



Water Management Planning in Northeast China

Program Overview

In Northeast China, four national level nature reserves (Zhalong, Xianghai, Keerqin and Momoge) have been identified as critical wetlands along the Siberian Crane flyway in east Asia. These remaining wetlands provide important breeding habitats and stop-over sites for several crane species and thousands of other migratory waterbirds on the Songnen Plain. SCWP consultants are working with reserve staff and regional water resource managers to develop water management and wetland restoration plans for these wetlands, with the goal of securing long-term water supplies for these sites.

Water management plans were completed and approved by the SCWP in 2005 for Zhalong, Xianghai and Keerqin Nature Reserves, while a fourth plan is now being developed for Momoge Nature Reserve. The Northeast Institute of Geography and Agricultural Ecology, with the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has developed a GIS-based management system for these key wetlands. This project will provide the technical basis for the management and updating of wetland information, while also enhancing the decision-making ability for the scientific management and protection of endangered species.

SCWP staff are working with local government agencies and the Heilongjiang Provincial Government and Songliao Water Management Commission to develop a long-term water supply mechanism and pilot restoration project for the Zhalong wetlands. Fifty million cubic meters of water were directed to the wetlands from canals surrounding the reserve in the last half of 2003, with 140 million cubic meters supplied to the wetlands in the first half of 2005. No releases occurred in 2006 or 2007, while approximately 50 million cubic meters were released in the spring of 2008. Additional water diversions to the wetlands in Xianghai and Momoge Nature Reserves have occurred with positive results.

Project staff are currently focusing on how to improve related agencies' attention to the importance of waterbird habitat and water requirements on the northeast Songnen Plain; on how to bring the needs for water allocations to maintain wetland functions into watershed and regional water resource programmes; and to promote the establishment of long-term water supply mechanisms for the four project sites.



Diversion of water from wetlands for irrigation, city water supplies, and other development needs is a critical threat to the remaining habitat for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds on the Songnen Plain in northeast China. Photos by Crawford Prentice

The UNEP/GEF Siberian Crane Wetland Project (SCWP) is a six-year effort to protect a network of globally important wetlands in Asia that are of critical importance for migratory waterbirds and other wetland biodiversity. The project uses the globally threatened Siberian Crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) as a flagship species, linking activities at 16 key wetlands along the species' western and eastern flyways in Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran and China.



Water release into the Zhalong wetlands in April 2008. Photo by Sara Gavney Moore

Program Highlights

- Water management plans for wetlands are being incorporated into regional water management plans, integrating the water needs of wildlife into management plans for regional development.
- Management plans focus on development of long-term water supply mechanisms for the reserve wetlands.
- The successful Workshop on Water Needs for the Habitats of Siberian Cranes and other Waterbirds in NE China's Songnen Plain was held in September 2007. The workshop participants recommended:
 1. Relevant government agencies include the management plans for Zhalong, Xianghai and Keerqin in their watershed water resource management plans, as well as middle and long-term management planning for the Songnen Plain.
 2. Ecological water supply projects and the cost for maintenance of the projects be included in national investment plans, establishing a long-term mechanism for wetland conservation and management.
 3. Relevant agencies further strengthen capacity building for wetland nature reserve management and establish a network for wetland ecological monitoring, providing a platform for systematic wetland scientific research and study.
 4. Strengthen public education and publicity in order to improve public awareness and concern regarding the conservation of wetlands required as waterbird habitat.



For more information on the SCWP, visit www.scwp.info or contact the International Crane Foundation, E11376 Shady Lane Rd, Baraboo WI, USA +1-608-356-9462 scwp@savingcranes.org



Workshop on water management planning for the Songnen Plain. Photo by Crawford Prentice

China National Coordination Unit
National Bird Banding Center
China Academy of Forestry
PO Box 1928
Beijing 100091, P. R. China
+86-10-6288-8454
www.baihegef.com

