

# The IUCN Protected Area Capacity Development Program

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## Introduction

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE not only in contributing to the conservation of cultural and natural resources, but also in securing ecosystem services such as clean water, contributing to food security, promoting health and economic well-being, mitigating the effects of climate change, and protecting against natural disasters.

To be effective in providing biodiversity conservation, ecosystem services, and other benefits, protected areas must practice good management and governance, be well-connected, and have management integrated across the wider landscapes and seascapes. For this to happen, protected areas need a well-trained workforce that has access to the most current ideas and best practices developed through decades of lesson-learning around the world.

Global management effectiveness assessments have found that large numbers of protected areas are inadequately managed, resulting in loss of cultural and natural resources and related essential ecological services. The combination of a rapid increase in the number and size of protected areas, a funding squeeze on many protected area agencies, and a shortage of training opportunities for protected area rangers means that there is a serious global lack of capacity in managing protected areas. With this in mind, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with the support of its commissions and members, is developing a comprehensive and worldwide program to strengthen the capacity of protected area professionals to achieve and maintain high standards of effective management and equitable governance.

## The IUCN WCPA Protected Area Capacity Development Program

Since its beginnings in 1948, IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) has been a leader in providing protected area capacity development knowledge products to park and protected area professionals. The organization has focused its capacity-building efforts in three main areas: (1) the production of key "knowledge products" such as the IUCN protected area management categories and the framework for assessing protected area manage-

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ment effectiveness; (2) a series of best practice guidelines on management; and (3) tailored courses, presentations, and personal capacity-building programs. Although working primarily in English, key documents and presentations have been widely translated into a range of languages.

In 2012 the IUCN Global Protected Areas Program and WCPA developed a strategy to provide a focus for IUCN's protected area capacity development actions so that energies and resources are used as efficiently as possible to achieve stated goals. These efforts are taking place against the backdrop of a global program to build and consolidate protected area networks. Countries are working together to increase by 2020 the total area of terrestrial and inland water protected areas by 17% and of coastal and marine protected areas by 10%, as called for by the strategic plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The vision of the IUCN WCPA Protected Area Capacity Development Program is to assist countries to more effectively and equitably manage their systems of protected areas and to meet their commitments under the CBD Program of Work on Protected Areas and the year 2020 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, agreed to by the CBD's Conference of Parties in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, in 2010. This strategic vision aligns with IUCN's organizational vision of "a just world that values and conserves nature."

This strategy will link together and provide a common direction to the three broad components of protected area capacity development in which IUCN has expertise: (1) the education and training of protected area professionals and higher level government decision-makers; (2) the production of knowledge products such as books, best practice protected area guidelines, technical briefs, and electronic-learning modules; and (3) the creation of tools that help achieve high standards for protected area management effectiveness.

The WCPA lead for this effort is Eduard Müller, vice chair for education and learning. David Reynolds is the protected area capacity development lead for the IUCN secretariat's Global Protected Areas Program. Reynolds is a career US National Park Service employee who has been assigned to the IUCN for three years through November 2014.

## **Education and training**

The 9th Conference of Parties for the CBD invited the IUCN WCPA and other relevant organizations to support the strengthening of national and regional capacity-training institutions through the development of an open curriculum framework to increase the capacity of protected area professionals and assist countries to meet their needs under the CBD Program of Work for Protected Areas.

In response, the Global Partnership for Professionalizing Protected Area Management (GPPAM) has been created by WCPA and IUCN's Global Protected Areas Program. GPPAM is a major component of IUCN's Protected Area Capacity Development Program. GPPAM will provide competency standards and leading-edge, open-source curricula for three levels of protected area professionals: (1) senior administrators, system directors, and planners; (2) chief park wardens, superintendents, and protected area managers; and (3) rangers and field staff. GPPAM will also implement advanced training through accreditation of protected area training institutions and will establish a certification program that assesses and certifies on-the-job performance of protected area professionals based on core

competencies. It coordinates with existing protected area professional associations so that services for the entire career of protected area professionals can be ensured. The intent is that GPPAM will set global standards for these areas. IUCN is working closely with partner organizations, such as the American Museum of Natural History, to draw together specialists from around the world in order to provide timely and accurate information for practitioners.

GPPAM addresses the full-life-cycle development of protected area professionals. It innovates by moving beyond training programs alone to coordinate courses into a larger professional certification system that serves the needs of both young and veteran protected area professionals throughout their careers. It will provide incentives to protected area staff to pursue the new learning opportunities.

The proposed training elements of the program build on verified on-line and in-person protected area curricula developed by IUCN WCPA by providing secure funding and on-site training throughout the world. Working with both United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage sites and Man and the Biosphere Program sites (i.e., biosphere reserves) will provide a range of training models from iconic, highly protected reserves to parks and protected areas that are integrated with multi-use activities. The initiative will be led by IUCN through the WCPA education and learning work group and the Global Protected Areas Program.

The proposed certification elements build on the existing Western Indian Ocean Certification of Marine Park Professionals Program. This certification program will be modified for terrestrial protected areas and exemplifies a regional model to ensure local ownership.

### **Knowledge products**

Since its inception, IUCN WCPA has produced many highly regarded and well-used publications for protected area staff. Working in close association with United Nations agencies, convention secretariats (such as those of the CBD and World Heritage Convention), and partner organizations, IUCN WCPA will continue to develop guidelines, technical publications, and other materials to support capacity-building. Since 1998, IUCN WCPA has produced nineteen best practice guidelines. These publications remain in high demand, but there is a need to revise and update some of them. New guideline topics for emergent themes now in production include climate change, urban protected areas, invasive species management, protected area governance, and social assessment of protected areas. There is a policy to produce each publication in English, French, and Spanish, the three official languages of IUCN. In addition, various publications have been translated into a variety of languages, and there is a demand for more as countries develop their protected area systems. Publications are available in printed form and electronically, making them freely available to anyone with internet access. In addition to detailed best practice guidelines, a range of shorter summary technical notes are also available.

### **Management effectiveness**

For the last decade, IUCN has placed increasing emphasis on management effectiveness of protected areas, alongside efforts to build the global protected areas network. This has included developing a standard framework for assessments along with a range of tools for both

rapid and more detailed assessments on site. Now, an initiative has been created by IUCN WCPA to develop, pilot, assess, and then launch a new global standard for effective and equitable protected area management: the *IUCN Global Green List of Protected Areas*. The Green List is part of the requested response by IUCN to assist parties to the CBD to achieve *quality* of area-based conservation measures, especially protected areas that contribute towards the Aichi Target 11 requirements, and to agree to and measure standards of good management.

Through the Green List initiative, IUCN and collaborating partners will develop global standards and matching guidance that can be used to assess and recognize effectiveness and equity in protected area management. Participating countries will be able to apply local context and criteria for the Green List assessment process, but the benchmark will be a consistent and credible set of IUCN Green List global standards. The intended aims of the Green List are to recognize and reward effective and equitable protected area management, and thereby:

- provide an incentive for improved policies and governance arrangements that will enable and catalyze more effective and equitable protected area systems;
- stimulate investment in capacity and leadership that enable effective and equitable management of protected areas; and
- allow participating countries to recognize and report on the *quality* of progress in the implementation of their national protected area systems towards meeting CBD Aichi Target 11 commitments.

### **The 6th World Parks Congress 2014 and protected area capacity development**

The IUCN WCPA, along with the Australian national and New South Wales governments, will hold the 6th World Parks Congress in Sydney, Australia, November 2014. Convened by IUCN every ten years, the congresses have been held since 1962, and have been instrumental in influencing the way in which the world has viewed and managed systems of protected areas. Up to 5,000 participants are expected to attend. The US National Park Service is leading one of the eight congress “streams” related to climate change and is co-leading a “Healthy Parks, Healthy People” stream with Parks Victoria. There will be extensive media coverage during and after the congress.

The Australian hosts and organizers of the 2014 World Parks Congress are working to ensure that protected area capacity development will be a major legacy of the meeting. The congress will be the venue for launching protected area programs and projects that have been in development since the last one a decade ago. Products to be launched include the IUCN WCPA Protected Area Capacity Development Program components described above. The planners will reinforce the congress’ legacy by requiring its capacity development-related sessions to be training-oriented and to have plans for post-congress activities. This will ensure the featured products will continue to be developed as the countries of the world work toward the 2020 targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Those targets are:

By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are *conserved* through *effectively and equitably*

*managed*, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of *protected areas* and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.

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