site as internationally important in the Flyway Site Network one or more of the following Criteria must be met:
 - Criterion i. It regularly supports >20,000 migratory waterbirds.
 - Criterion ii. It regularly supports >1% of the individuals of a biogeographic population of a migratory waterbird.
 - Criterion iii. It regularly supports appreciable numbers of a biogeographic population of a globally threatened (Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU)) migratory waterbird species.
 - Criterion iv. It is a “migratory staging site” that regularly supports >5,000 migratory waterbirds.
 - Criterion v. It is a “migratory staging site” that regularly supports >0.25% of a biogeographic population of a migratory waterbird.
 - Criterion vi. It supports migratory waterbirds at a stage of their life cycles important for the maintenance of their flyway populations, including as a refuge during adverse conditions.”
21. Note that it may be helpful for Partners to request the Secretariat to assess the extent to which Criterion v. above has been applied by Partners in their FNS designations to date, so as to further assess whether this Criterion is used and should be retained.

22. Issue 4: Improving the structure of current SIS field 10 (Justification of the Criteria)

23. Currently SIS field 10 structure is a single free-text box. From experience of reviewing FNS nominations this leads to Partners providing very variable information in this field, and it is sometimes hard to identify even which of the designation Criteria are being applied. So as to help Partners to fill in this key SIS field it would be helpful to provide Partners with a more structured approach to making their justifications of the Criteria applied.

24. **Recommendation:** Partners are encouraged to request that a clearer, more structured format of current SIS Field 10 is prepared. The recommended re-structuring is proposed as follows:

25. For each FNS Criterion establish a separate sub-section for each Criterion with three sub-fields:

- i. Is this Criterion being applied? Yes; or No
- ii. A table to fill in with columns for numbers counted for each of the most recent five years of counts; the average number for the years counted, (and for Criteria ii. and v. (above) the 1% threshold being applied for each species/population).
- iii. A free-text box for providing further information/explanation of the Criterion justification.

26. Issue 5: Lack of guidance to Partners for applying the FNS Criteria

27. it is curious that in the current SIS (2017 version) although some guidance is provided to Partners on the completion of most SIS fields, there is no such guidance for filling in the key Field 10 (Justification of the Criteria). Guidance on several aspects of the application of the Criteria could be valuably provide to Partners.

28. **Recommendation:** request the Secretariat and the TsC to prepare guidance to support the application of the FNS Criteria, including *inter alia* on:

- i. applying the FNS Criteria for only species/populations listed as ‘migratory’ in Annex 6 of CSR1;
- ii. choosing the correct 1% population threshold for applying Criteria ii, iv & v when more than one biogeographic population of a species occurs at the site.
- iii. applying “appreciable numbers” under Criterion iii.
- iv. applying the terms of “regularly supports” for FNS Criteria i, ii, iii, iv & v; and
- v. what counts to use to assess qualification under FNS Criterion i.

Decision:

- Partners at MOP11 are invited to approve the proposed amendments to the FNS Site Information Sheet (SIS) so as to improve the ease of its application in FNS designations by Partners.

Annex 1

Draft Decision 5

Amendments to the FNS Site Information Sheet (SIS)

Submitted by EAAFP Secretariat and the Technical sub-Committee

Recognising that the designation by Partners of Flyway Network Sites (FNSs) is a key component of the implementation of the EAAFP;

Recalling that at MOP10 the question was raised as to whether the current Site Information Sheet (SIS-2017 version) could be simplified so as to improve its ease of use by Partners;

Recognising that the review of the structure of the SIS – 2017 version has also identified a range of other issues and inconsistencies in the current version of the SIS, which could be valuably addressed so as to facilitate the use of the SIS by Partners;

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1. *Endorses* the restructuring of the SIS to be in two clear sections: Section A (required data and information fields); and Section B (optional fields);
2. *Requests* the Secretariat and Technical sub-Committee to prepare an SIS – 2023 version to include addressing *inter alia* the following improvements to the SIS:

i. addition of an SIS field to identify if the SIS is for a new FNS or an update of an existing FNS;

ii. amend the FNS designation Criteria to read:

“For inclusion of a site as internationally important in the Flyway Site Network one or more of the following Criteria must be met:

Criterion i. It regularly supports >20,000 migratory waterbirds.

Criterion ii. It regularly supports >1% of the individuals of a biogeographic population of a migratory waterbird.

Criterion iii. It regularly supports appreciable numbers of a biogeographic population of a globally threatened (Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU)) migratory waterbird species.

Criterion iv. It is a “migratory staging site” that regularly supports >5,000 migratory waterbirds.

Criterion v. It is a “migratory staging site” that regularly supports >0.25% of a biogeographic population of a migratory waterbird.

Criterion vi. It supports migratory waterbirds at a stage of their life cycles important for the maintenance of their flyway populations, including as a refuge during adverse conditions.”

iii. Concerning FNS designation Criteria, a. delete the current SIS Annex 1

iv. Improve the current structure of SIS Field 10 as follows:

For each FNS Criterion establish a separate sub-section for each Criterion with three sub-fields:

a. Is this Criterion being applied? Yes; or No

b. A table to fill in with columns for numbers counted for each of the most recent five years of counts; the average number for the years counted, (and for Criteria ii. and v. (above) the 1% threshold being applied for each species/population).

c. A free-text box for providing further information/explanation of the Criterion justification.

v. Prepare guidance on the application of the FNS Criteria, to include *inter alia*:

i. applying the FNS Criteria for only species/populations listed as ‘migratory’ in Annex 6 of CSR1;

ii. choosing the correct 1% population threshold for applying Criteria ii, iv & v when more than one biogeographic population of a species occurs at the site;

iii. applying “appreciable numbers” under Criterion iii;

iv. applying the terms of “regularly supports” for FNS Criteria i, ii, iii, iv & v; and

v. what counts to use to assess qualification under FNS Criterion i.