

# Protected Area Management Plan

## Recommended Elements<sup>1</sup>

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The following are considered “core elements” of a Protected Area (PA) Management Plan. PA management plans will necessarily vary given adaptation to specific national legislation, particular social and cultural contexts and the diversity of institutional approaches to conservation prioritization and action. The following represents the fundamental elements of a PA management plan, and should be the foundation upon which such variation occurs. They are presented below in sequence of definition and planning from general purpose to specific actions, monitoring and resources. The core elements are simply and clearly defined to provide a reference for PA managers, not a constraining set of criteria. This document purposefully retains a very general character to allow for broad utility in a diversity of natural and cultural contexts.

### 1. **Executive summary**

This section summarizes the most important issues presented in the document and the main management decisions for the protected area. It is crucial to provide a concise but complete summary, to orient all readers and because decision-makers will often not have the time to read all the details of the plan.

### 2. **Introduction**

The introduction describes the purpose, scope, and background of the management plan, as well as the purpose for which the PA was created. The purpose of the PA refers to the biological diversity, conservation role or function of the area, and in some cases will also include reference to its cultural or historical significance. This is the appropriate section in which to summarize the methodology used for the preparation of the management plan, and the organization and limitations of the document.

### 3. **General description**

The description of the protected area includes information on its geographic and political location, coordinates, accessibility, size, local climate, relationship with other protected areas, and role within the protected areas system at different geographic scales. It also includes a detailed account of its biotic (biodiversity) and abiotic (geological and soil formations, and hydrologic features) resources, and its historical, cultural, social, and economic backgrounds and characteristics. Other important information includes legal status, management category, governance issues, land tenure and resource access rights, access, public services, and legal and institutional frameworks. Location and thematic maps should be incorporated in this section.

### 4. **Protected area values**

The highest priority value of a protected area for the purpose of conservation is its biodiversity. For Conservation International (CI), this refers to the species of global

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: Thomas, Lee and Middleton, Julie, (2003). *Guidelines for Management Planning of Protected Areas*. IUCN Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. ix + 79pp.

conservation significance for which the area must be managed and the habitat on which they rely. Other values may also include historical, cultural, social features. Direct economic values, such as the area's potential contribution to local or national economies from extractive or non-consumptive uses, and ecosystem services should be also considered here.

5. **Selection of conservation targets**

Targets describe the subset of items that are considered to be keys for success in the protected area. Targets should be chosen in terms of importance and can be prioritized by the immediacy of threat to their persistence. From a biodiversity perspective, we could consider targets at different levels of ecological organization: species, sites, and landscapes/seascapes. This framework allows us to set consistent targets from which we can create clear management objectives. For example, among all sites, we choose to conduct conservation activities in those sites that are important for biodiversity. Within a protected area (or selected site), of all the species that are present, we may target those that are threatened. The same approach can be taken for cultural or historical resources or benefits. The targets allow managers to focus attention in order to achieve the protected area vision.

For CI, conservation targets are important elements of biodiversity to be affected by conservation actions. At the site level, such as PAs, conservation targets are globally threatened species.

6. **Vision, management objectives, and principles**

The vision for the protected area describes the desired state that the area should achieve, the accomplishment of the ideal function of the area in its intended biodiversity conservation or cultural/historical role. The vision is a statement of what the area is to serve as in the long-term, or the realization of the long-term role of the protected area.

The management objectives describe the intent of management actions or the expected results of interventions required to conserve/manage the area. These should clearly relate to the conservation targets described above: the targets are the focus of management, and the objectives are how we want to affect those targets. The objectives contribute to the achievement of the vision, addressing specific actions or outcomes necessary for the vision to be attained. For biodiversity conservation, the objectives will be defined relative to an understanding of the state of biodiversity, the pressures that pose a threat to maintaining this biodiversity, the sources of these pressures, and those responses determined appropriate to alleviate pressures and conserve biodiversity targets. Other objectives may concern enhancement or maintenance of the area's historical or cultural sites, development of visitation areas, sustainable use of resources in extractive areas, and development of economic benefits from protected area use.

The management objectives are defined for the period in which the area's plan is "current", i.e. prior to the periodic review and revision. This period is usually 5

years. A rationale for the objectives and the Limits of Acceptable Change (LACs) are recommended here, because they provide valuable justification for the selection of management policies and strategies. Management objectives must be specific (clear and precise, with well defined end results), measurable (quantifiable amount of change to be achieved), achievable (realistic and doable given available resources), relevant (related to the current and future status of the conservation targets), time-bound (possible to be completed within specific timeframe), and prioritized in order of importance for implementation purposes.

Principles are the manner in which management will occur. Key principles in protected area management might include transparency, stakeholder engagement, dispute resolution mechanisms, or internal governance structures/processes. These principles underpin how the area will be managed in order to reach the objectives and achieve the vision.

7. **Opportunities and constraints**

This component of the management plan analyzes the opportunities and problems, existing and potential, that affect the protected area. The current and future pressures need to be carefully identified and quantified here, as do the root causes of these pressures. The development of thorough conceptual models to understand the cause-effect relationship between human activities and biodiversity is crucial in this part of the management plan.

8. **Definition of management zones**

Zoning defines what can and cannot occur in different areas of the PA in terms of natural resources management, cultural resource management, human use and benefit, visitor use and experience, access, facilities and PA development, maintenance and operations. Through management zoning the limits of acceptable use and development in the PA are established. Often, when there is not enough information about the area, zoning is an action that occurs during the implementation of the management plan.

9. **Selection of management strategies**

Management strategies are defined as those specific interventions (actions or tasks) and investments required to achieve the management objectives. They should be based on solid conceptual models and defined relative to the conditions required for management of the area, including delimitation and zoning, patrolling and mitigation of anthropogenic and natural pressure, interventions required to restore or maintain desirable natural processes and habitats, infrastructure development and maintenance, personnel management, visitor management, and interpretation and education.

Intervention strategies are generally organized into programs and activities, with achievable and measurable objectives, deadlines, and stakeholders' responsibilities. Activities should comprehensively address those elements or conditions required for effective management, such as:

- Staffing and capacity building
- Delineation, demarcation, and signalization
- Management zoning
- Key species management
- Research
- Education and awareness
- Visitation
- Stakeholder engagement, including sustainable use of resources
- Conflict resolution approaches
- Governance
- Financing needs

10. **Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation plans help managers evaluate the effectiveness of the management strategies, and create the data necessary for implementing adaptive management. They should focus on measuring the success of biodiversity conservation, contribution to mitigating major threats, the implementation of activities or tasks, and the results of management practices. They should logically flow from the management planning process and in many cases clear descriptions and information about protected area conservation targets and objectives will provide baseline data for the monitoring and evaluation scheme.

11. **Financial plan**

The financial plan is a part of the general business plan that determines the protected area's funding requirements, including the amount and timing of that funding. Ensuring effective management and securing sufficient financial resources are vital if protected areas are to continue to provide benefits and fulfill their role in biodiversity conservation. The financial plan should articulate the budget needs for current and future management activities that are needed to achieve the objectives as stated in the management plan. Financial plans should be revisited frequently, especially in cases where management conditions rapidly change (e.g., major new threats are present).

12. **Business plan**

Business planning helps protected area managers systematically assess the various management inputs and processes that constitute their agency so as to proactively identify and correct weaknesses and to make best use of strengths so that its management objectives can be met with greater efficiency.

Business plans build from financial plans that identify how much money is needed for different management programs and activities. It goes a step farther by identifying the most appropriate funding sources for short, medium, and long-term needs, and assessing the probability and risk associated with securing these revenue streams.