

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



Decision 5

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

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;

Thanking the Secretariat and the Technical Sub-committee for its review and recommendations for this issues concerning the structure and content of the SIS -2017 version;

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; and *Thanking* the Technical Sub-committee and Secretariat for their recommendations on these matters provided in MOP11 DOC.13 and summarized in Annex 1 of this Decision; and

Thanking the Secretariat for its clarifications and adjustments to the review process for new Flyway Network Sites provided in Annex 2 of this Decision.

The 11th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership

1. *Requests* the Technical Sub-committee, with the input of the Secretariat, to prepare a draft revised FNS Site Information Sheet (SIS) which covers the issues and the recommendations to address them set out in Annex 1;
2. *Also requests* the Secretariat to circulate this draft revised SIS to all Partners for their review and comments;
3. *Further requests* the TSc and Secretariat to further revise the draft SIS in the light of Partners' and issue it in a timely manner for consideration by Partners at MOP12; and

4. *Endorses* the adjusted review process for new Flyway Network Sites and their Site Information Sheets in Annex 2.

Annex 1

Background and issues concerning amendments to improve the ease of use of the Site Information Sheet (FNS-SIS)

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 fill in in their designations and updates to FNSs.
4. Members of the EAAFP Technical Sub-committee and the EAAFP Secretariat have considered this matter. In addition to the issue of possible SIS simplification this review 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, issues and the 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 proposed SIS improvement to address them has been provided to Partners in MOP11 DOC.

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; 30);
 - c. Restructure the SIS to have two clearer sections: Section 1 Essential fields (fields 1-14; 30); and Section 2 additional (Optional) fields (fields 15-29).
9. Note that the “threats” field 30 is identified as “essential” as a consequence of MOP7 Decision 6, which requested partners to report on the threat status of their FNSs.
10. **Recommendation:** option 8.c is recommended, 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 ecological character and management of their FNSs, but to not require this additional information.

11. 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

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. Issue 3: What are the correct FNS Designation Criteria to apply?

15. 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 version is provided in Annex 1 of the SIS 2017 version, reproduced from Annex IV of the Partnership document. The other is provided in Section 10 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 correct application for FNS processes.
16. The Partnership text version of the Criteria reproduces three of the Ramsar Site designation Criteria (Criteria 2, 5 and 6) but does not make it clear 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).
17. 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 waterbird population. Finally, the SIS field 10 list does not include the qualitative Criterion (c.) listed in the Partnership text version of the Criteria.

18. Recommendations:

- i. delete current Annex 1 (Partnership text Criteria) from the SIS; and
- 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:
19. “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.”

20. Note that it would be helpful for Partners to request the Secretariat to assess the extent to which Criterion vi. above has been applied by Partners in their FNS designations to date, so as to further assess whether this Criterion is used and should or should not be retained.

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

22. 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.

23. **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:

24. 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% or 0.25% threshold being applied for each species/population).
 - iii. A free-text box for providing further information/explanation of the Criterion justification.

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

26. it is unhelpful 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.

27. **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.

Annex 2

ADJUSTMENT OF THE REVIEW PROCESS OF NEW FLYWAY NETWORK SITES

- 1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT/MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, NGO, NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNER, GOVERNMENTAL PARTNER**
 - Identification of potential sites for the Network, by reviewing available data, field surveys and determining which sites meet the criteria
- 2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT/MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**
 - Local consultations on-site nomination with stakeholders including community members, site managers, management authorities, and relevant organizations
- 3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT/MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, NGO, NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNER, GOVERNMENTAL PARTNER**
 - For the selected site, preparation of a Site Information Sheet (SIS) including a boundary map
- 4. GOVERNMENT PARTNER**
 - Consultation on-site nomination at the state/national scale with stakeholders including experts and relevant authorities
 - Finalizing the SIS, including the boundary map for the site nomination
 - Submission of SIS and map to the EAAFP Secretariat with a letter requesting that the site be included in the Network
- 5. EAAFP SECRETARIAT**
 - **The Secretariat** will forward Flyway Network Site nominations from Government Partners to Science Unit for review and also cc the email to the Chair of the Technical Sub-Committee and the nominating Government Partner within **5 days** of receipt of a Flyway Network Site nomination.
 - **Science Unit** conducts a preliminary review of the SIS (**7 days**) and follows-up with the nominating Government Partner if addition information is needed (**7 days**).
 - The Science Unit will seek input from relevant **Working Groups/Task Forces** and experts on the details of the nomination (**14 days**), The Science Unit will prepare a summary of key points.
 - **Technical Sub-Committee** reviews the SIS and summary of technical comments and meeting of the criteria and then conveys to the Science Unit, the CE and Chair of the EAAFP the recommendation of the Technical Sub-Committee (**14 days**).
 - All comments on the SIS are referred back to the nominating Government Partners who revise the SIS if necessary.
- 6. EAAFP CHAIR**
 - The Secretariat advises the Chair of the Management Committee on the nomination, showing the results of the review process, and requests the Chair to endorse the nomination by writing formally to the nominating Partner and notifying them about the official inclusion of the site in the Network

7. GOVERNMENT PARTNER & LOCAL GOVERNMENT/MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY, EAAFP Secretariat

- Secretariat prepares the Certificate of Participation and delivers the required number of copies to the Government Partner for distribution
- The Secretariat and the Government Partner agree on a date when the new FNS is announced publicly and the finalized SIS and boundary map are posted on the EAAFP Website
- The nominating Government Partner and relevant stakeholders organize an event at the Site to celebrate the designation of the new FNS
- Notification to all Partners about the inclusion of the site in the Network