INFORMATION SHEET ON RAMSAR DATABASE

RAMSARSP.15

1.- Country:
Spain

2.- Date:
May 1992

3.- Ref.:
7ES015

4.- Name and address of compiler:
Servicio de Protección de Espacios Naturales.
Dirección General de Conservación del Medio Natural
Conselleria de Medio Ambiente
Bailía 1.46003 VALENCIA.

5.- Name of wetland:
Paraje Natural de las Lagunas de la Mata y Torrevieja

6.- Date of Ramsar designation:
8 May 1990

7.- Geographical coordinates:
38^0 00' N ; 0^0 42' E

8.- General location:
Valencia Region. Province of Alicante. Nearest village: Torrevieja.

9.- Area:
3.700 Has.

10.- Wetland type:
J/5

11.- Altitude:
Average 0'2 m above sea level. Max: 31 m.

12.- Overview:
The site consists of two big lagoons interconnected to each other and to the sea, being under exploitation as salt mines. La Mata lagoon is used to increase the concentration of briny waters and Torrevieja lagoon acts as the crystallizer.

13.- Physical features:
The site is located on a tectonic depression, being controversial its possible "albuferal" origin. At present, the lagoons remains isolated from the sea by a sand bar. Both are holded in a great catchment that is bordered by the reliefs of the Lower Segura fault group in the North, and the Sierra de San Miguel de Salinas in the South. El Chaparral anticlinal separates both lagoons. In 1482 the canal ("El Acequión")

communicating Torrevieja Lagoon to the sea was built. In 1907 was excavated a similar one in La Mata, as well as the intercommunicating channel.

A conveyor belt supplying brines from the Pinoso saline dome was built between 1970 and 1872.

Some contaminated waters are poured into the lagoons due to agricultural practices in the catchment, consisting basically on cytric crops.

Water levels are artificially managed by the salt mine Company according to their needs, and frequent oscillations occur.

The soils that are sorrounding the lagoons are Gleysoles, Solochaks and Solochaks-Solonetz.

The climate is arid mediterranean with average temperatures about 17'5^{0} C and average rainfall between 178 and 217 mm per year. Average insolation is estimated in 2.500-3.000 hours per year.

14.- Ecological features:

The site consists mainly of:

- The landsacape is dominated by saline areas, extending to the edge of the lagoons, where occasionally some reedbeds occurs. Gulls and shorebirds are common in these areas.
- Reedbeds, occurs in areas with freswater supplies, especially most of the northern and wester edge of La Mata and northwestern edge of Torrevieja. This has a great interest as Montagu's harrier nesting area.
- Scrubs and reforested pinewood occurs in El Chaparral anticlinal and south of Laguna de la Mata.
- Crops, are forming a belt that surrounds the lagoons. Unirrigated fields are in the oriental area of La Mata.

15.- Land tenure/ownership of:

a) site: Most of it is State property (State Heritage). At present it is under leasing with the Nueva Compañía Arrendataria de las Salinas de Torrevieja, S.A., belonging to the belgian multinational company Solvay.

b) surrounding area: Many private owners.

16.- Conservation measures taken:

- Natural Place, declared by the Regional Government by the Decree 189/1988 dated on 12 December.
- Included in the Ramsar Sites List.
- Special Protection Area for Birds, according the Directive 79/409 CEE.

17.- Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

- A Management Plan is under preparation.

18.- Current land use: principal human activities in:

a) site: Salt mine exploitation. Small crops. Poachers.

b)surrounding/catchment:

In the coast, urbanistic, touristic and recreative uses. In the catchment, cytric crops.

19.- Disturbances/threats, including changes in land use and

major development projects:

a) at the site:

- The salt mine company manages the hydric levels according their interests. As a result of that, nesting waterbirds often lose their layings and breeding territories are destroyed.
- Litter and rubbles deposits.
- Human activities without control: tourism, four-wheel driving, horseback riding, etc.

b) in the surrounding/catchment:

- Urban develpoments very close to lagoons.
- A projected drainage collector surrounding the lagoons is just to be performed.
- Wastewaters without purifying are poured into.

20.- Hydrological and physical values:

The lagoons have an important function holding water supplies, both from rainfall, and from basin run-off, and in this way, they palliate the affects of catastrophic raifalls, realtively frequent in this area.

21.- Social and cultural values:

- Economic interest: This is the second most important european salt mine and the fourth in the world, according to their production rate. It supplies to the 80 % of the spanish markets and exports 350.000 Tons per year.

- The site owe its cultural value to its landscape, flora and fauna.

22.- Noteworthy fauna:

It is important to underline the abundance of *Artemia salina*, an invertebrate of great interest, being fundamental in the birds' diet. In addition to this, are also important the following nesting species: Montagu's harrier (*Circus pygargus*), shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), black-winged stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*), kentish plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), little tern (*Sterna albifrons*), whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), and stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*). Withe regard to wintering species, the site is important as a collector of black-necked grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), reaching numbers higher that 3.000 birds. Other wintering species are flamingoes (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), great flocks of shorebirds and anatidae, searching a shelter during shooting in the close game areas at El Hondo and Santa Pola.

23.- Noteworthy flora:

Halophylic vegetation is the most important in the site. It includes the following endemic communities of the peninsular south and south-east:

- *Halimiono - Salicornietum alpini*
- *Cistancho lutae - Arthrocnemetum fruticosi*
- *Frankenio corymbosae - Arthrocnemetum macrostachyi*
- *Limonio caesii - Lygeetum sparti*

Additionally, the presence of *Cynomorium coccineum* and *Limonium album*, two very restrictedly spread endemic especies, is also very noticeable.

24.- Current scientific resaearch and facilities:

- Waterbird populations are being monitored periodically.
- Some researches about shelduck management and gen. *Limonium*, that are being made in the area, also affect the site.

25.- Current conservation education:

- An educative and divulgative environmental program for Natural Protected Areas is being developed, and some monitors make didactic tours through the site.
- The Guardamar forest-house works at present as a reception centre.
- Brochures for adults and children, are also available

26.- Current recreation and tourism:

- Some itineraries for adults are being made between mondays and saturdays.

27.- Management authority:

GENERALITAT VALENCIANA. CONSELLERIA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE.
c/ Bailía 1. 46003 Valencia.

28.- Jurisdiction:

COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA.GENERALITAT VALENCIANA.CONSELLERIA DE MEDIO AMBIENTE.

29.- Bibliographical references:

BOX AMOROS, M. (1987). Humedales y áreas lacustres de la Provincia de Alicante. Instituto Gil Albert. Diputación de Alicante.

CALVO, J.F. and IBORRA, J. (1986). Estudio ecológico de la Laguna de la Mata. Instituto Gil Albert. Diputación de Alicante.

DIRECCION GENERAL DEL PATRIMONIO DEL ESTADO. (1972). Las salinas de Torrevieja y La Mata. Ministerio de Hacienda.

30.- Reasons for inclusion:

1 d, 2 c, 2 d, 3 c.

31.- Map of the site:

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