

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:

Mar. 31, 1999

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD	MM	YY

Designation date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Site Reference Number

2. Country:

CAMBODIA

3. Name of wetland: Middle Stretches of Mekong River North of Stoeng Treng.

4. Geographical coordinates: The stretch of the Mekong River from c.5km north of Stoeng Treng to the Lao border from 13 deg. 34'N; 105 deg. 58'E to 13 deg. 54'N; 105 deg. 59'E, a distance of c.37km.

5. Altitude: (average and/or max. & min.) 50m a.s.l (average)

6. Area: (in hectares) 14,600 ha.

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

The stretch of the Mekong River is in the middle reaches above the floodplain. It is characterised by strong turbulent flow with numerous channels between rocky and sandy islands which are completely inundated during the high water and high alluvial islands remain dry.

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: **M, Xf**

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: **1d**

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).

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

Mr. Mam Kosal, Deputy Director, Department of Nature Conservation and Protection, Ministry of Environment, #48, Samdech Preah Sihanouk Blvd., Tonle Bassac, Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Tel/Fax: (855) 23 27844

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).

The area contains specific wetland type which is unusual in the appropriate biogeographical region. It also contains unique habitat for animals at a critical stage of their biological cycle.

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

The site is located in the middle reaches of the Mekong River about 5km from the town of Stoeng Treng where the Tonle San joins the Mekong northwards to the south of Laos border.

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)

This stretch of the Mekong River is in the middle reaches above the floodplain and is characterised by a strong flow with numerous channels between rocky and sandy islands which are completely inundated during high water; and higher islands which do not get inundated. The water is at its lowest level in April and rises c.3m above the minimum level in wet season between June and December. Four main sections can be distinguished from north to south:

1. An area of relatively calm water from the Lao border 6km southwards including several inhabited islands of average elevation 50m. ASL.
2. An area of very turbulent fast-flowing water with numerous sand banks, bars and islands and rocky islands of low elevation which are inundated during the wet season.
3. Another area of relatively calm water where a ridge approaches the west bank producing steep, low cliffs.
4. An area of turbulent fast-flowing water with sand and rock islands of low elevation; and some inhabited islands of higher elevation.

Although rapids are described from this section of the Mekong, there are no true rapids. Between the rocky and sandy islands, the water is extremely turbulent with numerous whirlpools and areas of upwelling, but with relatively little white water. At minimum water level, the water is very low in suspended solids and is bluish in colour.

15. Hydrological values: (groundwater recharge, flood control, sediment trapping, shoreline stabilisation etc)

The presence of the vegetation and their root systems in the riverbed helps reduce the flow of water current especially in the wet season and therefore contribute to flood control and stabilising the river banks. This permanent water channel has the value in ground water recharge in the neighbouring area and downstream as well.

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

The major feature is the presence of a unique type of open forest growing on the sandy islands within the channel of the Mekong. Most of the trees present have roots with extensive development of root hairs growing out of the trunk to about 1m. from the ground, and these are often bent in the direction of water flow. Their function is to provide more stability to the tree, considering the incredibly strong flow they

have to endure. Many of the trees have reduced, narrow leaves reminiscent of rheophyllic trees and there are many epiphytes or parasites, particularly one type of fig, *Ficus sp.* Shrubs such as *Morindopsis sp.* are also common and may form a monoculture on the more rocky islands. This type of forest is markedly different in composition and appearance from adjoining terrestrial forest.

17. Noteworthy flora: (indicating, e.g., which species/communities are unique, rare, endangered or biogeographically important, etc)

Major tree species identified so far are *Barringtonia*, *Eugenia*, *Acacia* and a strangling fig, *Ficus sp.* and the common shrub species known as *Morindopsis sp.*

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

The Irrawaddy Dolphin *Orcaella brevirostris* is found in the calm areas of the river. Approximately 100 species of fishes are identified in the area and at least 50 species are of socio-economic importance. A new species of giant gourami *Osphronemos sp.* has been found in the area and there may be more species are waiting for their identification. There is also a high concentration of Oriental Darters, River Tern, Small Pratincole, and at least five Great Thick-knees and a White-bellied Sea-eagle. Other species such as Asian Openbill and Indian Skimmer are also reported identified here.

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

The area is extremely important for fisheries and for transport. The flooded forest provided refuge for fishes and may contribute to the productivity of detritus down stream of Mekong. The area is important for the rare species such as fish, dolphin and birds. The area serves as fishing ground for local communities especially in the dry season. Due to lack of road in the area, this water channel becomes the only transportation route for the people.

20. Land tenure/ownership of:

(a) site

The Mekong bed including the islands are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Fisheries.

(b) surrounding area

Since there are low population living in the area, only parts of land on and behind the river banks are privately owned, leaving most part unpopulated and thus owned by the state.

21. Current land use:

(a) site

The wetland is used primarily for fishing and water transport. Permanent settlements are mainly on the river banks and only a few families live on the islands in the river bed as their seasonal homes.

(b) surroundings/catchment

Most of the catchment area is intact and consists of open forest and poor soil which probably suffers from water stress towards the end of the dry season. There are some rice cultivation and grazing close to the river.

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

There appears to be little disturbance to the flooded open forest at present. Although there are few families living seasonally on some sandy and rocky islands, their impacts to the area appears to be minimal.

(b) around the site

The major threat to the area comes the prospective dam and hydro-electric generation projects upstream of the Mekong and its tributaries which causes alteration of annual flood cycle.

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)

None

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

There is so far no conservation measures proposed specifically for the area.

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

A brief survey to identify wetland type and resource use issues was made in 1998 during DINIDA supported project on "Inventory and Management of Cambodian Wetlands".

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)

There is no recreation and tourist facility on place.

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

The area falls under the administrative responsibility of the Stoeng Treng province. The Department of Fisheries has the jurisdiction over use of fish resources in the area.

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

There is no clear indication of the authority in responsibility for the management of wetlands. The Department of Fisheries and the Department of Nature Conservation and Protection are jointly responsible for the management of wetlands.

Department of Fisheries
#186, Norodom Blvd. Tonle Bassac,
Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh

Department of Nature Conservation and Protection,
Ministry of Environment
#48, Samdech Preah Sihanouk Blvd., Tonle Bassac,
Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh.

30. Bibliographical references: (scientific/technical only)

Asian Wetland Bureau, 1994, Wetland Surveys in Cambodia to Identify Sites of International Importance, Draft Final Report, AWB, Kuala Lumpur.

Wetlands International, 1996, Cambodia Wetlands – Ornithological Survey, WI, Kuala Lumpur.

Mundkur, T. et al., 1995, *Survey for Large Waterbirds in Cambodia, March-April 1994. IUCN species Survival Commission. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.*

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