

Supporting Wetlands, Livelihoods and Biodiversity in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Preliminary Working Meeting to Implement the Regional Flyway Initiative in the People's Republic of China

Webinar hosted by the

Asian Development Bank

Co-organized with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat and Center for EAAF Studies

29 September 2021

14:00–16:20 Beijing/Manila Time

Additional Working Session 16:20–17:00

Zoom: https://adb-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwucuuhrT0uH9GAsDOToWIMs9fxe_54ew7Z

Meeting ID: 983 5293 6455; Passcode: Flyway2021

A. Background

1. The wetlands of the People's Republic of China (PRC) support globally important biodiversity values and ecosystem services which support the livelihoods of millions of people. These wetlands are part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF): one of nine major global routes used by migratory waterbirds on their annual migrations from the Arctic Circle in the north to the southern hemisphere. The PRC's wetlands provide critical habitats for over 210 species of waterbirds to rest and refuel, as well as water, flood protection, carbon sequestration, and other resources for human communities. Many of these values are under threat, from agriculture, development, hunting, and other factors. The government, supported by civil society organizations (CSOs), development agencies, and other stakeholders, is undertaking comprehensive efforts to conserve wetlands, yet these efforts are challenged by climate change, rising human populations, limited financing, and other issues. There is a need to scale up these efforts, through regional initiatives that emphasize partnerships and the achievement of benefits for nature and people.

2. The Regional Flyway Initiative (RFI) is being developed as a long-term program to help protect and restore wetlands in East and Southeast Asia. The RFI will contribute to the goals of the EAAF Partnership Strategic Plan 2019–2028 to develop a network of internationally important sites for migratory waterbirds, as well as support national targets for conservation and livelihoods. It aims to build upon the many efforts for wetland conservation and livelihoods in the region. The RFI will be launched at the 15th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in October 2021, Yunnan Province, PRC. Preparation for the RFI began in 2020 and has included: an international webinar on 16 October 2020 to initiate dialogue on the RFI; and preparation of a two-year project (2021–2023) to develop the RFI, funded by a grant of \$1.0 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). A coalition of RFI partners is being established.

3. PRC support and participation will be critical to the success of the RFI. Representatives from the PRC's National Forestry and Grassland Administration and Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) attended the webinar in October 2020; and the RFI was briefly introduced by ADB at two national pre-COP15 events arranged by MEE: during a Business and Biodiversity Forum on 6–7 June 2021 and at a subforum of the Eco Forum Global Guiyang on 12 July 2021.

4. A key next step is to facilitate national dialogue to plan and implement the RFI in the PRC.

B. Workshop Objectives

1. Introduce and raise awareness of the RFI among key national agencies as well as CSOs, donors, and development agencies supporting wetland management in the PRC.
2. Learn from current and previous wetland projects: achievements and challenges.
3. Help identify next steps to plan and implement the RFI in the PRC.

MEETING AGENDA

14:00–14:20 Opening Remarks

Chair: **Mr. Thomas Panella**, Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division (EAER), East Asia Department, ADB

1. **Ms. Yolanda Fernandez Lommen**, Country Director, China Resident Mission, ADB.
2. **Ms. Li Yan**, Deputy Director General, Department of Wetland Management of the RAMSAR Administrative Authority of China, National Forestry and Grassland Administration, People's Republic of China.
3. **Mr. Liu Ning**, Deputy Director General, Department of Nature and Ecology Conservation, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, People's Republic of China.

14:20–14:50 Session 1: Regional Flyway Initiative and National Framework for Wetland Conservation (10 minutes each)

Chair: **Mr. Thomas Panella**, Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division (EAER), East Asia Department, ADB

This session will: introduce the Regional Flyway Initiative; summarize the national plans and targets that form the basis for wetland conservation in the People's Republic of China; and identify the national sites of highest global conservation priority in the East-Asian Australasian Flyway.

- Regional Flyway Initiative: Introduction, Objectives, Progress, and Next Steps. **Mr. Duncan Lang**, Senior Environment Specialist, ADB; and **Mr. Vinayagan Dharmarajah**, Regional Director, BirdLife International.
- East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership: Securing Internationally Important Wetlands for Migratory Waterbirds and Local Communities. **Mr. Doug Watkins**, Chief Executive, EAAFP Secretariat.
- National Plans, Policies, and Targets for Wetland and Waterbird Conservation in the People's Republic of China. **Professor Lei Guangchun**, Director, Center for EAAF Studies.

14:55–15:20 Session 2: Learning from Current and Previous Projects (7 minutes each)

Chair: **Mr. Nicolas Rossin**, Regional Task Team Leader on Biodiversity, Agence Française de Développement

This session will briefly reflect on achievements and challenges of previous projects including: how they were designed, how challenges were overcome, how they contributed to national targets.

- UNDP/GEF Strengthening the Protected Area Network for Migratory Bird Conservation Along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) in China Project. **Professor Zhang Mingxiang**, Project Environmental Policy and Legislation Expert; and Deputy Dean of School of Ecology and Nature Conservation, Beijing Forestry University.
- FAO program on wetlands in the People's Republic of China. **Dr. Chungshen Yao**, GEF Portfolio Officer, FAO in China.
- The Nature Conservancy program on wetlands in the People's Republic of China. **Dr. Kang Wei**, Land Strategy Director, The Nature Conservancy China Program.

15:25–16:15 Session 3: Next Steps to Establish the Regional Flyway Initiative – Stakeholder Feedback (5 minutes each)

Chair: **Mr. Mark R. Bezuijen**, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division (EAER), East Asia Department, ADB

This session will facilitate a preliminary stakeholder assessment to help planning for the RFI. Participants have been requested to provide feedback guided by the following questions:

- *What are the potential links between the RFI and your organization's wetland work?*
- *How to ensure that RFI projects benefit livelihoods as well as biodiversity?*
- *What are the potential challenges and next steps to establish the RFI in the PRC?*

Note: Other participants are kindly requested to provide questions in the chat box, for discussion in the working session after the formal close.

National agencies

- Ministry of Natural Resources. **Ms. Gao Aimei**, Deputy Division Director, Department of Territorial and Spatial Ecology Rehabilitation.
- Ministry of Ecology and Environment. **Ms. Du Jinmei**, Deputy Director, Division of Biodiversity, Foreign Environmental Cooperation Center.
- National Forestry and Grassland Administration. **Ms. Hu Xinxin**, Acting Director, Department of Wetland Management, RAMSAR Administrative Authority of China.

Civil Society Organizations

- Paulson Institute. **Dr. Jianbin Shi**, Director of Conservation Programme-Wetlands.
- Wetlands International-China Program. **Dr. Zhang Xiaohong**, Yellow Sea China Project Manager.

- International Crane Foundation. **Ms. Yu Qian**, ICF China Director.

Development agencies: planning frameworks for the RFI

- Agence Française de Développement. **Ms. Xiaoting Jin**, Senior Project Officer, Beijing Office.
- Asian Development Bank. **Ms. Silvia Cardascia**, Water Resources Specialist, EAER. *Yellow River Ecological Corridor Program and Yangtze River Economic Belt Initiative.*

16:15–16:20 Summary and Closing Remarks

- **Mr. Thomas Panella**, Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division (EAER), East Asia Department, ADB

16:20–17:00 Continuing Session 3: Open Working Discussion (40 minutes)

Chair: **Dr. Lu Cai**, Deputy Director, Center for EAAF Studies

- *Open to all participants*
- *Please write questions in chat box during the session, for discussion in this session*
- *Key discussion points may include for example: (i) what are the potential links between the RFI and your organization's wetland work? (ii) how to ensure that RFI projects benefit livelihoods as well as biodiversity? (iii) what are the potential challenges and next steps to establish the RFI in the PRC?*