

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

NOTE: It is important that you read the accompanying *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document before completing this form.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD MM YY

Designation date

Site Reference Number

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

May 2002

2. Country:

Denmark (Greenland)

3. Name of wetland:

Aqajarua (Mudderbugten) and Sullorsuaq (Kvandalen)

International No. 381

National No. 1

4. Geographical coordinates:

69° 39' N, 51° 58' W

5. Altitude: (min. & max.) 0-200 m

6. Area: 22.350 hectares

7. Overview:

 (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

Terrestrial/marine habitat area: 80/20%

Large U-shaped valley (Sullorsuaq) and shallow marine bay (Aqajarua) and delta with tidal mudflats. In valley river, freshwater lake and ponds. >35 homothermic springs along northern side of valley.

Important breeding, staging and moulting area for waterbirds. More than 1% of world population of Greenland White-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) moult in the area. Important fishing and hunting area for people from nearby towns.

8. Wetland Type

 (please circle the applicable codes for wetland types as listed in Annex I of the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document.)

marine-coastal: A ! B ! C ! D ! E ! F ! G ! H ! I ! J ! K

inland: L ! M ! N ! O ! P ! Q ! R ! Sp ! Ss ! Tp ! Ts

!U ! Va ! Vt ! W ! Xf ! Xp ! Y ! Zg !Zk

man made: 1 ! 2 ! 3 ! 4 ! 5 ! 6 ! 7 ! 8 ! 9

Please now rank these wetland types by listing them from the most to the least dominant:

Approximate ranking: H G A M O Tp Zg

9. Ramsar Criteria: (please circle the applicable criteria; see point 12 below)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:



4

10. Map of site included? Please tick **yes** **-or-** **no**

(Please refer to the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document for information regarding desirable map traits).

As print and Word file on CD-rom.

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

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12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

(Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

1. Large and undisturbed area with shallow marine bay and lush and extensive wetlands in the valley

4. Important moulting area for White-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) and King eider (*Somateria spectabilis*). When the site was designated in 1988 it was based on counts from the 1949 and 1954 primarily because of large concentrations of moulting king eider.

6. For the number of White-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) utilising the area –up to 673 specimens which constitutes 2,1% of the Greenland/Ireland/UK population.

13. General location: (include the nearest large town and its administrative region)

The site is located on the eastern coast of Disco Island in Disco Bay. The Disco Bay is in Greenlandic terms highly populated were c. 20% of the human population is concentrated. The larger towns: Qeqertarsuaq (on Disco Isl.), Aasiaat, Ilulissat and Qasigiannuit, are located within 100-150 km from this Ramsar site.

14. Physical features: (e.g. geology, geomorphology; origins - natural or artificial; hydrology; soil type; water quality; water depth. Water permanence; fluctuations in water level; tidal variations; catchment area; downstream area; climate)

The site is located within the low arctic climatic zone with continuous permafrost. The Disco Bay has 80-100% ice cover during winter. The average tidal amplitude is c. 4.1 meters. The entire site is situated below the 200 m contour and consists of three markedly different habitats (the large U-shaped valley Sullorsuaq, the shallow marine bay Aqajarua and the northern part of the low and sloping sedimentary foreland Qaamassoq).

Sullorsuaq is a large u-shaped glacially eroded valley with a large braiding melt-water river in the

floor. The valley sides are gently sloping towards the riverbed, and many tributaries to cross the main river cross the valley sides. Most of these are melt water rivers, however, a few have clear water from homeothermic springs further up the valley sides. Along the northern side of the valley at least 35 homeothermic springs have been located. In the outer part of the valley, these rivers have cut deep canyons in the Cretaceous sands. Tertiary basalt dikes form rocky outcrops in a few places.

Aqajarua is the shallow water outside the Sullorsuaq river mouth between Narujuk and Alakkariaq. In the innermost parts extensive mudflats are exposed during low tide.

Qaanassoq is situated between a low mountain ridge to the west and the coast to the east. It is traversed by a number of shallow rivers. The surface is mainly loose sediments, only with a single short rocky ridge in the western part. The sediments are Cretaceous sands and sandstones, and the few cliff ridges are Tertiary basalt dikes. The coastal part consists of a rather steep sand beach, with low dunes on the top, forming a barrier behind which an extensive and shallow lagoon is situated. During low tide small mudflats becomes exposed at the river outlets (Egevang & Boertmann 2001b).

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)
No information available.

16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

At the many ponds and small lakes there are extensive marshlands. The river mouth is a wide delta with mud- and sandflats exposed at low tide, and with salt marshes in the higher parts. At the coast of Qaamassoq there are barrier beaches and lagoon. In the drier parts there are dwarf heaths and fell fields. The vegetation on the low dunes and on the backside of the coastal barrier is very sparse, with scattered stands of a.o. *Elymus*, *Honckenya*, and *Mertensia*. On the lower parts of the salt marshes *Puccinellia phryganodes*, *Carex subspathacea*, *C. ursine* and *Juncus articus* are dominating often forming dense cover. In the higher parts of the salt marshes *Carex rariflora* becomes frequent. *Carex stans* is the most prominent *Carex* species in the marshes where it forms dense stands. Where the marsh becomes drier they transform into grassland mainly with *Carex bigelowii*.

The vegetation in the valley of Sullorsuaq is dominated by dwarf scrub heath, mainly rather dry with *Betula*, *Empetrum* and lichens. Here and there it is more hummocky and moist with *Salix* and mosses. In the valley floor *Salix* is domination in the dryer areas on gravel banks and dried out riverbeds. Mosses and herbs like *Polygonum viviparum* and *Bartsia* are numerous in these open *Salix* scrubs. In the marshes *Carex stans* and *Eriophorum triste* and *E. scheuchzeri* are domination and often forming dense stands (Egevang & Boertmann 2001a and b). At the “hot” (homeothermic) springs a rich diversity of vegetation are found.

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)
None

18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.)

A significant number of White-fronted geese (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) population use the site as a moulting area in July-August (468-637 birds in 2001). King eider (*S. spectabilis*) staging and moulting in the area (1575 birds in 2001).

Compare to other parts of Greenland the site holds many breeding pairs of the Canada goose (*Branta Canadensis*) (87 breeding pairs in 2001) (Egevang & Boertmann 2001b).

19. Social and cultural values: (e.g. fisheries production, forestry, religious importance, archaeological site etc.)

Important hunting area for local people (seabirds and seals). Arctic char gill net fishing is popular in the muddy waters of Aqajarua.

20. Land tenure/ownership of: (a) site (b) surrounding area

a and b: Territorial ownership. No privately owned land.

21. Current land use: (a) site (b) surroundings/catchment

a and b: As described in point 19.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

(a) at the site (b) around the site

(a) and (b) past:

There has neither been any human induced changes' adversely affecting the physical structure of the site nor of the surroundings of the site. So the ecological potential of the site is expected to be preserved. The only exception is scallop dredging in the years 1991 – 1998 mostly outside the eastern border of the site. Changes in the composition of the bird species using the site, might have been caused by factors affecting the birds in the whole of their distribution areas, but can also have been caused by traditional hunting and fishing in the site.

Scallop dredging has been mentioned as a potential threat to eiders using the area because of the disturbance caused by the activity. However the scallop fishery has ceased and the decline in the kingeider population was observed before the designation of the site.

(a) and (b) present:

The same as in the past even though there are some traditional human activities in the area and outside the area (boat traffic, camping, fishing and hunting).

(a) and (b) potential: There are no planned activities which will change the physical structure of the site or the surroundings of the site. Any future activities will be regulated. See point 23 and 24.

23. Conservation measures taken: (national category and legal status of protected areas - including any boundary changes which have been made: management practices; whether an officially approved management plan exists and whether it has been implemented)

The site has been designated an "Area important to wildlife" (eiders and other seaducks* on the marine parts and geese** on the terrestrial parts) by the Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum. In general the regulation apply only to activities in relation to mineral exploration. Fixed-wing aircrafts flying more than 500 m above the ground is not regulated.

*In areas designated for eiders and other seaducks all activities need approval in the period 1 Aug. – 30 Sep. (except from some single helicopter flights and navigation with motorised vessels with a maximum speed of 10 knots).

**In areas designated for staging, breeding and moulting geese all activities need approval in the periods 1-20 May, 15-31 May and 15 June – 10 Aug. (except from some single helicopter flights and navigation with motorised vessels with a maximum speed of 10 knots) (Egevang & Boertmann 2001a, Anonymous 2000).

No management plans exists.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plans in preparation; officially proposed as a protected area etc.)

No management plan in preparation. However, within a 2-4 year time frame specific conservation measures of this Ramsar area could be expected following a new Nature protection act planned to enter into force in 2002. The National Environmental Research Institute (NERI) recommends that a monitoring programme is necessary with a 8-10 years interval at this site. In addition, NERI concludes that there is a "high demand of management" due to "high potential conflict" (with human activities) at this Ramsar site (Egevang & Boertmann, 2001a).

25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

NERI has published a status report for this and all other Ramsar areas in Greenland. A field study was done during the summer 2001.

26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

None.

27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

Important hunting and fishing area for commercial hunters/fishermen as well as leisure hunters/fishermen. No tourism activities.

28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

The Greenland Home Rule Government. Ministry of Environment and Nature.

29. Management authority: (name and address of local body directly responsible for managing the wetland)

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30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

Danish Report 1996 on the Ramsar Convention, Denmark and Greenland.

Ministry of Environment and Energy, The National Forest and Nature Agency
Ramsar Areas in Greenland.

Department of Environment and Nature, Greenland. Unpublished report 1998.

Anonymous 2000. Rules for fieldwork and reporting regarding mineral resources (excluding hydrocarbons) in Greenland. Government of Greenland, Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum.

Egevang, C. & Boertmann, D. 2001a. The Greenland Ramsar Sites, a status report. - National Environmental Research Institute (NERI), Denmark. NERI Technical Report No. 346, 96 pp.

Egevang, C. & Boertmann, D. 2001b. The Ramsar sites of Disko, West Greenland. A survey in July 2001. National Environmental Research Institute (NERI), Denmark. NERI Technical Report No. 368, 68 pp.

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