TWELFTH MEETING OF PARTNERS OF THE EAST ASIAN – AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP
Cebu, Philippines, 8-14 November 2025

Decision 13

Review and Recommended Course of Action for the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force

Submitted by EAAFP Secretariat

Summary

The coastal wetlands of the Yellow Sea Ecoregion are of global significance and they support a large proportion of the waterbirds of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway for one or more crucial parts of their annual cycle.

The Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China are working to identify and protect these wetlands, and they are supported in this work by the global community.

The EAAFP at MOP8 (Kushiro 16-21 January 2015[1]) confirmed a formal Terms of Reference for the Yellow Sea Ecoregion Task Force (YSTF) and that since then the EAAFP YSTF has worked to implement the Terms of Reference with meetings and reports to the subsequent MOP of the Partnership.

The 12th Meeting of Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership:

1. *Agrees* the EAAFP maintains an EAAFP Yellow Sea Ecoregion Task Force;
2. *Updates* the Terms of Reference adopted at MOP8. (Attached at the Appendix).
3. *Instructs* the incoming YSTF convenor to prepare a work plan for the period 2026-2028.
4. *Endorse*s a new Convenor for the period 2026-2028.

Background

1. At MOP5 (Siem Reap 6-10 December 2010[1]) the Partners of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) agreed (para 105 and Action 19) to establish a Yellow Sea Ecoregion Task

[1] Microsoft Word - EAAFP MoP5 Dec2010_final Report_v2.doc

Force. At this time, Wetlands International offered to take the lead in initiating work to develop a work programme.

2. At MOP6 (Palembang 19-22 March 2012[2]), Wetlands International reported on behalf of the Task Force that:
   a. The Task Force has been working to engage Government Partners to identify a way forward.
   b. IUCN has undertaken a situation analysis on the loss of tidal flats in East Asia, leading to a motion for the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC) in the Republic of Korea in September 2012.
   c. It was proposed that consultants will circulate the report and will meet with China and the Republic of Korea to discuss how to frame a resolution for WCC to produce an effective resolution.
   d. Partners are encouraged to read and respond to the desk study report when they receive it.

3. At MOP7 (Alaska 10-14 June 2013[3]), the YSTF met and discussed the challenge of developing a multi-state work programme. There was recognition that a bilateral program for the conservation of wetlands in the Yellow/West Sea was desirable. It was recognized that development of an EAAFP work programme needed to integrate with National programmes and processes. The Chair reported back on work towards IUCN Resolution 28. Action 17 of the MOP was to:

   > Progress intra- and inter-governmental discussions to develop a Yellow Sea partnership program.

4. At MOP8 (Kushiro 16-21 January 2015[4]), the EAAFP YSTF along with the Shorebird Working Group held a participatory workshop and reported back to the MOP. The report back led by EAAFP YSTF Chair Doug Watkins included:
   a. Adoption of EAAFP Collaborative Work Programme for Shorebird Conservation - Yellow Sea Ecoregion 2015-2016. Subsequently published by WWF Hong Kong and available here.
   b. The objectives at this time of the Task Force were:
      i. Develop a program of work at "collaboration sites" where EAAF Partners are working with local partners to improve outcomes from migratory waterbirds".
      ii. Develop complementary activities in other parts of the Flyway for priority shorebirds.
   c. A formal term of reference for the Task Force were presented and adopted. These are at Appendix Two.
   d. The report back to the Plenary identified the following elements of this approach as:
      i. Direct linkage to the EAAFP Implementation Strategy
      ii. Builds on existing work by EAAF Partners
      iii. Responds to the needs of threatened migratory waterbird populations
      iv. Links with complementary Initiatives

[2] Microsoft Word - EAAFP MoP6 Report March2012_Final
[3] MOP7 Programme
[4] MOP7 Programme

e. Doug Watkins (Wetlands International) stood down as Task Force Chair and Bruce McKinlay (New Zealand Government Partner) took over as Task Force Chair.

5. MOP 8 was followed up with activities to further these objectives and the following events:
   a. Regional Yellow Sea Workshop, Beijing, August 2016
   b. IUCN World Conservation Congress, Hawaii, September 2016, which recommended the following:
      i. Propose draft resolution to Ramsar COP on conservation of Yellow Sea intertidal habitats
      ii. Form a Joint Committee of the countries of the Yellow Sea, EAAFP, Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and IUCN to move forward Motion 24 and outcome from Beijing, with possible first workshop in December 2016
      iii. Create joint Task Forces around a) migratory waterbirds; b) habitat and fisheries; and 3) World Heritage designation

6. At MOP 9 (Singapore 11-15 January 2017[5]), the Task Force held side events and reported to the Plenary. The Task Force reported against the EAAPF Strategic Plan objectives and included a wide range of activities which were shared by attendees at the Task Force Meeting. The report reflected the activity by Partners and colleagues in the Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion. The EAAFP YSTF at this meeting developed a work programme 2017-2018 which was presented to the Plenary and adopted by the MOP[6].

7. At MOP 10 (Changjiang Hainan 10-14 December 2018), the EAAFP YSTF Convenor submitted a pre-MOP report on activities[7]. The most successful aspects of the work of the YSTF were listed as:
   a. Accession of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the Partnership
   b. Ongoing survey work between National Union for Conservation of Nature and Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust has been extremely successful in identifying key areas in the West Sea.
   c. Leadership by the Government of the People's Republic of China to protect coastal wetlands through implementing the Blue Line Project and establishing further protected areas in the Bohai Sea.
   d. Leadership by the Republic of Korea and China to develop a transnational application for World Heritage status for the Yellow/West Sea.

8. Conversely, the following areas for work were identified:
   a. Ineffectiveness in providing leadership to be able to implement the Collaborative Work Programme for the Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion 2015-16.
   b. There are a lot of highly effective domestic and bilateral activities which has been extremely positive for migratory waterbirds occurring in the Yellow/West Sea.

[5] 9th Meeting of Partners (MOP 9) - Eaaflyway
[6] Para 209 9th Meeting of Partners (MOP 9) - Eaaflyway
[7] SurveyMonkey Analyze - Export

c. The presence of the Convenor in New Zealand has led to inefficiencies in utilizing this role to work with colleagues in the key countries in the Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion.
d. The Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Forces needs financial and organisational assistance to be able to advance our intersessional work.
e. The Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force would benefit from the support of the Technical Committee to advance analysis of the best way to develop an intersessional workplan.

9. At MOP 10, the YSTF met and reported to the Plenary that:
   a. There was consensus on the ongoing need for a Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force.
   b. There is a need for a revised goal which would emphasise reporting and information sharing as key activities for the Task Force.
   c. The Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force will revise its terms of reference to reflect the positive changes current situation in the Yellow/West Sea.
   d. This will include an update on the membership criteria of the revised Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force.
   e. The work programme of the Yellow/West Sea Task Force was proposed to be:
      i. To maintain a Yellow/West Sea Eco-Region Task Force
      ii. To review the goal of the Task Force to emphasise reporting and information sharing as key activities for the Task Force.
      iii. To develop a brief and terms of reference to implement any revised goal for reporting at MOP 11.
      iv. To support the following areas of work during the intersessional period:
         - The 2020 meetings including INTECOL, CBD COP and CMS COP.
         - Providing support on projects relating to the control of *Spartina* throughout the Yellow Sea. Including considering sponsoring a technical workshop.
         - Supporting the Transnational World Heritage process
         - Support the Yancheng Coastal Workshop

10. At MOP 11 (Brisbane, Australia 12-17 March 2023[8]), the YSTF met and received reports from participants about their intersessional work. Reports were received from:
    a. IUCN
    b. BirdLife International
    c. Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation (KOEM)
    d. Center for East Asia-Australasian Flyway Studies (CEAAF) Beijing Forestry University
    e. Eco Korea
    f. Hanns Seidel Foundation

11. The minutes of this meeting were presented to the Plenary. Key points are:
    a. There was a consensus that a EAAFP YSTF continued to be justified.
    b. There is a significant gap in our understanding of the links between the EAAFP YSTF, and the IUCN Led YSWG

[8] MoP11 - Eaaflyway

c. The current goal and role of the EAAFP YSTF was accepted as appropriate for the Task Force at this time.

12. Subsequent to MOP the IUCN 2023 Situation Analysis was published. [9].

13. The Convenor contributed to the Review of Operations of EAAFP Working Groups and Task Forces in September 2024.

14. Since MOP11, the Task Force has been engaged in providing consistent science information to members of the group. This work is supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, who compile reports, and we share these with the group.

15. At the Our Ocean Conference (OOC) Held at Busan, Republic of Korea on 30 April 2025: a side event entitled, Collaborating for Conservation: Protecting the Yellow Sea's Biodiversity and Ecosystems was held. The main recommendations from this side event are:
    a. Strengthen Transboundary and Inter-Agency Cooperation
    b. Advance Ecosystem Resilience and Biodiversity Conservation
    c. Enhance Science-Policy Integration
    d. Empower Local Stakeholders and Governance
    e. Promote International Cooperation and Technical Exchange
    f. Expand Transboundary Cooperation

16. At the 2025 World Coastal Forum the EAAFP organised and held a "Yellow Sea World Heritage Sites: Flyway Transboundary Collaboration Workshop". Approximately 25 people attended and held focused conversations on:
    i. Coastal Wetland Management and Restoration
    ii. Communication, Education Participation and Awareness (CEPA)
    iii. Research and Monitoring
    iv. Governance & Partnerships

17. Each group was asked to address the following questions:
    i. Transboundary Collaboration: what does this look like; what two actions are needed to make this collaboration happen?
    ii. Organisational Capacity: what capacity does your organisation currently have to contribute to these actions?
    iii. Challenges and Solutions: what key challenges does you organisation face in achieving effective transboundary collaboration?

18. The feedback from each of the tables is summarised and is attached at Appendix 1. The full feedback is available on request[10].

[9] IUCN (2023). The 2023 IUCN Situation analysis on ecosystems of the Yellow Sea with particular reference to intertidal and associated coastal habitats. Bangkok, Thailand: IUCN.
[10] Requests to bmckinlay@doc.govt.nz

19. As part of the feedback received the title of any future taskforce has been raised. Suggestions include: EAAFP Yellow Sea Network or EAAFP West Sea Network or retaining the formal title of EAAFP Yellow Sea Eco-Region Taskforce.

20. These are in the main similar issues that side events at previous EAAFP MOP's have identified.

21. A recent review of the operation of EAAFP Working Groups & Task Forces recommended that:
    a. "the leads of Working Groups and Task Forces, with the support and advice of the Secretariat and TSc, review and as necessary update their Terms of Reference and *modus operandi,* as necessary filling gaps in these" and:
    b. *Report* on the outcomes of these reviews and submit updated TORs and *modus operandi* to Partners at MOP13.

Decision:

22. MOP 12 needs to:
    a. Confirm the intention to have an EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Eco-Region Taskforce.
    b. Endorse or update the Terms of Reference adopted at MOP8. (Attached at the Appendix).
    c. In the event of the MOP affirming a EAAFP YSTF provides a clear expectation that the Task Force will prepare a work plan for the period 2026-2028.
    d. Endorse a new Convenor for the period 2026-2028.

Annex 1

Decision 13

Review and Recommended Course of Action for the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force

Submitted by EAAFP Secretariat

Acknowledging the global significance of the coastal wetlands of the Yellow/West Sea Eco-Region and the large proportion of the waterbirds of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway which rely on these wetlands for one or more crucial parts of their annual cycle;

Recognising the ongoing commitment of the Governments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea, and the People's Republic of China to identify and protect these wetlands;

Further recognizing the ongoing efforts of the global community to support the work of the governments of the Yellow Sea;

Recalling at MOP8 (Kushiro 16-21 January 2015[11]) the decision by the Meeting of Partners to confirm a formal Terms of Reference for the Yellow Sea Task Force EAAFP Implementation Strategy;

Further recalling the work by the EAAFP Yellow Sea Task Force to implement the Terms of Reference with meetings and reports to the subsequent MOP of the Partnership;

The 12th Meeting of Partners
of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway Partnership

1. *Agrees* the EAAFP maintains an EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force;
2. *Updates* the Terms of Reference adopted at MOP8 (attached at Appendix 2);
3. *Instructs* the incoming YSTF convenor to prepare a work plan for the period 2026-2028; and
4. *Endorse*s a new Convenor for the period 2026-2028.

[11] MOP7 Programme

Appendix 1

Summary of Feedback: Yellow Sea World Heritage Sites: Flyway Transboundary Collaboration Workshop 25 September 2025

Summary of Workshop Feedback

The Trilateral World Heritage (WH) Management Workshop brought together stakeholders to strengthen transboundary collaboration for conserving Yellow Sea World Heritage Sites. The workshop focused on four thematic areas: Coastal Wetland Management, CEPA (Communication, Education, Participation, and Awareness), Research and Monitoring, and Governance and Partnerships.

Coastal Wetland Management, led by Nicola Crockford, emphasized empowering site managers through AI tools to overcome language barriers. A co-designed survey was proposed to identify site-level challenges and opportunities. The group recommended a shared management plan with agreed objectives and evidence-based practices, alongside a list of 50 priority research questions. Enhanced trilateral data sharing and an award scheme to encourage collaboration were also suggested.

CEPA, facilitated by Huizhe Hu, focused on learning from the Wadden Sea's trilateral cooperation. China and Korea have developed educational materials and ecotourism infrastructure. Recommendations included site manager exchanges, a Yellow Sea Site Manager Network, and Sister/Pairs Sites for joint actions. A CEPA framework tailored to diverse audiences and professional ecotourism training were proposed. NGOs were identified as key facilitators amid budget constraints.

Research and Monitoring, led by Ding Li Yong, discussed challenges like limited data sharing, lack of standardized protocols, and funding gaps. Solutions included joint research on shared species, standardized monitoring, and a network of international labs. Emphasis was placed on multilingual platforms, collaborative research, and identifying shared threats and gaps.

Governance and Partnerships, facilitated by Bruce McKinlay, advocated for bottom-up cooperation from site managers, with gradual engagement of high-level bodies like NEASPEC. Clear, inclusive governance structures, trust-building, and annual exchange meetings were recommended to enhance coordination and include DPRK when feasible.

Appendix 2

EAAFP Yellow Sea Ecoregion Task Force Terms of Reference revised after consultation with Partners at the Yellow Sea World Heritage Sites: Flyway Transboundary Collaboration Workshop held in association with World Coastal Forum Sept 2025.

EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Task Force
Terms of Reference MOP12 v 2.6

Goal: *To foster the implementation of international collaborative conservation activities by EAAFP Partners around the coastal wetlands of the Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion to reduce the decline of migratory waterbird populations, including to ensure any use of intertidal resources is sustainable.*

Role

The role of the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force will be to promote Regional and International Cooperation and report on progress on:

1. **National-Level Coordination**: Promote national partnerships and coordination mechanisms within each of the three Yellow/West Sea countries to support conservation goals.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement and Awareness**: Empower and develop capacity of site managers through incentives and co-management to promote consistent management of World Heritage sites, and implement outreach programs targeting decision-makers using CEPA frameworks.
3. **Regional and International Cooperation:** Facilitate collaboration through multilateral frameworks and inclusive coordination mechanisms, including trilateral and transboundary efforts , with a particular focus on facilitating trilateral cooperation on World Heritage Site protection, management and restoration.
4. **Conservation and Ecosystem Management**: Strengthen protected area network management including to ensure any use is sustainable, and restoration, including for disaster risk reduction, with a focus on maintaining and restoring ecological connectivity to enhance migratory bird populations.
5. **Science-Policy Integration and Monitoring**: Establish platforms for science-policy dialogue, promote standardized approaches for monitoring and data sharing, and monitor the effectiveness of conservation initiatives.

Term

The EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force will operate until the end of 2028 and at this time its function and Terms of Reference will be reviewed.

Membership

Membership of the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force will be open to:

1. The EAAFP focal point for Government Partners from the countries around the Yellow Sea Ecoregion
2. The designated representative of other EAAFP Partners
3. The designated representative of key EAAFP Working Groups and Task Forces (especially the Shorebird Working Group, Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force and Monitoring Taskforce)
4. Representatives of national experts and conservation organisations from People's Republic of China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Republic of Korea,
5. Site Managers from World Heritage sites around the Yellow/West Sea; and
6. Other experts as required.

Officers

A Chairperson of the EAAFP Yellow Sea Ecoregion Task Force will be elected amongst its members. This position should ideally be filled by an EAAFP Governmental Partner of one of the states bordering the Yellow Sea.

Meetings

The EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force should aim to hold face-to-face meetings at least once a year. Other face-to-face meetings may be arranged as circumstances allow (e.g., at EAAFP MOPs). Between meetings, business will be conducted electronically such as via an appropriate Task Force website.

Implementation Arrangements for the EAAFP Collaborative Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Work Program

The EAAFP Secretariat will provide assistance with communication mechanisms for the Task Force. The members of the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force will nominate an in-country focal point to lead engagement in the Task Force and to be a conduit for receiving and sharing communications within the Taskforce and with country colleagues.

Reporting

A report on the implementation of the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Work Program will be produced for each EAAFP MOP. A draft of this report will initially be shared with the National Government Partners of the Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion. It will be based on the contributions from Partners and other contributors to the activities.

At each EAAFP MOP, the Task Force Chairperson should give an overview report on the development and implementation, summarizing progress, lessons learned, challenges and any adjustments needed. Other reports will be produced by Task Forces as required by the EAAFP Secretariat or relevant EAAFP Working Group.

Financing

The operations of the EAAFP Yellow/West Sea Ecoregion Task Force are to be financed primarily by its members and the organizations they represent. Efforts will also be made to fund-raise from appropriate sources.