



**Memorandum of Cooperation between
The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)
and
Stetson University College of Law**

Preamble

Since its inception in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971) has provided the single most important intergovernmental forum on wetland conservation issues. According to the Convention's mission statement, the Contracting Parties agree to "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world."

The Convention is founded on three pillars of:

- promoting wise use of wetlands,
- developing international cooperation, and
- developing a network of Wetland sites of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

The conservation and wise management of wetlands through the designation of wetlands for the Ramsar List of Wetlands of international Importance (also known as the Ramsar List), especially the obligation to maintain the ecological character of designated sites, deserves special recognition. This obligation recognizes the importance of wetlands for the maintenance of healthy and productive inland freshwater and coastal systems. In the context of water and wetlands, the Convention on Wetlands thus addresses issues which guide its Contracting Parties on ways to achieve sustainable development.

Within the general obligations set out by the treaty, Contracting Parties, meeting as the Conference of the Parties (COP), identify priorities for action through a Strategic Plan. Implementation of this Memorandum of Cooperation shall be through joint actions within the framework of the Strategic Plan.

Stetson University, located in the U.S. state of Florida, is a comprehensive university committed to academic excellence and distinctive values-centered programs. One of Stetson University's core values is environmental responsibility. Stetson University College of Law (SUCOL) supports this value through its Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy, which serves as an interdisciplinary focal point for education, research, and service activities related to global, regional, and local biodiversity issues.

The Institute has contributed significantly to wetland-related education and the work of the Ramsar Convention. For example, Stetson University College of Law was the first law school to be a member of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee (USNRC) and the first law school to sign a memorandum of cooperation with the Ramsar Convention. Stetson students and professors work with the USNRC to facilitate the designation and listing of Ramsar Sites within the United States. Stetson students and professors have conducted research and published on many legal and policy issues relevant to the pillars of the Ramsar Convention, including: the benefits associated with Ramsar designation, the use of the term "ecosystem services" in international documents, wetland mitigation and

restoration incentives, and National Ramsar Committees. Moreover, Stetson students have produced useful research for the Ramsar Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), including water law case studies which contributed to its work on environmental flows, as well as research on the approaches taken by Contracting Parties adopting the avoid-mitigate-compensate sequence in their national laws and policies. The Institute has hosted STRP writing workshops, and it hosts every year the Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition, which highlights global environmental challenges, including those associated with wetlands, and for which the Ramsar Secretary General has served as a final round judge.

The Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL recognize the fundamental role played by wetlands in regulating and providing water, in supporting maintenance of cultural and biological diversity, in ensuring high ecosystem productivity, and in providing services and benefits for people and the planet. The Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL also recognize the importance of integrating law and policy considerations into wetland conservation efforts.

The Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL share a commitment to environmental responsibility and the wise use of wetlands as expressed through their previous collaborations. Turning to the future, the two institutions wish to reinforce existing mechanisms and establish new and specific mechanisms for enhancing synergies and partnerships to achieve common goals.

Therefore, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL agree to the following:

Article 1. Mechanisms for Programme Cooperation

A. The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL will develop a collaborative law and policy programme for sustainable wetland and water resource conservation and management by increasing current consultation and cooperation between them.

B. For general matters, the focal points for the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL are respectively the Deputy Secretary General and the Director of the Institute for Biodiversity Law and Policy, or their assigned delegates.

C. The focal points, or their assigned delegates, may meet from time to time to assess the implementation of this Memorandum, exchange documents, and review on-going activities.

Article 2. Joint Activities

A. Common areas for joint conservation activities, as identified below, relate clearly to the Fourth Ramsar Strategic Plan (2016-2024) and will be reviewed annually or at the request of either party. Such activities may include:

- Stetson faculty and Biodiversity Fellows and other Stetson students working under the direction of Stetson faculty conducting research related to wetland law and policy and compiling a periodic bibliography of scientific articles discussing the Ramsar Convention or Ramsar Sites.
- Collaboration with Ramsar regional initiatives and Centers, such as *inter alia* the Caribbean Wetland Initiative, the Mangroves Initiative, the High Andean Wetland Strategy, the Plata River Basin and CREHO (Centro regional para el Hemisferio Occidental), as appropriate.
- Collaboration on wetland-related conferences and symposia.

- Guest lectures by Ramsar Secretariat staff (in Florida and/or via videoconference).
- Visits to the Ramsar Secretariat as part of Stetson study abroad or spring break programs.
- Hosting Ramsar meetings and workshops at SUCOL.

B. The Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and SUCOL will provide each other with details of their annual work programmes to identify possible areas of collaboration.

C. The extent to which the collaborative programme and the joint conservation activities are implemented will be subject to the availability of resources.

Article 3. Obligation, Review, and Termination

A. This Memorandum of Cooperation constitutes an expression of a shared objective and vision. However, each party's actions will be considered to be that party's sole and separate action, for all purposes, and neither party shall claim to be acting on behalf of, or as agent for, the other party to this Memorandum of Cooperation.

B. The term for this Memorandum of Cooperation is six years. The agreement may be reviewed at the request of either party (usually annually) and may be terminated by either party subject to six months' notice in writing.

Alia Grodzicki

11/3/2016.

Acting Secretary General
Convention on Wetlands
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)



14/3/2016

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