



Forest Protected Areas

As humans impact on ever-larger areas of the world's land and water surface, pressures on populations of wild plants and animals increase accordingly. Although a proportion of biodiversity can survive in quite highly modified agricultural or other cultural landscapes, many species need specialised conditions only found in near natural ecosystems. In situ conservation through development and management of an ecologically representative network of protected areas is therefore a cornerstone of national and ecoregional conservation strategies. WWF understands a forest protected area to be:

"An area of forest or woodland especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, through legal or other effective means"

Hence protected areas are areas where biodiversity protection is the primary objective and where suitable legal or other effective means (e.g. customary management systems, agreement as part of third-party certification systems etc) have been established.

WWF believes that it is necessary to create an ecologically representative network of effectively managed protected areas to protect a viable sample of all different forest types. Development of such a network involves: **identification** of the most suitable areas for protection using best available scientific knowledge; a process of **negotiation** and **advocacy** to establish the protected area; followed by **planning** and **capacity building**, to ensure **effective management**; and a process of **monitoring** and **evaluation** to check that protected area values are being maintained. Protected areas are only effective in the long term if local communities support them and therefore ensuring the **participation** of all relevant stakeholders is an important function of management.

WWF will work with governments, forest owners and local communities to help develop and maintain a viable network of forest protected areas around the world by:

- Developing, implementing and promoting a methodology for the systematic planning of networks of protected areas within ecoregions
- Helping to identify and gazette new protected areas, through mechanisms such as Gifts to the Earth, the Yaoundé Summit and the World Bank/WWF Forest Alliance
- Integrating protected areas into a wider ecoregional conservation strategy through the triple approach of "protect, manage and restore", using tools such as the High Conservation Value Forest methodology and the landscape approach
- Promoting the World Commission on Protected Areas' framework for assessing management effectiveness of protected areas to both monitor and facilitate adaptive management, with the Rapid Assessment and Prioritisation Methodology for protected area systems and through site-based approaches.
- Undertaking advocacy in support of the creation and effective management of forest protected areas through mechanisms such as the Convention on Biological Diversity
- Assisting IUCN in preventing dilution or misinterpretation of the World Commission on Protected Areas' definition of protected areas
- Ensuring stakeholder involvement in and support for protected area networks, by building and implementing methods of participation, including co-management, supporting community-managed protected areas
- Lobbying for increased resources for protected areas
- Running pilot field projects in co-operation with partner organisations
- Inspiring people about the role and potential of protected areas to provide many other values – e.g. recreation, tranquillity, exercise – and encouraging their support for the creation and maintenance of a global system of protected areas



Position Paper

January 2002

One of a series of position papers produced as WWF's response to the WWF/IUCN Forests for Life strategy and

WWF's current five-year target-driven programme on forests

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