

World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)

Mandate 2009–2012¹

WCPA and its partners strive to provide leadership on protected area issues to governments, NGOs, communities and other key stakeholders. Emphasizing its power to convene a diversity of actors, WPCA works by bringing science, knowledge and experience to bear on decision making to address the existing challenges and on future issues and opportunities in order to realize a common vision:

“that society fully recognizes and supports the importance of protected areas in the 22nd Century by: securing key places for biological and cultural diversity, promoting equity and justice, maintaining the quality of the environment, and ensuring the sustainable use of the natural resources for poverty reduction, food and water security, and the prevention of conflicts.”

To realize this vision the mission of IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) is:

“to promote an effectively managed, representative system of marine and terrestrial protected areas as an integral part of the IUCN mission.”

Protected areas serve a variety of purposes for society. They are vital for life on Earth, they conserve vital biodiversity and many also offer the world a model of how people can live in harmony with nature. There are treasured landscapes reflecting the inherited cultures of many generations, and they hold spiritual values for many societies. Protected areas also represent the diversity of the Earth’s history and the current natural processes, and provide many ecosystem and wider environmental services, such as clean air, copious supplies of water and nutrients. Protected areas are an expression of community goals to maintain the value of biodiversity and to ensure these values can be passed on to future generations. Indeed, protected areas are a promise of perpetuating today’s values for the generations to come.

Protected areas are an expression of hope for the future while providing immediate reciprocity. Protected areas contribute a myriad of services that include clean air, water, sources of fibre and protein, spiritual experiences, recreation, sources of knowledge, livelihoods, protection of unique cultures, and educational experiences from connecting with nature. This latter opportunity will become increasingly important to the ever-increasing world population that lives in urban areas. The recognition of all of these values is reflected in the dramatic growth in the numbers and extension of protected areas over recent decades.

1. Objectives

- (a) Provide strategic advice to governments and others on the optimum planning approaches to establishing protected areas and how best to integrate them into all sectors;
- (b) Strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of protected area managers and their staff, through learning, exchange and the development of information and guidance in a managed professional network;
- (c) Enhance the level of investment in protected areas and protected area systems, by persuading public and corporate donors of the value of protected areas; and

¹ Adopted at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, October, 2008

- (d) Enhance the capacity of WCPA members, including through co-operative ventures with partners and in particular IUCN members, and recognize their contributions.

2. Priorities

To meet the above objectives requires setting priorities and assuring that these are congruent. To make the point, science and tools of good management of protected areas can only be effective if a solid system of governance and an internal capacity is in place. As well, having an appropriately designed protected area, be it in the form of a system or an individual area, is of course essential for achieving objectives. Accordingly, the four following priorities should not be viewed as being separate but rather as an interrelated approach to meeting objectives and addressing the overall WCPA Mission through partnerships, in particular with IUCN members.

- (a) **Conserving biodiversity**
WCPA will actively assist jurisdictions in the design and completion of systems of protected areas, with particular focus on the marine biome, as well as promotion of ecological networks and the ecosystem approach to ensure sustainable use and to mitigate effects of climate change on biodiversity.
- (b) **Generating knowledge**
WCPA will focus on the integration of conservation science, including traditional knowledge, in management effectiveness, conservation tools and mechanisms, protected area management categories, and the setting and maintenance of standards for protected areas.
- (c) **Building awareness**
WCPA will promote the values of protected areas through effective conservation education and building up practitioners' skills, developing strategies for sustainable financing, and generating and disseminating knowledge, including through PALNet.
- (d) **Improving governance and equity**
WCPA will promote the full range of governance types for protected areas; increased participation of indigenous peoples and local communities; and promote the values of protected areas to human well-being and livelihoods.
- (e) **Celebrating WCPA**
WCPA will build up the capacity of its members and celebrate their contributions to the advancement of the establishment and effective management of protected areas, while seeking and developing strategic alliances among members for more effective implementation of WCPA's strategy.

3. Structure and Organization

WCPA has 1400 members from 140 countries that are organized by Region and/or Strategic Direction. WCPA is led by the Steering Committee composed of Regional Vice-Chairs and four Strategic Direction Vice-Chairs and a representative of UNEP WCMC. The Steering Committee meets annually and decisions are taken between Steering Committee meetings by the WCPA Executive comprising the Chair, Deputy Chair, two Vice-Chairs and the Head of the Programme on Protected Areas. Membership of the Commission will be revised in 2009 with a view to improving regional performance and to achieving gender and geographic balance. Task Forces are reviewed at the beginning of the Intercessional Period and renewed mandates are assigned where warranted.

4. Expected Results

- (a) ***The role of protected areas in biodiversity conservation is effectively fulfilled.***
- (i) Representative network of marine protected areas established and effectively managed, by 2012, as a contribution towards the WSSD Targets regarding marine conservation;
 - (ii) Global gaps in PA biodiversity coverage identified and filled at global, national and regional levels using the best conservation planning science available;
 - (iii) Climate change addressed through planning and effective management to ensure protected areas continue their provision of ecological services.
- (b) ***The effectiveness of management of terrestrial and marine protected areas is improved and assessment methods applied.***
- (i) Global Initiative on Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas implemented;
 - (ii) Revised IUCN System for PA Management Categories is applied globally as the international framework for protected areas, including national data collection and reporting to the CBD Secretariat on protected areas;
 - (iii) Certification of protected areas developed and selectively applied.
- (c) ***The capacity of protected area managers and their staff is enhanced.***
- (i) Global capacity development initiative for protected areas, including PALNet, developed and implemented;
 - (ii) Effective contribution provided by IUCN/WCPA to the implementation of the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas;
 - (iii) Values of ecological services from protected areas more effectively assessed and factored into decision making and poverty reduction strategies;
 - (iv) IUCN input to the World Heritage Convention effectively managed to enhance the role of the Convention in biodiversity conservation.
- (d) ***Local communities and indigenous peoples are more effectively involved and engaged with protected areas to assure their contribution to sustainable development.***
- (i) Role of indigenous peoples and local communities in establishing and managing PAs recognized by national governments, including through incorporation of Community Conserved Areas (CCA) in national systems of protected areas;
 - (ii) Global Initiative on the Cultural and Spiritual values of Protected Areas implemented;
 - (iii) Improved methods available for the planning and establishment of Community Conserved Areas (CCA) and other conservation areas managed by indigenous peoples and local communities.
- (e) ***The Programme on Protected Areas (PPA) and WCPA are effectively managed.***
- (i) WCPA Strategic Plan revised to include Durban+5 and Barcelona WCC outcomes;
 - (ii) Strategic alliances among IUCN members with professional support from WCPA developed to increase capacity for implementation of Strategic priorities;
 - (iii) Capacity of PPA/WCPA enhanced to ensure effective management and full accountability of financial and human resources;
 - (iv) WCPA members valued and recognized;
 - (v) PPA/WCPA Communication Strategy implemented.