

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.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

4. 3. 93

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DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

France

3. Name of wetland: Petite Camargue

4. Geographical coordinates:

5. **Altitude:** (average and/or max. & min.) Water area 150 NGF, wetlands 1 NGF*

6. **Area:** (in hectares) water area 220,000 ha; wetlands 37,000 ha *General reference level

7. **Overview:** (general summary, in two or three sentences, of the wetland's principal characteristics)

Coastal ponds and marshes fed by the catchments of coastal watercourses; dune and lagoon belts.

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:

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

1a . 1b . 1c . 1d | 2a . 2b . 2c . 2d | 3a . 3b . 3c | 4a . 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

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). 1: 100,000

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

Ministère de l'Environnement
14 Boulevard du General Leclerc
92524 Neuilly/Seine CEDEX

Please provide additional information on each of the following categories by attaching

extra pages (please limit extra pages to no more than 10):

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page. (Please refer to Annex II in the *Explanatory Note and Guidelines* document).

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

Languedoc-Roussillon region, Hérault and Gard départements, Montpellier and Nîmes.

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)

- recent Quaternary alluvial deposits;
 - alluvial plains, lagoons gradually filling in, salinity 7-35 g/l;
 - natural origin with human management;
 - hydrology: 220,000 ha catchment on a crystalline base and karst plateaux;
 - sandy marl;
 - brackish waters with average depth of 1 m, slight variation in depth due to flood waters and winds;
 - contrasted Mediterranean climate with rain in spring and autumn.
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15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

- expansion area for Vistre and Vidourle Rivers;
 - salt wedge equilibrium;
 - dikes on outlet downstream sections of Vidourle and Vistre and floodwater spillways into wetlands;
 - Rhone Canal at Sète used to disperse floodwater flow into the wetlands;
 - digging of spurs to protect the lido;
 - catchment/sea interface - bacteriological protection for the beaches.
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16. Ecological features: (main habitats and vegetation types)

- ZICO (Important Bird Area): LR 23, LR 24, LR 09;
 - crops;
 - fallow;
 - permanent and intermittent meadows
 - sedge meadows;
 - reed beds;
 - sansouires (local name for salicornia steppes);
 - coastal halophytic vegetation;
 - coastal forest;
 - stretches of water (shallow brackish lagoons) where sea fish spawn and hatch - priority habitat.
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17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

- Floristic inventory currently being carried out;
 - compilation of a regional list of protected species under consideration (National Botanical Conservatory at Porquerolles)
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18. Noteworthy fauna: (indicating, e.g., which species are unique, rare, endangered, abundant or biogeographically important; include count data, etc.) Cf. annex 1

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

- Salt pans (Salins du Midi);

- “Les Sables” vineyards (Listel);
 - small-scale fisheries;
 - reforestation within the context of coastal planning and management;
 - Roman and mediaeval remains;
 - strong Camargue regional traditions;
 - Aigues-Mortes, a mediaeval city in the centre of the wetland;
 - value of the landscape for the resort towns of Grau du Roi and La Grande- Motte on the shores of the lido.
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20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site:

- private holdings,
- State-owned land and State maritime zone,
- Conservatoire du Littoral (Coastal Conservation Authority),
- local authorities (communes).

(b) surroundings/catchment: private and local authority (commune) holdings.

21. Current land use:

(a) site:

- cattle farms, peat marshes, major crops, orchards, vineyards, market gardening;
- small-scale fishing on the ponds;
- salt farms (Les Salins du Midi).

(b) surroundings/catchment:

- major crops, wine production, orchards, extensive grazing (shrubland - “garrigue”).
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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:

- unregulated building of huts and second homes on the shores;
- natural and man-made filling in of ponds;
- shifting shoreline
- major infrastructure (extension of Montpellier airport, widening the Rhone Canal to European gauge at Sète);
- abandoned flooded marshland, degradation of the hydrological network, increased soil salinity.

(b) around the site:

- intensive farming on the downstream catchment with application of nutrients (Vistrenque and Mauguio water tables);
 - urban development pressure (pond pollution and eutrophication)
 - pressure from tourism;
 - major infrastructures (TGV-High-Speed Train, motorway).
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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)

- classified sites: Etang de l’Or, Espiguette; ponds at Aigues-Mortes;
 - listed site: Petite Camargue;
 - biotope decree: la Castillonne (Etang de l’Or);
 - Conservatoire du Littoral properties;
 - voluntary nature reserve: (Petite Camargue);
 - Application of Coastal Protection Law (article 146-6).
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24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented: (e.g. management plan in preparation; officially

proposed as a protected area etc.)

- Implementation of Birds and Habitats directives;
 - 4 management plans considered, including 1 already applied;
 - 1 management plan under study (LIFE Management Plan);
 - water development and management outline plan;
 - Operation Agri-Environment;
 - Environment Charter.
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25. Current scientific research and facilities: (e.g. details of current projects; existence of field station etc.)

- Tour du Valat research centre (CNRS)
 - Scientific commission for the ponds
 - Scamandre Centre science committee
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26. Current conservation education: (e.g. visitors centre, hides, information booklet, facilities for school visits etc.)

- Scamandre and Candillargue centres
 - Trial zone for the MEDWET programme for training and extension services
 - Mobile exhibitions
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27. Current recreation and tourism: (state if wetland is used for recreation/tourism; indicate type and frequency/intensity)

- development of tourist facilities on the coast;
 - management plan for visits by the public (now being implemented on the north shore of the Etang de l'Or);
 - Scamandre voluntary nature reserve (guided tours)
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28. Jurisdiction: (territorial e.g. state/region and functional e.g. Dept of Agriculture/Dept. of Environment etc.)

Languedoc-Roussillon Regional Council;
Gard and Hérault Département Councils;

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

- Joint management board for l'Etang de l'Or (Syndicat mixte);
 - Joint management board for la Petite Camargue
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30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only) Cf. annex 2

Please return to: **Ramsar Convention Bureau, Rue Mauverney 28, CH-1196 GLAND, Switzerland**
Telephone: +41 22 999 0170 • Fax: +41 22 999 0169 • e-mail: ramsar@hq.iucn.org