

## Concept Note

### Preliminary Study on Transboundary Cooperation among Protected Wetlands in the Tumen River Estuary

#### I. Background

The North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) is a comprehensive intergovernmental cooperation mechanism established by six North-East Asian countries, namely China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Russian Federation in 1993<sup>1</sup>. NEASPEC supports cooperation of member governments and stakeholders on air pollution, nature conservation, marine protected areas, low carbon cities and land degradation. The East and North-East Asia Office of UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP-ENEA) serves as the NEASPEC Secretariat based in Incheon, ROK.

Based on the outcome of NEASPEC nature conservation projects on “Conservation and Rehabilitation of Habitats for Key Migratory Birds in North-East Asia” and “Connectivity Conservation and Transboundary Cooperation in North-East Asia”, the NEASPEC 22<sup>nd</sup> Senior Officials Meeting (SOM-22) held in October 2018 considered the Secretariat’s suggestion of strengthening coordination among protected areas located along or near the national boundaries, such as through creating a transboundary Ramsar site in the Tumen River Estuary. The proposed sites include the Rason Migratory Bird Reserve (DPRK), the Khasansky Nature Park (the Russian Federation) and the Fangchuan National Scenic Area (China) where project activities, such as regular exchange of staff, experience sharing, coordinated annual surveys, information exchange and joint education activities, could be organized in future<sup>2</sup>.

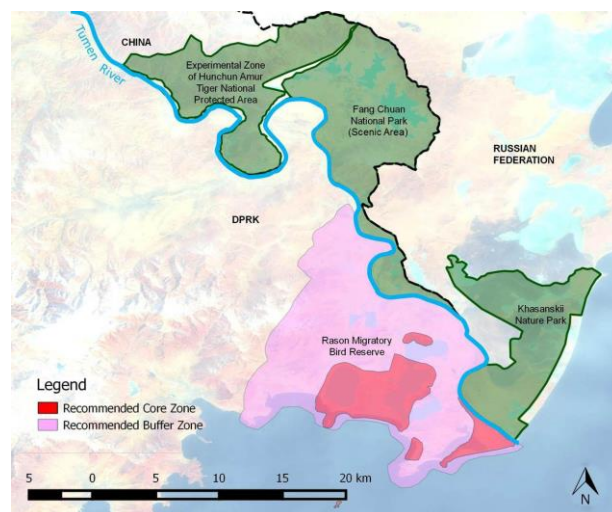


Figure 1 Wetlands and key protected areas in China, DPRK and the Russian Federation at the Tumen River Delta, NEASPEC, 2014, [Rason Migratory Bird Reserve: Birds and Habitats](#)

#### II. Objective

Following the discussion at SOM-22, the NEASPEC Secretariat plans to develop a preliminary baseline report with recommendations on future steps towards strengthening and institutionalizing the cooperation among the three protected wetland areas in Tumen River

<sup>1</sup> See more at NEASPEC website: [www.neaspec.org](http://www.neaspec.org)

<sup>2</sup> NEASPEC/SOM(22)/2, [http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//2.%20SOM22 Nature%20Conservation.pdf](http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//2.%20SOM22%20Nature%20Conservation.pdf)

Estuary. The report will include: a) desk research on key species, habitat conditions, socio-economic status, threatening factors, management system and perspectives; b) consultations with local community and authorities; and c) recommendations of future steps leading to a transboundary conservation strategy for the maintenance of ecosystem services such as through establishing a transboundary Ramsar site involving the three protected areas.

Given the Rason Migratory Bird Reserve (DPRK) has already been designated as Ramsar site in May 2018 following to the NEASPEC research on 2014<sup>3</sup>, the preliminary baseline report will focus on desk research and consultations with key stakeholders in Khasansky Nature Park (Russia) and the Fangchuan National Scenic Area (China) during July to September 2019 in collaboration with lead experts from Russia and China. The final report will incorporate survey results of Rason Migratory Bird Reserve (DPRK) conducted by NEASPEC in 2014 and complemented by any other available information.

The report will focus on the following topics:

- a. The ecological characters and the socio-economic factors of the targeted wetlands;
- b. Preliminary assessment of qualification of the proposed sites in Fangchuan and Khasansky as Ramsar Sites and Flyway Network Sites;
- c. Consultation with local authorities and communities on the ecosystem services and benefits, conservation management, local development alignment and wise and sustainable use of the wetlands;
- d. Cooperation areas and approaches among the wetlands for ensuring their ecological coherence and enhancing subregional cooperation; and
- e. Recommendations on the pathways for establishing a transboundary conservation strategy, such as through transboundary Ramsar site

### III. Methods

The study will be carried out by lead experts based on desk research and complemented by consultations with local stakeholders in Khasansky and Fangchuan, respectively.

### IV. Proposed timeline

Timeline	Activity/ Deliverables
May - June 2019	Identify and prepare contracts with lead experts
July 2019	Refine the report outline and plans for complementary consultation in Fangchuan and Khasansky
July - September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk research</li> <li>• Local consultations</li> <li>• Draft report and initial recommendations</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Rason Migratory Bird Reserve: Birds and Habitats, DPRK, [http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve\\_birds%20and%20habitats.jpg](http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve_birds%20and%20habitats.jpg)

20 September 2019	Finalize draft report and elaborate on future proposal
9-10 October 2019	Present key findings and recommendations/ proposal to NEASPEC SOM-23 for discussion and consideration
October 2019 - Q2 2020 (tbc)	Finalize report, and facilitate inter-governmental consultation (China, DPRK, Russia) through organizing subregional workshop/ Expert Group Meeting on transboundary cooperation on protected wetlands in the Tumen River Estuary (with the possibility of establishing the first transboundary Ramsar site in Asia)

## V. Suggested report outline

### Transboundary cooperation among protected wetlands in the Tumen River Estuary (Fangchuan and Khasansky<sup>4</sup>)

#### 1- Introduction

- Overview of ecosystem integrity/ ecological connectivity in Tumen River Estuary
- The role of wetlands for regional sustainable development
- Necessity and urgency of transboundary conservation

#### 2- Status and trends: Fangchuan wetlands/ Khasansky Nature Park<sup>5</sup>

- Key species<sup>6</sup> and ecosystem services
- Habitat conditions and trends
- Environment and socio-economic pressures
- Conservation and management systems
  - Local level
  - Provincial level
  - National level
  - International or transboundary level
- Challenges (wise and sustainable use) and opportunities (in both local and transboundary/ international context, e.g. eco-civilization, green development, SDGs, trilateral relationship, regional cooperation etc.)

#### 3- Diverse perspectives in wetland management and use

- Conservation authorities

<sup>4</sup> The preliminary study in July – September 2019 will focus on Fangchuan and Khasan wetlands in China and the Russian Federation respectively. The final report will incorporate survey results of Rason Migratory Bird Reserve (DPRK) conducted by NEASPEC in 2014, [http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve\\_birds%20and%20habitats.jpg](http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files//Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve_birds%20and%20habitats.jpg), and complement with other relevant information.

<sup>5</sup> final draft will incorporate Rason based on the 2014 study and complementary information; [http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files/Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve\\_birds%20and%20habitats.pdf](http://www.neaspec.org/sites/default/files/Rason%20migratory%20bird%20reserve_birds%20and%20habitats.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> include NEASPEC flagship species where feasible <http://www.neaspec.org/our-work/nature-conservation>

- Local communities
  - Other important stakeholders/ third parties (e.g. private tourism company, hunters etc.)
  - International/ regional mechanisms
- 4- Gaps and needs analysis
- Date and monitoring
  - Management capacity (to mitigate challenges)
  - Communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) on the value of wetlands
  - Synergy of regional/ local development planning and conservation planning
  - Resources availability (e.g. internal, external, regional initiative, NGO and government support etc.)
- 5- Conclusions
- Shared core/important/special value and trends of changes
  - Differences in countries
  - Shared challenges and opportunities
- 6- Recommendations
- *Future steps towards strengthening and institutionalizing the cooperation among three protected wetlands in the Tumen River Estuary across China, DPRK and the Russian Federation*
- 7- Annex
- References
  - Proposal for future activities
- 8- Tables
- 9- Figures