

Speaking a Common Language

An investigation into the uses and performance of the IUCN
System of Management Categories for Protected Areas

Final draft report
March 2004

Preface

Protected areas are at the very heart of national and regional conservation strategies; their existence and continued success are vital to the achievement of global commitments to biodiversity conservation. Some countries are beginning to regard their natural heritage in the same light as their important cultural sites, so that places like the wide Serengeti savannahs and the mountains of Yosemite are assuming the same status and importance as the Taj Mahal or Nôtre-Dame cathedral. But protected areas are far more than just places set aside for wild plants and animals, they also provide: environmental services, such as soil protection and clean drinking water supplies; secure homes for fragile human communities including many indigenous peoples; protect places of high cultural and spiritual significance; supply economic benefits, for instance through tourism; and give us all essential breathing space for recreation and renewal.

It follows that the term “protected area” does not describe a single entity or management regime and that an enormously wide range of different approaches to protection can be found around the world. In an attempt to bring some order into this rapidly developing use of land and water, IUCN The World Conservation Union developed a system of categories for protected areas, the most recent version of which was agreed at the IVth World Parks Congress in 1992 and finally endorsed and published in 1994.

The IUCN protected area system of management categories was originally developed as a “common language”, to help clarifying and reporting on protected areas. In the decades since, several things have happened to stretch and perhaps sometimes distort this original aim. First, the number of protected areas has continued to increase rapidly – with the global total now exceeding 100,000 – while the pressures on these precious places have often also risen: the categories therefore relate to many more issues, encompassing a far larger area, than in 1994. Secondly, in the absence of any other international framework, the IUCN categories have been used in ways that their original architects did not fully foresee; for instance as the basis for legislation or for controlling land use within existing protected areas. As the uses of the categories have expanded, so too has the intensity with which they have been scrutinised. What began as a simple classification exercise has assumed greater political importance.

The system of protected area management categories therefore lies at the very heart of IUCN’s work and of its mission; their effective use is of fundamental concern to the Union and its members. In recognition, IUCN has been supporting the “*Speaking a Common Language*” project, which has looked at the successes, failures, strengths and weaknesses of the categories after a decade of use, with the intention of giving guidance on steps needed to improve their future effectiveness in response to changing needs and conditions.

We should stress that the research reported here addresses only questions relating specifically to the fairly narrow issue of how the IUCN protected area categories are used and how effectively they fulfil their aims. This has proved a wide enough brief as it is and we have resisted undertaking analysis or making recommendations that stray beyond these issues. This has been surprisingly difficult: in all our reading, discussions and workshops wider issues have inevitably emerged and been debated.

Some particular questions have emerged with a regularity that suggests they are common to many people involved in these issues and would therefore justify further work by IUCN and its commissions. In particular,

The world’s protected area network lies at the heart of IUCN’s mission



Snowdonia National Park: Nigel Dudley

Please note that throughout the text the more detailed case studies prepared by the project are referred to in the side margins.

These case studies can all be downloaded from the Speaking a Common Language web site at: www.cf.ac.uk/cplan/sacl/

there is an emerging and very vibrant debate about how protected areas fit within a wider sustainable development strategy. From our perspective here, many questions were raised about the way in which protected areas were selected; who has a say in this, what the implications are for other stakeholders; and how these issues can be handled in an equitable manner. There was a call for more transparent and more robust decision-making processes relating to these issues.

The project has been carried out by Cardiff University in association with Equilibrium Consultants and the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre. It has been supported by a wide grouping of non-governmental and commercial sponsors: WWF, IUCN, Conservation International, Shell, BP plc and the International Council on Mining and Metals. The project team are extremely grateful to all these bodies, not least for their willingness to work together on what are often complex and challenging issues.

The project has produced a large number of case studies, working papers and reports, which were also discussed at a workshop at the Vth World Parks Congress in September 2003. The current document summarises this material and provides a key set of recommendations. All the project material is also available on a website, at www.cf.ac.uk/cplan/sacl/

The following draft report summarises the key findings of the project; any comments or suggestion on the text should be forwarded to the project team by 15th June 2004 via email (equilibrium@compuserve.com or adrianp@wcpa.demon.co.uk). Thank you.

Adrian Phillips
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March 2004

CBD Update

At the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD/COP7), meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2004, IUCN organised a side event on its Protected Areas Management Categories System and the SaCL project. This draft report was presented, and distributed with requests for comment.

Later, CBD/COP7 adopted a Programme of Work on Protected Areas. The relevant decision contains an important paragraph in which CBD/COP7 endorses the categories system and supports the Speaking a Common Language project. It states that the COP:

Recognises the value of a single international classification system for protected areas and the benefit of providing information that is comparable across countries and regions and therefore *welcomes* the on-going efforts of the IUCN WCPA to refine the IUCN system of categories and *encourages* Parties, other Governments and relevant organisations to assign protected area management categories to their protected areas, providing information consistent with the refined IUCN categories for reporting purposes.

The full text of the CBD/COP7 decision can be found on www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/cop/cop-07/official/cop-07-l-32-en.pdf

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Section 1: Key findings and recommendations

The project reaffirmed the conservation values and the importance of the 1994 objectives-based IUCN category system. It endorsed the general recommendation emerging from the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) that no changes should be made to the 1994 category system itself, but did find a number of ways in which the interpretation and the application of this system could be improved. It also reaffirmed that the integrity of the protected areas categories system is the responsibility of IUCN, and that it should reinforce its efforts, both through its general membership and particularly through WCPA and other commissions, to promote the understanding of the full range of IUCN categories at national and international levels. These general conclusions have been supported by a recommendation, prepared by the project team, and then modified and endorsed by a workshop at the Vth World Parks Congress in 2003. The full text of this recommendation can be found in Appendix 2.

Original uses of the system of categories

The original uses of the categories were identified and assessed, namely to:

- Encourage national protected area systems
- Reduce confusion through the use of the same term for different management approaches
- Help to develop international standards for management
- Provide a framework for handling data.

All these aims have been at least partially fulfilled, although the success in so doing has been variable. The system of categories has undoubtedly helped to encourage the development of protected area networks and has provided a common language that has helped to sort out misunderstandings about names. The periodic publication of the *United Nations List of Protected Areas* also shows that they have been successful in providing a framework for handling data.

However, some confusion undoubtedly remains in respect of these uses. Application of the system of categories in more specialised situations, such as forest or marine protected areas, has proved problematic and there have also been difficulties in understanding and using the categories in national statistics. All these issues might be addressed at least partially by better guidelines on their use, perhaps developed specifically for certain uses or biomes: some specific proposals are made to this end in the report.

New uses of the system of categories

The new ways in which the category system is now being used – none of which was clearly envisaged in 1994 – serve to raise the importance of the system, but also create additional challenges. Key new uses include:

- In determining appropriate activities in protected areas (e.g., in respect of mining and protected areas)
- In establishing relevant criteria to assess management effectiveness
- In advocacy in relation to protected areas
- As the basis for national protected area legislation and policy, and international agreements

A key finding is that today the IUCN protected area categories are being stretched and used in ways beyond those originally envisaged in 1994



Tanzania: Nigel Dudley

- To provide quality standards
- As a tool in bioregional planning.

Not all these are explicit **purposes**, as envisaged by IUCN, but they are all emerging **uses** and as such may need to be reflected, or at least acknowledged, in an update of advice on the category system. We review their uptake and the implications for the use of the category system.

Recommendations

The project was set up with the specific purpose of making a series of proposals to IUCN The World Conservation Union and its World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) about future development of the category system, including proposals for a work programme. Our recommendations fall into three main areas – outlined below:

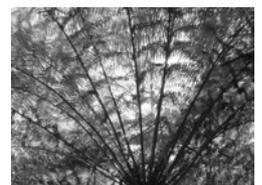
- Guidance in use of the categories, including preparation of a new version of the explanatory guidelines
- Awareness-raising and capacity building
- Monitoring and research.

New guidance for the protected area category system

We propose that the new uses for which the system is now being applied, coupled with the continuing confusion about some of the original uses of the guidelines, necessitate the production, through an open, participatory process, of a revised, **up-dated edition of the 1994 guidelines to the protected area category system**. This should:

- Build on the existing objectives set out for each category, including by developing improved summary definitions of the categories
- Include a set of criteria and principles which should underpin the categories system and its application
- Explain how the category system relates to ecological networks, wider regional planning and broadscale conservation initiatives
- Consider removing generic names of protected areas from the category system and using only management objectives and numbers for each category
- Present a redesigned version of the “Matrix of Management Objectives and IUCN Protected Area Management Categories” in the 1994 edition, so as to relate better to current experience in protected areas
- Give more emphasises to marine, freshwater and forest protected areas
- Give more consideration to the linkage between protected areas and sustainable livelihoods
- Give greater recognition of cultural and spiritual values, so that the full range of special qualities of each protected area are fully recognised
- Suggest how protected areas, which are assigned to their category by primary management objectives, can also be described by reference to the organisation responsible for their governance, with reference to the governance matrix being developed within WCPA, the effectiveness of their management and the degree to which they retain their naturalness

The project is proposing a new edition of the guidelines on the IUCN protected area categories



Queensland, Australia:
Nigel Dudley

- Explain how protected areas can have more than one category when zones within them have been legally defined for different management objectives
- Clarify the recommended process by which protected areas are assigned to categories, including reference to principles of assignment
- Include a full description of the criteria used when suggesting that certain activities and land uses be excluded from particular categories of protected areas
- Make these revised guidelines available in IUCN's official languages and also in other languages as permitted by available resources (including development of principles for translation and better use of technical glossaries)
- Explain clear lines of responsibility for both assignment and reporting of the system of categories.

Supplementary guidance

In addition to the overall guidelines, specific advice may be warranted in separate publications from IUCN, sometimes working with other institutions, regarding specific aspects of the category system:

- **Biomes:** advice on specific biomes (as is currently being prepared for forest protected areas) particularly with respect to freshwater protected areas and marine protected areas, including in the latter case clarifying the relationship with no-take zones
- **Categories:** specific advice on at least some of the categories (building on the category V guidelines), starting with category VI but possibly also on category Ib (wilderness) and category III (natural monuments, with specific reference to sacred sites)
- **Legal use:** a possible role of the IUCN Environmental Law Centre in developing a manual for governments and others on both when the use of the system of categories in law might be useful and how this could be achieved
- **Best practice:** for specific management interventions within protected areas, such as sustainable collection of non-timber forest products by local communities, or for extractive industries in categories V and VI
- **Reporting:** development of a manual by UNEP-WCMC and WCPA to help governments to report adequately to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA).

Awareness-raising and capacity building

One problem in implementing the system of categories, and more generally in building effective protected area networks, is lack of understanding and technical, institutional and financial capacity. A second set of recommendations therefore focuses on developing a stronger environment for implementation of protected area networks with a carefully designed portfolio of management objectives. We recommend that IUCN, in collaboration with partner organisations, urgently invest in awareness raising and capacity building about the use of the categories system, based upon the foregoing and working with partners such as UNEP/WCMC, through training, case studies and additional published guidance.

One key need is for greater awareness of the categories and the project therefore proposes a series of capacity-building actions



Lake reflection, Wales:
Nigel Dudley

Such awareness raising and capacity building should give a high priority to advocating an open, inclusive, and transparent procedure for assignment of protected areas to categories for application at the national level, including a grievance procedure in relation to assignment decisions. Specific interventions might include:

- **Accessibility:** translation of the category system and guidance into more languages (currently in English, French and Spanish)
- **Legal advice:** from the IUCN Environmental Law Centre
- **National databases:** capacity building, in association with governments and development agencies, in building information and national databases on protected areas (for example along the lines of the Strengthening Protected Areas Management project in Vietnam)
- **World Database on Protected Areas:** capacity building including fund-raising to help the UNEP-WCMC to strengthen the WDPA
- **Information:** a concerted effort by the WDPA Consortium (see page 31) to build up the information held on protected areas in the WDPA
- **Awareness:** publicity material and other means of raising awareness about the system of categories more generally.

Monitoring and evaluation

The project further recommends that IUCN develop a monitoring and research programme around the use of the categories, including:

- The implications of the categories system for indigenous and community rights, including indigenous protected areas
- Current use of the system of categories by governments for both policy and law
- Integration of the system of protected areas management categories more fully into the WCPA framework on management effectiveness of protected areas
- Building awareness and accommodation of the categories into initiatives such as: environmental certification (e.g. forest, farming, marine and tourism); environmental and social criteria and indicator processes (e.g. Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe)
- Identification of a methodology to avoid double-counting in the case of protected areas nested within larger protected areas of a different category, or zones within a single protected area
- Investigation of options for a grievance procedure or verification process for assignment.

We further recommend that the foregoing would be aided by the creation of a task force under the WCPA Management Effectiveness theme and that IUCN's Inter-sessional Programme Framework for 2005–2008, which will be considered by IUCN's members at the 3rd World Conservation Congress (November 2004) should accommodate a programme of work to further develop and promote the IUCN Protected Areas Categories System. The above recommendations should be linked into other initiatives (CBD work programme on protected areas, IUCN ICMM Dialogue, etc).

Section 2: The emergence of an international system of protected areas management system of categories

The idea of protection of special places is universal: it occurs in the traditions of communities in the Pacific, 'tapu' areas, in the sacred groves of Africa and in hunting areas in parts of Europe and Asia. However, the idea of protected areas as we now know them can be traced back to the nineteenth century. The first national park came in 1872 with the dedication of Yellowstone by United States law "as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people". Similar forms of protected areas emerged in several other countries around the same time. In 1885, Canada gave protection to the hot springs in the Bow Valley of the Rocky Mountains, now part of Banff National Park and in 1887, Maori Chief Te Heuheu in New Zealand offered the Crown 2,400ha of the sacred summits of Tongariro, Ngauruhoe and Ruapehu, with a view to its being treated as a tapu place under the protection of Queen Victoria: the Tongariro National Park Act was passed in 1894 and the park was gazetted in 1907.

While the modern protected areas movement thus had its origins in the then 'new' nations of North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, other countries were quick to follow suit. During the twentieth century the idea spread around the world, though the driving force for protection differed between regions. For example, in Africa large game parks were created for wildlife, whilst in Europe landscape protection was more common. By the end of the twentieth century, nearly every country had adopted its own protected area legislation and designated sites for protection and many organisations in the public, private, community and voluntary sectors became active in creating protected areas.

This very short history hints at some of the issues that gave rise to the move to develop a system for categorising protected areas which:

- Have been set up for different reasons
- May be established in wilderness areas and in long-settled landscapes
- Have been set up in forests, savannahs, grasslands, mountains, deserts, wetlands, ice caps, lakes and at sea
- Vary greatly in size
- Have been given many different names at the national level
- Are based on national legislation which takes many different forms
- Came about through a wide variety of governmental and other initiatives
- Are owned by different interests
- Are run by different kinds of organisation.

Early protected areas in Africa tended to be game parks whereas Europe focused more on landscape protection



Lion in Serengeti, Tanzania: Marc Hockings and Parc Jurassien Vaudois, Switzerland: Nigel Dudley

First moves to categorise protected areas

The first effort to clarify terms relating to protected areas was made in 1933, at the International Conference for the Protection of Fauna and Flora, held in London. In 1942, a rather different classification was incorporated into the Pan American Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere. With the emergence of a world-wide conservation movement after the Second World War, a global framework for protected areas began to emerge. The main instrument for this has been the IUCN international network – or commission – of volunteer experts on the topic of

protected areas. The International Commission on National Parks was established in 1960. Within a few years, it became the Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas of IUCN (CNPPA) and since 1996 it has been the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).

In 1972, the II World Conference on National Parks adopted a resolution which recommended that IUCN, “taking into account existing terminology in international treaties and in close consultation with governments concerned (should): (1) Define the various purposes for which protected areas are set aside; and (2) Develop suitable standards and nomenclature for such areas”. In 1975 CNPPA began work on developing a categories system for protected areas. The outcome of this work set out to promote a system of ten categories of protected area, based on management objectives rather than their national names¹. These categories represented a variety of conservation-related management purposes to be thought of as “members of one family, free from dominance one by another”.

The 1978 report suggested that such a categorisation system could achieve several purposes, including:

- Showing how national parks might be complemented by other land management categories
- Helping countries develop management categories which reflected particular resources and needs
- Providing “the possibility to gradually establish systematic procedures to remove ambiguities and inconsistencies due to variations in administrative, institutional, legal and political mechanisms among nations”
- Ensuring that “regardless of nomenclature used by nations or consistent to particular languages, a conservation area can be recognised and categorised by the objectives for which it is in fact managed”
- Providing the scientific community with access to more complete data on natural areas under conservation management
- Helping IUCN to use the categories system to secure the support of “development banks and development institutions” by showing how a range of land conservation tools could address both conservation and development needs
- Aiding IUCN produce more informative versions of its directory of national parks and other protected areas.

Despite these strengths in the system, there were some limitations in the system as well:

- It did not contain a definition of a protected area as such, so the ‘universe’ covered by the categories system as a whole was not evident
- It apparently went beyond protected areas, into broader areas of land management, leading to some confusion as to whether it was a system for categorising land management or of protected areas, or both
- It included two international categories (IX – Biosphere Reserve and X – World Heritage Site: Natural), while acknowledging that many such sites might already be protected under a previous category – a confusing arrangement

The 1978 guidelines had separate categories for biosphere reserves and World Heritage, such as the Greater St Lucia wetland area in South Africa, which often had their own designations, thus creating confusion and double counting



Marc Hockings

- Some distinctions between definitions of categories were not always clear
- The system was largely terrestrial in its concepts and language. Better coverage of the marine environment was needed.

The 1994 protected area management categories system

As early as 1984, CNPPA established a task force to consider up-dating the categories system in light of these limitations. The task force conducted a wide debate, initially amongst Commission members, and then more widely, which culminated in a three day workshop at the IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas in Caracas, Venezuela in 1982. As a result of the workshop's conclusions, the Caracas Congress adopted a recommendation urging CNPPA and the IUCN Council to: "endorse a system of six protected area categories based on management objectives; recommend this to governments; and explain it through guidelines".

In fact, the IUCN Council referred this matter to a higher level and in 1994, ten years after the review of the 1978 system had begun, the IUCN General Assembly approved the new system, commended it to governments and called on CNPPA to finalise guidance to explain it. Later in 1994, IUCN and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) published *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories*, in English, French and Spanish².

An analysis of the new system of categories compared to the 1978 system reveals some interesting developments:

- Whereas the definitions etc. used in the 1978 system implied that human occupation or resource use were unwelcome or unacceptable in some protected areas, the 1994 system explicitly recognises that some permanent human presence – albeit very slight in certain cases – may occur in all categories except Ia (Strict Nature Reserve)
- The 1978 system is fairly prescriptive about the type of agency etc. that would normally manage each category. The 1994 system allows for more flexibility, including management by private individuals and bodies, non-governmental organisations, indigenous peoples, community groups and governments at all levels
- The 1978 system tends to see all protected area categories as managed for the broader public good. Though this perspective is still strong in the 1994 guidance, it also recognises that the interests of indigenous peoples and other local groups should also be taken account of
- The 1994 system of categories also introduced a new category of protected area: a protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources (Category VI). This represented a response to a widely held concern among many developing country participants at the Caracas Congress that the system needed to recognise that there are many places where resources are conserved in essentially their natural condition as a basis for sustainable use.

The 1994 system explained

The 1994 Guidelines sets out a definition of 'protected area' as: *An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means*³. This is the foundation of the system, as it defines the "universe" to which the categories apply. If an area does not meet this definition, it is not a protected area as far as IUCN is concerned and is not covered by any protected area category. Conversely, any area that is recognised under this definition should be capable of being assigned to a category. Furthermore, the definition:

- Explicitly applies to the marine as well as the terrestrial environment
- Requires that there should always be a special policy for conservation of biodiversity
- Allows for conservation of natural resources, and those cultural resources which are *associated* with these
- Requires that a management regime be in place, but acknowledges that in some places this may be done effectively through tradition or ownership rather than a formal legal means.

The six protected area management categories which follow this definition are printed on the inside cover of this publication. In the 1994 Guidelines, each category is explained in detail through an overall definition, the objectives of management, guidance for selection and organisational responsibility. The text also referred to the equivalent category in 1978 system. A number of important principles found in the 1994 Guidelines help to further explain the system, categorisation system. These include that:

- the basis of categorisation is by primary management objective
- assignment to a category is not a commentary on effectiveness
- the categories system is international
- national names for protected areas may vary
- all categories are important (i.e. not intended as a hierarchy), **but**
- a gradation of human intervention is implied (see Figure 1).

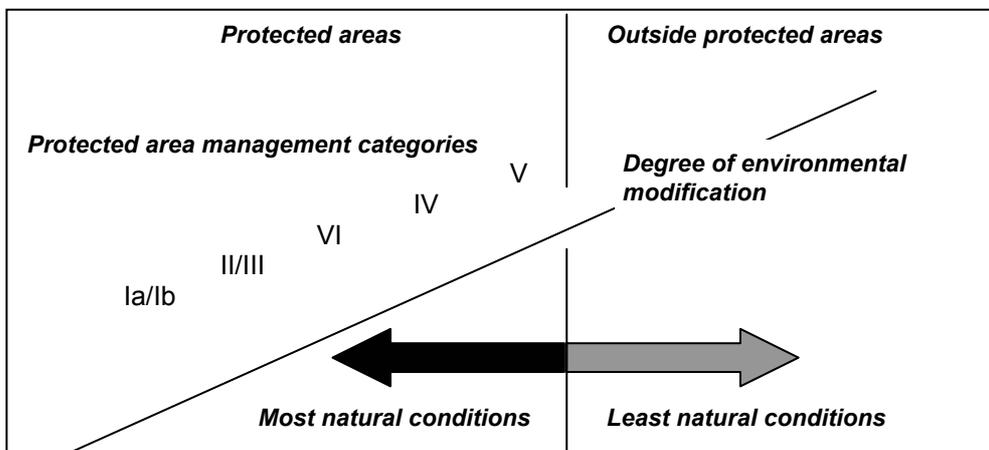


Figure 1: IUCN protected area categories and their degree of environmental modification

In his introduction to the 1994 Guidelines, the then Chair of CNPPA, P.H.C. (Bing) Lucas wrote that "These guidelines have a special significance as they are intended for everyone involved in protected areas, providing a common language by which managers, planners, researchers, politicians and citizens groups in all countries can exchange information and views"



New Zealand. Nigel Dudley

The Guidelines also deal with the application of the categories system, giving some basic rules for its interpretation. Many of the questions that are often asked about the system are answered here. The main points are summarised below but, for a definitive explanation, the reader should consult the original text.

- **The management unit** is the protected area for the purposes of the categories system: usually this will be a separate legal entity
- **Size** is not a relevant factor in assigning the system of categories, though the size should be sufficient for the area to fulfil its objectives
- **Zoning** within protected areas may allow for uses that would not be accepted throughout: but at least 75 per cent of the area should be managed for the primary purpose (and uses in the remaining area should not conflict with the primary purpose)
- **Management responsibility** may rest with the public, private, community or voluntary sectors, regardless of category
- **Ownership of land** may similarly be in the public, private, community or voluntary sectors, regardless of category
- **Regional flexibility** is intended to be a feature of the application of the system
- **Multiple Classifications** may arise when several protected areas in several different categories are contiguous; or surround one another
- **International designations** are to be considered as quite separate from the categorisation exercise.

The definition states that at least 75% of a protected area should be managed for the primary purpose



Triglav National Park, Slovenia by Nigel Dudley

Finally, the system was not specifically designed to provide the basis for management standards of individual protected areas. Indeed IUCN/WCMC advised that it was not to be used as a “driving” mechanism, but that protected areas should first be established to meet national or local need and then be “labelled with an IUCN category according to the management objectives”.

Section 3: Original aims of the categories system

The 1994 guidelines identified some aims for the system of categories, outlined in the side-bar. The first part of the Speaking a Common Language research project assessed the impact of these in the following four sections. Recommendations to IUCN are listed after each section (these are grouped together in the section 1, from pages 5-8).

1. Encouraging national protected area systems

“A system plan is the design of a total reserve system covering the full range of ecosystems and communities found in a particular country. The plan should identify the range of purposes of protected areas, and help to balance different objectives.”⁴

The first two purposes of the system of categories defined in the 1994 Guidelines are aimed at governments. The first is that the system should “alert governments to the importance of protected areas”. A system of protected area categorisation is only one of many tools that can achieve this. The second purpose is more specific and encourages governments to use the categories system to “develop systems of protected areas with management aims tailored to national and local circumstance”. This has two main aims: that protected area systems should wherever feasible include the diversity of protected areas and associated management regimes suggested in IUCN’s categories system; and that management regimes should reflect national and local realities. This reinforces the overall goal to provide a global framework rather than a series of prescriptive management objectives to be imposed on national protected area systems.

The wealth of experience behind the design of the categories system, and the clarity it gives to management, make it a valuable tool for developing regional and national protected area systems. Indeed, the volume on protected area systems development in the WCPA best practice series recommends that governments consider establishing protected areas using the IUCN system as a means to implement Article 8a of the Convention on Biological Diversity (which calls on States Parties to develop systems of protected areas)⁵.

Several countries have used the system of categories as a basis for developing or reviewing their system of protected areas. However, as IUCN’s Environmental Law Centre maintains records of environmental legislation, there is no central information resource monitoring environmental policy, the exact extent is hard to assess. Examples of IUCN categories being referred to in protected area policy were found in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Kuwait, Russia, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine. At the sub-national (i.e. state) level they occur in Australia, Argentina and Canada. In Canada, the Québec Government has developed a Strategic Action Plan for implementing a protected areas network in the province using the IUCN categories as a basis⁶. Even from this incomplete survey, it is clear that more countries around the world have policy documents incorporating the IUCN categories than have incorporated them into legislation (see page 18): a result to be expected from a system developed barely ten years ago, as policy or strategies tend to be updated more regularly than legislation.

Recommendations

- Conduct a monitoring and research programme on the use of the categories system by governments to develop national protected area systems, to help shape advice and capacity building resources available to governments.

The purposes of the guidelines as published in the 1994 Guidelines are:

- ***“To alert governments to the importance of protected areas***
- ***To encourage governments to develop systems of protected areas with management aims tailored to national and local circumstances***
- ***To reduce the confusion that has arisen from the adoption of many different terms to describe different kinds of protected areas***
- ***To provide international standards to help global and regional accounting and comparisons between countries***
- ***To provide a framework for the collection, handling and dissemination of data about protected areas***
- ***And generally to improve communication and understanding between all those engaged in conservation.”***

See case study on “Use of IUCN protected areas categories in national laws”

See case studies on “Vietnam”, “Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia” and on “Standardising names”

2. Reducing confusion about terminology

While the 1994 Guidelines give prominence to the numbers and related objectives of protected area management, they also retain the names traditionally attached to protected areas – but which may imply very different management objectives. This is somewhat inconsistent with the aim of developing a common language that was independent of the variable terminology used at the national level. The decision to retain names for the categories, albeit in a subordinate way, represented an uneasy compromise between the traditionalists, who were opposed to the loss of all mention of national parks in particular and others who wanted to move to entirely “neutral” titles for different kinds of protected area⁷.

The system has apparently been successful in encouraging at least some governments to consider the management objectives of individual protected areas when reporting them internationally, whatever their name. For instance, “national parks” existed long before the system and some had very different aims: as a result some countries have categorised their national parks into appropriate IUCN categories, whilst keeping the name “national park” (see Table 1).

Category	Name	Location	Size (ha)	Date
Ia	Dipperu National Park	Australia	11,100	1969
II	Guanecaste National Park	Costa Rica	32,512	1991
III	Yozgat Camligi National Park	Turkey	264	1988
IV	Pallas Ounastunturi National Park	Finland	49,600	1938
V	Snowdonia National Park	Wales, UK	214,200	1954
VI	Expedition National Park	Australia	2930	1994

Table 1: Examples of national parks in different IUCN categories

In other cases, however, the use of names such as national park in the international system has undoubtedly caused confusion – legally and culturally. For instance in Vietnam, where the system was used as the basis for the protected areas legal and regulatory framework, the initial interpretation of the IUCN categories was primarily based on name rather than on the management objectives that were being applied to the country’s protected areas. In Australia, when the categories system was used as the basis for discussions aimed at developing a system of Indigenous Protected Areas, questions were raised over the title and definition of Category Ib (Wilderness), as from the perspective of indigenous people no “wilderness” areas exist as there is no landscape without people or cultural significance.

The other action to ensure harmony in the way protected areas are classified internationally is to provide awareness raising and capacity building for all those using the categories system. First steps in this direction have been made with the publication of notes on interpretation and application of the system in Europe⁸ and draft guidelines in Australia⁹. WCPA’s Cardiff Best Practice series has published a volume specifically on category V, which develops principles and guidelines for the planning and management of this category¹⁰. There is an urgent need for similar advice particularly on the new category VI.

Recommendations

- Serious consideration is given to removing generic names from the categories. The system exists to get away from the confusion caused by one name being used for many types of protected area and linking specific names to categories may have reduced their effectiveness
- Supplementary guidance is produced for other categories, with the need being most urgent for category VI protected areas.

The Argentinean National Strategy on Protected Areas policy aims “To homogenise the different management categories of Protected Areas used at present in the 25 jurisdictions, adapting them to the international terminology ... established by the World Commission on Protected Areas ...”



Tierra de Fuego National Park, Argentina: Sue Stolton

3. Providing international standards

The system of categories is increasingly called upon to provide standards for a range of initiatives, from the assessment of the effectiveness of protected areas to being used by the private sector as a way of promoting a company's corporate environmental standards.

At the 1992 World Parks Congress, in Caracas Venezuela, most discussion focused on the creation of new protected areas; the issue of effective management of existing areas was relegated to a small but important footnote in the conference recommendations. In the years since, this emphasis has changed dramatically and a number of new developments mean that protected area quality is assuming ever greater importance:

Many of these developments come from the recognition of the extent to which existing protected areas are under threat or are undergoing actual degradation, and thus a greater emphasis on the management effectiveness of protected areas. To set standards, and to assess and guarantee effectiveness, the protected area management objectives need to be clear. The IUCN system of protected area management categories should help to achieve this, and examples exist of its use. The WCPA Framework for Assessing Management Effectiveness offers some advice on distinguishing between different management categories in assessments¹¹, and there is a proposal from WCPA in Europe to develop a certification system for application of the categories system to protected areas. There is also interest in the development of standards for protected area management, including a major WCPA project to agree basic standards and discussions about ways of guaranteeing management effectiveness, ranging from danger lists to certification systems.

In other areas the category system remains poorly reflected in situations where it seems ideally suited to contribute. For example, the movement towards certification of good forest management, which has emerged since the categories system was agreed and overlaps with many protected areas, does not consider the implications of the category system. The same is true for other environmental certification systems such as organic farming and the Marine Stewardship Council. Efforts to set standards for good environmental management still tend to judge protected areas as single management entities rather than as a suite of quite different management systems. An assessment of the various regional criteria and indicator processes to encourage good forest management, found that they ignored the categories, and a superficial analysis of similar approaches in other biomes suggests that this is indicative of a more general lack of awareness.

Just as the categories are receiving increasing attention from resource using industries, like mining and energy (see pages 20-21), so it should be of increasing concern to financial institutions which invest in many of their activities. They too may find the category system provides a useful framework for their investment strategies and decisions.

Recommendations

- WCPA should further integrate the categories system into the WCPA framework for assessing management effectiveness of protected areas
- Work with other systems of standards to ensure that the IUCN protected area categories are adequately reflected in these (for instance forest, marine and organic certification and regional criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management).

See case studies on "forest certification" and on "forest criteria and indicator processes"

The drive to certify protected area categories in Europe came partly because the Austrian government linked level of financial support to the category



Austrian Alps: Nigel Dudley

See case study on
“forest resource
assessments”,
Vietnam,
“improving
category
designation”,
“zoning” and
“marine protected
areas”

4. Creating a framework for handling data

The first and most pressing use of the category system was to standardise data collection. During the 1990s, the political profile of protected areas rose dramatically as NGOs and civil society clamoured for protection of fragile habitats. IUCN’s call for at least 10 per cent of the world to be in protected areas created many associated campaigns. It also meant that governments were under pressure to prove their conservation credentials. One inevitable result was a mass of claims, counter claims and statistics about the area of land and water under protection.

The system of categories aimed to provide a transparent and credible framework for reporting on protected areas. This is reflected most clearly in the WDPA maintained by the UNEP-WCMC, and the reporting of the categories in the 1997 and 2003 UN List of Protected Areas¹². The wide uptake of the system by national governments shows that in this respect they have been highly successful.

Ironically, while statistical needs created a major spur for development of the system of categories, it also created the most problems. Perhaps the broad philosophy behind the system does not always mesh well with statistical precision. For example, when the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) asked countries to report on forest protected areas for its *Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment 2000*, information was requested on IUCN categories. The results were unsatisfactory; with confusion about whether plantations in Category V protected areas are “forest protected areas”, when forests managed for avalanche control or watershed management became “forest protected areas” and so on. The statistics did not really match with reality and as a result the UNECE and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe created an alternative set of definitions, which although they are compatible with the IUCN system of categories, also contain many “protective forests” which IUCN would not recognise as protected areas.

There was also considerable confusion about how to report different management zones within a single protected area: an issue that has particular relevance to marine protected areas. For instance, many Category V or VI marine reserves contain areas with much stricter protection: such “no fish zones” for example, may also move over time. Although there are precedents for addressing this, many protected area agencies find this issue difficult and are looking for further guidance.

More fundamentally, there have been problems in reporting and in some cases understanding the system of categories – especially when those assigning categories do not fully understand English, French or Spanish, the languages of the 1994 guidance book (a number of ad hoc translations have been made into other languages).

Many countries have not assigned all their protected areas to categories, or have assigned them incorrectly. In the past, UNEP-WCMC has assigned categories to protected areas when countries have not done so, but this is not ideal and is in any case beyond the organisation’s capacity.

Recommendations

- IUCN should develop specific guidance for use of the system of categories in those places where confusion still remains, for example in forest, freshwater and marine protected areas
- Future editions of the system, and basic guidance on use, should be translated into many more languages than is currently the case (see page 32).

Should plantations in category V protected areas be counted as “forest protected areas”? Further guidance is needed on the use of the categories in forest statistics



Plantation in Snowdonia National Park by Nigel Dudley

Section 4: New priorities for the IUCN system of categories

Along with their “traditional” uses, the IUCN system of categories has also developed a variety of new roles: in effect it may have filled a vacuum left by the absence of other instruments. Many of the questions that have arisen occur because the system of categories is being used in ways that were not originally planned. While at least some of these new uses appear to be a logical and probably healthy development, they have thrown up a variety of questions and some tensions. The sections below identify and discuss some major points that have been raised or become obvious during our research.

*See case study on
“Use of IUCN
protected areas
categories in
national laws”*

1. Providing a basis for legislation

Although not one of the original declared intentions of the categories system, the IUCN system has been used by some national governments as the basis for protected area legal and policy frameworks.

An initial review of the extent to which legal and policy frameworks have used the IUCN system of categories, carried out by IUCN’s Environmental Law Centre in 2002, found that 20 countries out of the 164 reviewed have used the IUCN categories system (both the 1978 and 1994 versions) in national law and or in binding national regulations. As many national laws were passed some time ago and reviews are infrequent, perhaps more important in determining trends is that the system has been used in ten per cent of the reviewed legislation developed since 1994¹. In most of these cases categories have been amended to suit the national situation. As noted above (see page 14), the research also found that more countries have national policy documents incorporating the IUCN categories system than those that have incorporated it into their legislation. This also indicates that the categories system may be used in legal documents in several more countries in the future, as policy recommendations are adopted into law.

The research also looked at international processes and agreements. It was found that, to date, the system of categories have had little impact on key instruments at a global level, as most pre-date the development of the categories system. The system has however been discussed at the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The system has also been mentioned specifically in the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Circumpolar Protected Areas Network Strategy and Action Plan (1996) and the revision of the 1968 African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, adopted in July 2003, incorporates the IUCN Protected Areas Management Categories in an Annex to the text.

Emerging issues

From a conservation perspective, using the system of categories in legislation can provide specification of objectives (e.g. to give guidance to decision makers or to buffer uses from short term policy change) and regulation of activities. Countries might be interested in incorporating categories in legislation to help broaden types, reach and objectives of protected areas. This has occurred, for example, in Peru and Queensland (Australia). On the other hand, the use of the system of categories and associated objectives may lead to restrictions on actions, unless they are adapted to fit local realities and needs.

¹ The research assessed the degree to which legislation and policy frameworks adopted the IUCN categories. The figures quoted here include those countries where the IUCN protected area management categories are incorporated exactly into legislation and those where very similar wording is used in legislation.

Queensland state government in Australia has used the categories in legislation to help broaden the type and reach of protected areas



Lamington National Park
by Nigel Dudley

*See case study on
“use of protected
area categories in
national
legislation”*

There is also a chance that making alterations to the category language within national legislation (i.e. definitions or objectives) could work against the goal of an international “common language”, adding further confusion to protected area definitions.

Conflict between political aspirations and conservation objectives can also lead to inappropriate legal categories. For instance, because of the way the categories system is constructed, it is viewed by some as hierarchical; with category I protected areas being more important than category VI. Since this is a misreading of the system, the application of system of categories to measure “conservation targets” or determine the level of available funding can be inappropriate.

The clarity of the relationship between legislation and the IUCN system of categories has thus become an important issue, as is the secondary question of whether the system should be promoted for use in primary legislation, secondary legislation, sectoral legislation or for a range of other policy instruments. Opinions differ as to whether IUCN should actively promote the use of the categories system in legislation. However, there is general agreement about the need to monitor developments, provide guidance where the system is used in legislation and report on the uses of the system of categories in regulatory frameworks.

Recommendations

- Develop a practical manual to explain the category system and discuss issues to be considered *if* the categories system is to be used in legislation and/or policy development
- Provide capacity building and technical advice to those countries reviewing and amending their protected area legislation or policy
- Continue to ensure that ECOLEX² is updated with information on protected area legislation as it relates to the IUCN system of categories, conventions and agreements and that the information is regularly reviewed and analysed
- Similarly, collect and analyse relevant information on protected area policy
- Link relevant legislation and policy information to the WDPA.

² An electronic legislative database holding a large collection of environmental agreements, laws and regulations from IUCN, UNEP and FAO

2. Helping to regulate activities

On a number of occasions, the system of categories has been used as a tool for controlling major changes in land use within protected areas. This has created tension, partly because some of those affected are unconvinced that the categories are assigned with enough care, or enough stakeholder participation, to support such significant policy positions or legislation.

It is a paradox that the most controversial “new” use of the system of categories is one that many people consider to be implicit. By defining management objectives, many people assume that that certain types of management will *and will not* take place. However, accompanying guidance states management objectives only in general terms. Since 1994, several challenges to the system mean that WCPA and IUCN have had to refine and develop guidance relating to particular categories or to certain issues raised by stakeholders. Guidance has been developed in three main ways:

- **Detailed technical guidance from WCPA:** prepared with the participation of the protected area community (but not always of wider stakeholders) – for instance the technical guidance on Category V protected areas gives some advice about appropriate land uses
- **Stakeholder-driven clarification:** where interest groups have formally proposed clarification on key issues, such as the recommendation to governments that they ban mining in category I-IV protected areas, passed by the 2000 World Conservation Congress in Amman, Jordan
- **Emergency responses:** prepared by WCPA with less stakeholder input due to policy proposals, for example the clarification of the role and limitations of industrial timber production in protected areas prepared as a result of proposals from Ontario, Canada¹³.

The “Amman Recommendation”

Concern about mining within protected areas motivated IUCN members to propose a recommendation at the 2000 World Conservation Congress recommending, among other things, that governments ban mining in Category I-IV protected areas. Inter alia, Recommendation 2.82: “*Calls on all IUCN’s State members to prohibit by law, all exploration and extraction of mineral resources in protected areas corresponding to IUCN protected area management categories I-IV*”. At present, this would eliminate around six per cent of global land area from mining activity including fossil fuel extraction. The recommendation has been controversial, with opposition from mining and energy interests and the US government and only lukewarm acceptance from some NGOs. Other NGOs and governments see it as a critical test of states’ seriousness in implementing protected areas. Governments vary widely in their approach to mining in protected areas and different parts of government may disagree. The industry has raised many questions, such as whether the sectors are being singled out unfairly, how rigid the recommendation should be, whether protected area establishment might be used as a tactic to stop mining and whether well-managed mines could help to sustain protected areas. Some NGOs fear that a rigid application of the recommendation might result in protected areas being degazetted or potential protected areas not being created. A series of more general issues have also emerged, relating to the way in which categories are applied, as discussed in the main text.

The “Amman Recommendation” advised governments to ban mining, including fossil fuel extraction, from category I-IV protected areas, causing a storm of controversy that has raised many other questions about the role of the categories and about mining and protected areas



Three related general issues have emerged from this debate:

See case studies on “mining” and “the energy sector”

- Does being a “protected area” automatically mean that some activities are prohibited?
- If so, is the IUCN system of categories a strong enough foundation upon which to base these decisions?
- Should such decisions be made based on management objective or management effectiveness?

There is no serious question that the existence of a protected area implies restrictions on management activities, otherwise the whole concept becomes meaningless. There also seems to be little opposition to the principle that the IUCN system of categories should be used as a basis for such decisions. The question about management effectiveness is more controversial but reflects some clear concerns about the categories system. The questions could be restated:

- How are decisions made about management prohibitions in protected areas, who is involved in these decisions and how are such decisions integrated into land-use planning and regional development strategies?
- How are IUCN categories assigned, who is involved in those decisions and how can they be challenged, if at all?
- Should the system of categories be changed depending on whether or not management is meeting the objectives stated in the categories?

Critical questions emerging from the associated debates relate to whether categories are applied correctly and consistently and whether there should be a system for verifying or challenging particular choices of category. Critics complain that assignment is often undertaken by junior civil servants with little understanding or debate, or even remotely by UNEP-WCMC. Yet the resulting categories could be used to make decisions which have significant development implications for a country. The question of whether management effectiveness should be used as a basis for changing categories is controversial and strongly rejected by IUCN, on the grounds that it goes against the idea of an objectives based system.

The debate is ongoing, but has already raised questions about assignment of categories that need to be addressed with some urgency if the system is to be strong enough to carry the weight of wide-ranging management decisions. The debate has had the positive outcome that stakeholders previously not been involved in protected area issues are now engaging fully with governments and NGOs on this issue, although this in turn also creates challenges and potential problems for the protected area community.

Recommendations

- Creation of a more systematic and transparent framework for assignment of the system of categories, with clear lines of communication and appeal (i.e. a manual by UNEP-WCMC and WCPA)
- Development of criteria for considering the compatibility/incompatibility of specific activities with the conservation objectives of protected areas
- Development of guidelines on acceptable practices for extractive industries in all six categories and in buffer zones, in association with interested stakeholders
- Involvement with the WWF initiative on certification of mining to ensure that this takes full account of issues relating to the categories.

3. Managing existing or traditional uses within protected areas

The presumption of the people creating the earliest protected areas was that these would be set aside entirely for wildlife and scenery: indeed, existing human communities were often summarily expelled to maximise the perceived values of these areas, which were at that time primarily aesthetic – particularly the preservation of so-called “wilderness”. Over the past few decades, such perspectives have gradually changed. The creation of protected areas in populated landscapes – particularly the category V protected areas in Europe – showed that protection need not be incompatible with the presence of people. Research showed that many existing protected areas in other regions also contain people; for example it is estimated that 80 per cent of protected areas in Latin America contain permanent settlement. It should also be recalled that most of the existing IUCN categories do not exclude people, although governments sometimes act as if they did.

See case studies on “zoning” and “indigenous and traditional peoples”

Managers of protected areas are increasingly recognising the rights, needs and desires of local people. Reserves that once excluded people have in some case rethought their policies and are opening up their reserves for traditional sustainable uses, such as collection of non-timber forest products or controlled game hunting. Many of the new protected areas that are being created ensure that agreements with local communities are reached before final decisions are made on location, management plans and protected area aims. Most marine protected areas fall into this category.

The relationship between people and protected areas is therefore still developing, and critics can rightly point to many places where this has broken down or been handled badly. On the other hand, experience is building up and there are a growing number of success stories, which show that it is often possible for protected areas to coexist with human communities under certain circumstances.

A key part of most strategies for human-ecology interactions is the concept of **zoning**; that is of agreeing parts of the protected area where traditional uses can continue and where any resource use is prohibited. In some cases these might be more-or-less permanent zones, but in others the zones may shift over time to allow recovery of game or valued plants, or to rebuild fish stocks. In some protected areas the existence and longevity of particular zones may also be subject to negotiation between managers and local communities¹⁴.

A simple zoning system includes a protected core surrounded by a buffer zone. The core – a strict reserve or no-take area – protects critical habitat and species. The buffer zone allows more uses but insulates the core from threats. Zoning systems can be applied both for management zones within individual protected areas and in landscape or ecoregional conservation approaches where a series of protected areas are linked to other compatible land management. Different “zones” are also often created in transboundary conservation area initiatives – which have increased from 59 in 1988, mainly in Europe and North America to 169 by 2001, from all over the world¹⁵.

Categories are increasingly being used to help define such zones to facilitate, for example, management of marine resources (e.g. “no take zones”), non-timber forest products collection and traditional hunting etc. This is particularly through use of categories V and VI to facilitate management of cultural resources, but many category II-IV protected areas have also evolved to allow these uses.

Zoning is particularly critical in the case of many marine protected areas, where parts of the protected area are frequently set aside to allow fish stocks to build up, but where such protective zones may change over time



Greater St Lucia protected area, South Africa: Marc Hockings

Although zoning is an integral and recognised part of protected area management, its use has created some challenges for the IUCN system of categories:

- Confusion remains over how to classify large protected areas containing a range of zones. There is sometimes also a problem of “double counting” in calculating the extent of protected areas when strict reserves exist within broader landscape or seascape protected area categories: for example in the UK in relation to category IV nature reserves which are nested within category V national parks
- Some marine protected area specialists believe that marine reserves do not fit comfortably within the existing definitions, particularly with respect to “no-take zones”, and that in consequence have not been represented adequately within the category system
- There is uncertainty about how to report transboundary protected areas. The possibility of having a different category was examined and rejected but one option would be to include a separate list of such areas as an appendix to the UN List of Protected Areas and possibly to identify constituent protected areas within the main text.

Most issues are basically about the mechanics of recording and reporting. The project concluded that many of these issues can be addressed through the development of additional technical guidance and some specific suggestions are made below.

Recommendations

- **Multiple-use protected areas:** a specific supplement to the IUCN category guidelines is needed to explain precisely the circumstances in which parts of a single management unit should be separately reported
- **Marine protected areas:** specific guidelines for the application of the IUCN system of protected area management categories to marine protected areas should be produced including:
 - ✓ Guidance on which types of fishery management areas qualify
 - ✓ Clarification of terms
 - ✓ Relationship between the categories’ objective-based approach and marine protected areas
- **Marine no-take zones:** in addition, further guidance is required with respect to data gathering about no-take zones
- **Double-counting in multiple use protected areas:** UNEP-WCMC should develop a means of identifying and reporting any protected areas which are located within other protected areas, to remove the possibility of double-counting from the WDPA
- **Transboundary protected areas:** the WCPA Transboundary Protected Area Task Force and UNEP-WCMC should consider developing specific guidance on the reporting of transboundary protected areas within the WDPA.

There may be an argument for listing transboundary protected areas separately in the database, and indicating in the main list those individual protected areas that are part of transboundary protected areas



Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa looking into Lesotho – a transboundary protected area: Nigel Dudley

4. Interpreting or clarifying land tenure

By separating the ownership of land and resources from the requirements and objectives of management, the 1994 version of the IUCN system of categories allows for a range of models of protected areas to ensure that both indigenous and other traditional peoples' rights can be respected and also that conservation objectives can be achieved. Furthermore, the recognition of private lands (of communities, individual or corporations) in the category system offers the opportunity to incorporate the concept of community-owned protected areas¹⁶. One result, is that the system is sometimes being used as a tool for interpreting or clarifying land tenure and different governance regimes in protected areas, for instance as a way of both defining and in some cases creating sanctuaries for indigenous or traditional peoples.

See case studies on "Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia", "Governance" and "Indigenous and Traditional Peoples"

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) in Australia

IPAs are created when indigenous land owners make a formal and public announcement of their intention to manage their lands primarily for the protection of natural and associated cultural values, managed in accordance with the IUCN system of categories and management objectives. Today IPAs in Australia, as distinct from government run parks and reserves, are gathering momentum, with 28 projects currently either established or being developed¹⁷.

Initially, there was considerable resistance among government and non-government conservation interests when IPAs were proposed. The conventional government protected areas management agencies saw IPAs as being temporary and having no parity with the "true and proper" protected areas being managed through statutory means. Partially in response to this concern Environment Australia sought to inform indigenous people about the IUCN system of categories and asked them to consider their application in the context of their own management aspirations. It was found that indigenous groups reacted positively to the idea of adopting an internationally recognised system, as it reinforced their status as legitimate protected area managers and thus engaged them into an internationally significant agenda, something they have struggled to achieve in Australia. From other stakeholders' perspective, i.e. government and NGOs, the IUCN category system gave the IPA concept more credibility and parity with the mainstream protected area system and so their criticisms were somewhat diminished. From the perspective of the Commonwealth government, who are the funders and promoters of the initiative, the use of the categories in this way gave greater confidence that IPAs were worth investment.

These uses are still often poorly developed. Although the IUCN categories system accepts a range of tenure and governance regimes, legal and political regulations on issues like ownership and statutory powers within protected areas at the national level often contradict the concepts of the categories system. For example, categories with the highest potential to respond to indigenous peoples' claims, like V (Protected Landscapes/Seascapes) and VI (Managed Resource Protected Areas) are often under-utilised and poorly understood. Often countries rely on public ownership of lands within in protected areas. Often, national protected areas legislation does not provide for any private or communal property to exist within protected areas in any category, and requires the expropriation of lands whenever necessary for the purposes of declaring, expanding, or consolidating areas or systems¹⁸.

Protected areas are gradually developing from a threat to indigenous peoples to being a possible vehicle for preserving traditional lifestyles



Sami hut in Swedish national park: Nigel Dudley

Attention has been focused by on how the categories system can be used to help promote a range of governance types in protected areas, and specifically to develop the role (in management, access to resources, etc) of people in protected areas.

A proposal was made at the Vth World Parks Congress to add the dimension of “governance type” to the categories system. To this end a draft matrix for detailing the governance of protected areas has been developed, which could help in assessing and strengthening national protected area systems, by “recognising” new elements. The governance dimension would be listed in the database alongside the existing category system rather than replacing it.

Recommendations

- IUCN should be encouraged to develop and finalise the governance matrix as a supplement to the IUCN Guidelines
- Better explanation of the categories system is needed at all levels, i.e. from governments through to local people
- A set of case studies should be developed to show how different management and ownership approaches can be reflected in the IUCN protected area categories system.

5. Being used for advocacy by conservation NGOs

Protected areas remain a major focus – sometimes the sole focus – for many conservation organisations. From the mid 1990s, many of the larger conservation NGOs undertook a concerted drive to increase the number and extent of protected areas, often through vigorous lobbying and advocacy efforts. Specific reference to the system of categories is relatively rare although there are clear biases towards certain types of protection. A series of issues can be identified:

See case study on
“NGOs”

- **Field projects:** most conservation NGOs focus their efforts on the more strictly protected categories. For example, analysis of almost 200 protected areas around the world where WWF has projects found none in category V and both the Wildlife Conservation Society and Fauna and Flora International say that they generally work in the “higher” categories
- **Advocacy:** in a few cases, the categories have been named specifically in NGO campaign targets. For instance, when WWF ran a global campaign to increase the proportion of forests in protected areas to 10 per cent of the total, some parts of the WWF network specified that this should apply only to a proportion of the categories (see box below). Many NGOs have also promoted or supported category-specific advocacy positions, most notably related to the Amman mining recommendation but also with respect to logging and hunting
- **Sustainable use:** a smaller but growing NGO involvement relating to various forms of land management which are compatible with biodiversity conservation, in buffer zones of protected areas and in category V and VI protected areas. Here the NGOs tend to be those involved in activities such as organic farming, sustainable fishing and certified forest management rather than traditional wildlife conservation organisations.

Use of protected area system of categories by WWF in advocacy

WWF has been running a campaign to increase the number of forest protected areas, but the categories included have varied in different parts of the world, for example:

- WWF Brazil only counts categories I-III
- WWF European Programme only counts categories I-IV
- WWF Africa and Madagascar Programme counts all categories

No real problems have been identified, although there is clearly a debate needed about the role of different types of protected area in biodiversity conservation and perhaps an under-valuing of categories V and VI. (This is less a problem of categories than a question of NGO strategy.)

Recommendation

- WCPA should consider producing clear guidance about the conservation role of different categories for use by NGOs and others, with examples.

WWF “counts” all the IUCN categories towards its forest targets in Africa, but only categories I-IV in Europe



Uganda: Sue Stolton
Latvia: Nigel Dudley

See case studies
on
“Transboundary
Protected Areas”
and “Bioregional
planning”

6. Providing a tool for bioregional planning

Lobbying for an increase in coverage of protected areas is occurring in a wider context of moves towards a more comprehensive and planned approach to conservation, which has taken place over the last decade and involves both large NGOs and a number of governments. Three developments are critical:

- **Prioritisation:** there is a need to prioritise within global conservation, so as to focus most attention on areas that have the greatest biodiversity richness, intactness or which are under most threat. Important global prioritisation exercises include IUCN’s “Centres of Plant Diversity”, Birdlife International’s “Endemic Bird Areas of the World”, Conservation International’s “Biodiversity Hotspots”, the World Resources Institutes “Frontier Forests” and WWF’s “Global 200 Ecoregions”.
- **Broadscale conservation:** development of larger scale approaches to conservation, consciously planning conservation interventions over a large area, such as an ecoregion or bioregion, based around an agreed biodiversity vision and involving a mosaic of protected areas and other forms of sustainable land use. Amongst NGOs, The Nature Conservancy, WWF and Conservation International have been the most active, and governments, such as Australia, Canada and the Netherlands, have made broader-scale commitments to conservation. The CBD is promoting the ecosystem approach, which reflects many of these values.
- **Integration of conservation and development objectives** in land-use planning and regional development strategies, based on ecosystem approach.

Focusing on ecoregion conservation within priority countries and regions means looking beyond individual sites, at a whole land or water mosaic, aiming to build up a mixture of protected areas of various categories, linked and buffered by various other types of sustainable land use, including land within category V and VI protected areas (use of land outside protected areas is generally less well developed in current ecoregion conservation plans). One of the most ambitious examples of this, currently under development, is the MesoAmerican Biological Corridor, a set of reserves and sustainable use areas stretching over seven countries and involving negotiations with literally hundreds of communities, organisations and businesses along the way.

There is a recognition that the system of categories will play a role in both planning and measuring success; for example The Nature Conservancy notes that one important measure of conservation status of ecoregions is “area and percentage under conservation management designation categories”, noting that “the classification system needs to be updated in many plans to correspond with globally applicable IUCN categories”¹⁹. However, while this is taking place in theory, the extent to which it has been translated into reality is unclear: most ecoregional plans still focus almost exclusively on strictly protected areas of categories I-III or perhaps IV and few distinguish different categories in ecoregional plans.

Recommendations

- More work is needed on clarifying and communicating the role of different protected area management categories within broadscale conservation and development strategies.

The MesoAmerican Biological Corridor will consist of a string of protected areas of various categories connected by other management regimes: here farmers discuss conservation of a rare parrot species in commercial plantations. The categories could help to plan land and water uses in a conservation mosaic



Costa Rica: Nigel Dudley

Section 5: Using the System of Categories More Effectively

As conservation develops from a minority passion to a mainstream necessity, it follows that conservation practice must also grow and mature, to reflect the subtleties and the extra obligations that emerge from a period of rapid growth. If protected areas are to play the central role demanded of them in this process, they must also reflect the multiplicity of needs of different stakeholders, different ecosystems and different socio-economic and political environments. While it is important not to place too much reliance on a system that was developed mainly as a way of standardising protected area records, the categories system can help to define and even guide this process. However, given that the demands on the system are considerably greater than they were in 1994, this also implies that categories are used more effectively to reflect this expanded role. The following section draws on the previous analysis and makes some further and more general recommendations for development in the future. The four key issues discussed below are:

- Clarifying the definition of a protected areas and the purposes of the categories system
- Collection, analysis and dissemination of data about the categories
- Assigning protected areas to categories
- Responsibility for the operation of the categories system.

1. The definition and purposes of the system of categories

To recap, the foundation of the 1994 protected areas categories system is the definition of a protected area: *“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”*.

The IUCN guidelines state that: *“All categories must fall within this definition. But although protected areas meet the general purposes contained in this definition, in practice the precise purposes for which protected areas are managed differ greatly”*. This qualification is important and has sometimes been overlooked. The inclusion of an area under the definition and the assignment of it into a category form a sequence: an area that appears to fulfil the requirements of one of the categories but does *not* meet the overall definition is not to be conceived as a protected area as defined by IUCN. The definition of a protected area is therefore critical to the process of category assignment, and is generally accepted by the international community. The Convention on Biological Diversity contains a very similar definition, as outlined in the box below.

Definitions: CBD and IUCN

International understanding about protected areas has been somewhat confused by the Convention on Biological Diversity adopting a different definition of a protected area: *“Geographically defined area which is designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives”* (Article 2). In practice these definitions are only marginally different and both of them consider protected areas:

- to be area-based concepts that might be found anywhere
- to require specific measures (dedication, designation, regulation) for the purposes of biodiversity conservation (i.e. protection and maintenance)
- to require management, delivered through legal or other effective means
- by implication, to require that some kind of management authority is in place to secure conservation.

Use of the categories within the implementation of Convention on Biological Diversity would be a major step towards using them more effectively



Chile: Sue Stolton

The very act of publishing definitions, categories and guidelines for their use tends to open up every word and sentence contained within this guidance to interpretation – and inevitably interpretations vary between different interest groups and perspectives. The more that the conservation community attempts to use the categories for purposes such as controlling undesirable forms of development, the more the precise wording will be subject to critical scrutiny. However many working groups, meetings and conferences are held to refine the language in the definitions used, it is likely that a variety of interpretations will remain. It is therefore suggested that guidance on the IUCN system of protected area management categories should include a section which discusses two fundamental questions:

- What is the *purpose* of the IUCN system of protected area management categories?
- What are the *principles* that underpin this system?

The first sections of this report reviewed the *original purposes* of the system of categories and also identified some of the new uses for which the categories are now being used. The four substantive purposes contained in the original guidance (based on text from page 5 of the 1994 IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories) remain important:

1. To encourage governments to develop systems of protected areas with management aims tailored to national and local circumstance;
2. To reduce the confusion which has arisen from the adoption of many different terms to describe different kinds of protected areas;
3. To provide international standards to help global and regional accounting and comparisons between countries; and
4. To provide a framework for the collection, handling and dissemination of data about protected areas

A range of other purposes have also emerged (see pages 18-28) and as such may need to be reflected, or at least acknowledged, in an update of advice on the category system. From this discussion, these new purposes could be added to the guidance:

5. To provide a basis for legislation
6. To provide a framework for land-use changes and management in particular categories
7. To provide a framework for existing and traditional land uses within protected areas, such as subsistence hunting and fishing and collection of non-timber forest products
8. To provide a framework for interpreting and clarifying land tenure
9. To provide information for advocacy
10. To serve as a tool for bioregional planning, or for large-scale conservation and development planning.

Recommendations

- **Revision of the guidelines:** It has become clear during the research for “Speaking a Common Language” that the new uses to which the categories are put, and confusion about their original uses, mean that there is a need for substantially revised guidance on their use and application including a revision of the 1994 guidance. One outcome from the project is a recommendation from a workshop at the Vth World Parks Congress, in September 2003, that a new version of the guidelines be produced.

2. Dissemination of information

The provision, analysis and dissemination of information can be viewed from three perspectives: the data user, the data holder (UNEP-WCMC) and the data collector. The need for thorough and accurate information on protected areas and their categorisation is increasing. From the perspective of the providers of the information, these demands have created an increasing challenge, as the protected area estate increases and tenure and governance forms become more varied.

The international status of the global protected areas system needs to be complemented by a single international repository of protected area data. The United Nations first endorsed the preparation of a list of “national parks and equivalent reserves” in 1962. Since 1981, data for this list has been collected by UNEP-WCMC, on behalf of IUCN, as a component of the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA).

The *2003 UN List of Protected Areas* presents data on 102,102 protected areas (covering 18.8 million km²)²⁰. Within this total figure there are 68,066 protected areas with IUCN Management Categories, showing the progress that has been made in assigning categories to most of the world’s protected areas (67 per cent of the total number and 81 per cent of the area). The 34,036 protected areas without IUCN categories however cover a 3.6 million km² and therefore represent a significant proportion of the global conservation estate. Of the 243 countries and territories in the WDPA only 13 have no management categories allocated to their protected areas. Therefore most of the gaps lie in countries that have gone some way to designating categories – or have had it done for them by UNEP-WCMC or IUCN.

Two main issues arise relating to the accuracy of the WDPA with respect to the IUCN system of categories:

- Category designations (the question of assignment is dealt with later in this section)
- Quality of data.

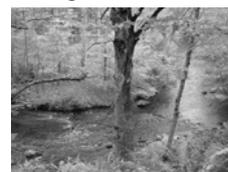
With a database of over 100,000 international records some errors are bound to occur. Although no systematic survey of the records was made, even a short scan of the current publicly available data reveals that errors and inconsistencies are not hard to find, particularly when the category on the list is compared with that on the more detailed, but more dated, site sheets (see Table 2).

Name of MPA	Category assigned
Soufriere Marine Management Area, St Lucia	VI: on WDPA; none on site sheet
Saba Marine Park, Netherlands Antilles	VI: on the site sheet; none on WDPA
Montego Bay Marine Park, Jamaica	II: on WDPA; III: on the site sheet
Hol Chan Marine Reserve, Belize	II: on WDPA; IV: on site sheet
Palawan Wildlife Sanctuary and Biosphere Reserve, Philippines	No classification

Table 2: Comparison of data from the UNEP-WCMC database

The database can only be as accurate as the information reported to UNEP-WCMC (see the box overleaf for a detailed explanation of the process undertaken to update the WDPA for publication in the *2003 UN list of Protected Areas*). For the 1997 List UNEP-WCMC received only 180 responses from requests to 512 protected area agencies, or about 35 per cent rate of return. In 2002/3, official updates were received from 103, or 56 per cent of all countries.

Currently the accuracy of the World Database on Protected Areas rests largely with governments, not all of which have the expertise or resources to report accurately. While the larger and richer countries are able to maintain records, many others are failing to do so



New York State: Nigel Dudley

The World Database on Protected Areas Consortium hopes to increase the capacity for data collection and verification



Phatam Transboundary Protected Area Complex – Thailand and Laos: Nigel Dudley

Although the rates of returns are improving, the gaps still mean major problems in terms of accuracy of the list. It is likely that countries with accurate data at the national level will find it easier to complete effective reporting for global assessments and monitoring. Improving the process for providing information on protected areas and category designation at a national level is therefore a priority. This will need to be supplemented by guidance both for specific biomes and some of the categories. Furthermore, the advice of the 1994 IUCN Guidelines that “final responsibility for determining categories should be taken at the international level” still remains an elusive ideal: there is no clear mechanism as yet for how this might be achieved.

The clear understanding, interpretation and translation of the six IUCN Protected Area Management Categories are also essential prerequisites for their correct adoption and reporting internationally. As noted earlier, there is a need to translate the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories and guidelines into many more languages – and for these translations to involve the participation of in-country specialists who are familiar with the issues, thus ensuring that translation is as precise as possible.

UNEP-WCMC has indicated that it needs stronger support from the international conservation community if it is to be able to maintain what is already a huge database and which is likely to grow still further in the next few years. The importance of the database was reflected in the 2002 agreement by IUCN and UNEP and a number of non-governmental organisations to form the WDPA Consortium³.

Producing the *United Nations List of Protected Areas*

Participation of national protected area agencies and other organisations in updating data in the WDPA is central to the UN List process. The task of updating the 2003 *UN List of Protected Areas*, the 13th to be produced, began in early 2002, when the UNEP Executive Director and IUCN Director General jointly wrote to national environment ministers, seeking their cooperation in updating protected areas information for their respective countries. At the same time, the WDPA Consortium members agreed to contribute the WDPA country and regional protected area information that they held, or to which they had access. UNEP-WCMC sent requests for updates and verification to 183 countries in November-December 2002, with hard copies of each country's protected areas information held in the WDPA. Explanatory notes to assist countries in completing the update were also provided, including information on the IUCN protected area definition and application of the management categories.

Through its cooperative agreement with UNEP-WCMC, the European Environment Agency (EEA), undertook, through the European Topic Centre on Nature Protection & Biodiversity (ETC/NPB), the updating of data for the 38 countries covered by its authority. Although requests were sent to individual countries in Southeast Asia, data were also provided by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) for countries in the ASEAN region. In the event that no information was received from official sources, research was undertaken by UNEP-WCMC to obtain data – wherever possible – from published material and other sources.

³ UNEP-WCMC, IUCN-WCPA, Conservation International, WWF, Wildlife Conservation Society, BirdLife International, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Biology Institute and Fauna and Flora International. In addition, UNEP-WCMC has separate cooperation agreements with ARCBC and EEA to form a WDPA Consortium to facilitate more effective updating and development of the database.

UNEP-WCMC received 86 direct official national replies, representing 47 per cent of the total. In addition, 15 official responses were received from European countries through the EEA/ETC-NC 2003 review of Europe in time for inclusion in the 2003 *UN List*. However, the WDPA was updated for all European countries through the Common Database on Designated Areas (in partnership with EEA) in December 2002. Official data was also received for seven ASEAN countries through ARCBC, although direct official responses were also received from five of these countries. In effect, official updates were received from 103 countries, or 56 per cent of all countries, through the combined efforts of UNEP-WCMC, EEA and ARCBC.

This text has been edited from the 2003 United Nations List of Protected Areas.

Recommendations

- UNEP-WCMC needs increased capacity and commitment from partners and governments to increase the effectiveness of the WDPA to ensure the database is updated regularly and well maintained, and that data gaps and inaccuracies on the current data base are determined and targets for improvements set
- A suggested first step need to improve the effectiveness of the data collected by UNEP-WCMC at a national level should be the development of a best practice manual on completing the returns, which would include elements of good practice such as:
 - ✓ The need to develop a thorough understanding of the categories system
 - ✓ Ensuring that the return is completed responsibly, and that returns are signed off by a senior official
 - ✓ Ensuring the approach is inclusive: arrange wide consultations with stakeholders so that they have a chance to influence the returns
 - ✓ Developing a system which is transparent, making every step needed, and who is responsible for it, to complete the return clear.
- Principles for translation of the categories and guidelines should be developed to ensure clarity is maintained – including agreement of a verification process for technical terms and increased use of a glossary
- Development of a global capacity-building programme for understanding and using the categories is also needed and should be coordinated by WCPA and the WDPA Consortium.

A manual to help governments collect and report data on protected areas would be a valuable first step in improving effectiveness of reporting



Bukit Timah protected area, Singapore: Nigel Dudley

3. Assigning categories to protected areas

The value of the categories system lies in its allocation of categories by primary management objective – which can then be used as a more refined measurement of approaches to biodiversity conservation by countries. When the categories were simply used as convenient shorthand for data collection, the question of assignment was at worst irksome for those charged with data collection, but was not particularly controversial. As the system of categories has assumed greater political significance – for instance because it is linked to funding or restrictions on use – then the issues of who decides on the category, and to whom they are accountable, become correspondingly more important.

A constant theme in the discussions, research and case studies carried out during the “Speaking a Common Language” project was the significance of category assignment. A particular concern was whether the current methodology for assigning a particular category to a protected area is sufficiently systematic, transparent and verifiable. It is clear from discussions with UNEP-WCMC and other stakeholders that there are a number of shortcomings with the way in which assignment of protected area categories currently occurs, including:

- Information sent from governments for incorporation into the WDPA is not always of high quality and does not necessarily emerge from a rigorous process of assignment
- There is no way in which a decision to assign a particular category can be appealed against by a person or institution who feels that they have been unfairly penalised by an inaccurate decision nor are there systems for verification of assignments (officially verification is carried out by UNEP-WCMC, but this is not widely known)
- UNEP-WCMC has indicated that it does not have the resources to follow up with governments where no information is forthcoming, to assign categories in the absence of data or to ‘police’ the system
- The current system is operated almost entirely through dialogue between governments and UNEP-WCMC, and to some extent WCPA, without an opportunity for other stakeholders to express opinions about the assignment of categories.

There is an evident and widely acknowledged need for an improved way of reporting categories, which includes a more effective, responsible and logical process of assignment.

Recommendations

Some consistent recommendations have emerged on assignment:

- Assignment should take place in the context of some agreed principles (see box on the following page)
- Capacity building is required with respect to:
 - ✓ National assignment and reporting through an active outreach process
 - ✓ Development of national databases and ensuring that these are compatible with the WDPA
 - ✓ Translation into local languages (noting the need to seek appropriate funding for this)
- There is also a need for an agreed system for addressing grievances and conflicts arising from category assignment. The proposed system

The Speaking a Common Language project’s workshop in the Cotswolds, in England, proposed that there be a series of **principles** for assignment of categories



Adrian Phillips

from Europe offers one possible model, and IUCN and UNEP-WCMC should investigate this and other possible procedures with interested stakeholders.

Some implicit and proposed principles for assignment of the system of categories

Five distinct areas that could be regarded as principles underlying the categories system can be found in the 1994 edition:

- Objectives led
- International
- Flexible
- Clear, consistent and logical
- All categories are important

In addition, we propose a range of 'key words' which might form the basis of principles relating to the implementation of the categories system:

- Participatory
- Accountable
- Equitable
- Transparent
- Performance-led
- Part of a continuum of responses
- Rights-based approach

In general there should be shared ownership, inclusiveness and openness in the whole process of assignment involving national agencies and other stakeholders: all stakeholders need to agree the full range of roles that protected area categories are performing, including advocacy in international conservation debates.

4. Responsibility for the system of categories

Who “owns” the categories system? As it was originally developed by IUCN, through WCPA, the IUCN membership as a whole – which includes both government and non-governmental members – have a direct stake in the protected area definition and categories. But then so too does the United Nations, as the instigator and publisher of the global database, and the UNEP-WCMC as the body responsible for assembling the information. Governments have a stake too, whether or not they are members of IUCN, as they are the ones requested to report using the system of categories. And increasingly other stakeholders are demanding a say too, whether it is the mining industry concerned about loss of mineral rights, organic farmers interested in exploring the options for sustainable agriculture in category V and VI protected areas, or civil society in general, who are expected to shoulder many of the costs of the global protected area network through taxation. In earlier sections, we summarised some options for giving a wider stakeholder representation in issues related to assignment. But eventually responsibility for making final decisions on some of these issues – which in some cases are and will remain controversial – will fall on particular institutions. This section looks at how responsibility might be assigned.

Ultimately IUCN is the body responsible for the integrity and application of the categories. Beyond this, the issue of responsibility is pertinent to three key areas of working:

- Assignment protected areas to individual categories
- Reporting data about protected area categories
- Keeping the system under review and updating it as necessary.

In the following section we make some initial proposals about lines of responsibility.

Responsibility for assignment

As noted above, ultimate responsibility for assignment of categories rests with governments. However, there is clearly a desire and a need for other stakeholders to be more closely involved, and discussion as to whether assignment should be to a greater or lesser extent the subject of negotiation. In the case of private protected areas, the individuals or organisations who own them clearly should also have a major stake in assignment. Other stakeholders are demanding the right to have some more formal way of verification. The following diagram outlines how these responsibilities might be related.

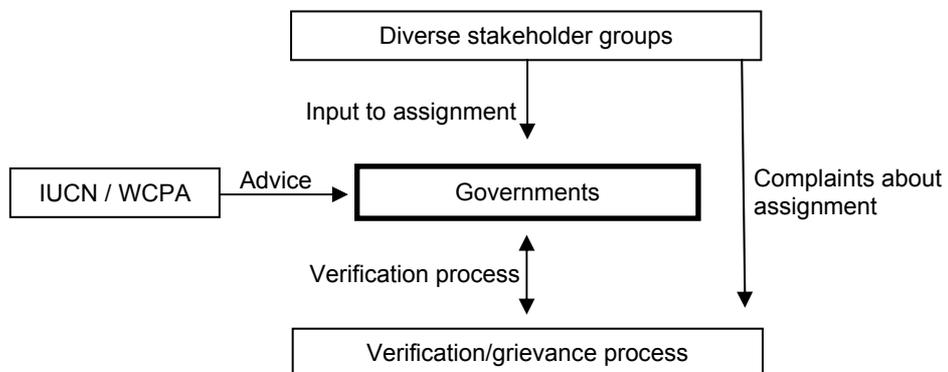


Figure 2: Responsibility for assignment

Responsibility for recording and reporting

In the same way as assignment must ultimately remain the role of governments, responsibility for *recording* data should remain with the UNEP-WCMC, although this institution will only be able to function effectively if it receives appropriate support from governments and others in terms of *reporting*.

However, many governments do not respond to calls for information, many have not assigned the system of categories to protected areas and, even if data are available, the task of checking or verifying these is beyond the reach of one small organisation with limited resources. Over the last few years, the WDPA consortium, drawn from major conservation NGOs, has been formed to help improve and strengthen the database (see page 31). Recording and reporting of protected area category information could be strengthened by:

- **Convention on Biological Diversity:** lending support for the *UN List of Protected Areas* and the World Protected Areas Database and encouraging signatory states to report this information to UNEP-WCMC as part of the requirements under the convention
- **Governments:** provision of basic protected areas data to UNEP-WCMC
- **Non-governmental organisations, research institutions etc:** checking data and provision of additional information for the database (biological information, effectiveness etc)
- **WDPA Consortium:** more substantial support in terms of information, liaison with key governments etc
- **IUCN / WCPA:** checking of data, particularly through members and regional groups.

The relationship might be illustrated as follows:

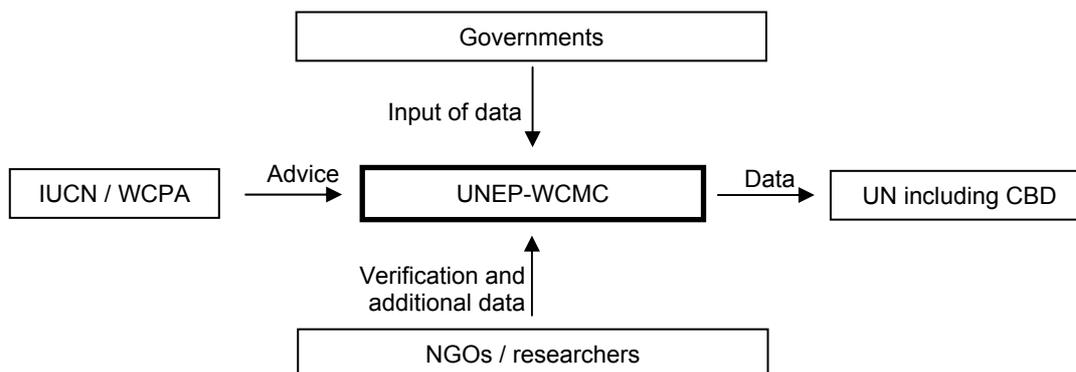


Figure 3: Responsibility for reporting and recording

Responsibility for reviewing

From the above, it is clear that whatever happens in the future, the days in which assignment of the system of categories was principally an experts' job, decided in government offices or at UNEP-WCMC are over. As more areas are protected and protected area management becomes more professional, many more stakeholders are demanding a role in determining the size and location of protected areas, their management aims and – as a result – their category.

Below five other important stakeholder groups are briefly outlined, whose input will be critical to maximising the potential benefits from protected areas.

- **Non-governmental organisations:** including those interested in environment, social issues and human rights – a critical role in lobbying for (and sometimes against) protected areas and ensuring that the optimal balance is struck between the needs of biodiversity and those of human communities. NGOs will not bring a single perspective negotiations but will represent very diverse interests and perspectives
- **Industry:** demanding a greater role and critically interested in what type of category might be applied in cases where this will have a direct impact on potential and future investment. Industry groups are also increasingly calling for issues of management effectiveness to play a greater role in the debate about categorisation of protected areas
- **Local government:** although reporting is the responsibility of national governments, designation and day-to-day management of protected areas are increasingly devolved to a local level in many countries and this is also the level at which problems become obvious and need to be resolved
- **Local and indigenous peoples' communities:** the people most directly affected by many protected areas, who have in the past often had little say in their designation or management. This is changing as indigenous peoples associations become more effective lobbyists and governments and protected area agencies recognise their legitimate claims
- **Civil society:** in many societies, members of the public are taking an increasing interest in protected areas, as tourists, day visitors or because they have a keen interest in the natural heritage. Creating ways in which members of the public without clear institutional support can also contribute their views to issues relating to protection is a key challenge for the future.

Section 6: Conclusions and a vision for the system of protected area categories

The issues brought to light by this research project are more complex and challenging than had been assumed at the outset. By looking at the way in which protected areas are classified, we have been forced to ask many more fundamental questions about what they are for, who should decide how they are managed, and where and if they will fit into landscapes and seascapes in the future. Although most of the direct responses come back to the six categories, the implications are much larger and address the core of many aspects of conservation policy. But we also need to step back and remember that this is only a classification system and it cannot and should not be squeezed and distorted into jobs for which it is neither designed nor robust enough to fulfil.

In part, the categories have extended their use to fill gaps in knowledge and expertise. Alongside strengthening the IUCN system of categories there is also undoubtedly a lot of work still to be done in terms of developing other tools and approaches, some of which may replace a few of the uses of the categories that have been described above. (For example, ecoregional planning should ideally be considering a far wider portfolio of land and water use than simply the six categories of officially protected areas.)

This report has provided an overview but by no means a complete distillation of our research, which would have taken a book rather than a report. For those who want to know more, there are 18 detailed case studies and papers covering a wide range of issues, and a workshop report: it is hoped eventually to integrate all of these and the current report into a single publication. The case studies are as follows:

- An assessment of the application of the IUCN system of categorising protected areas
- How the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories can support the needs and rights of Traditional and Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas
- Developing self-declared Indigenous Protected Areas in Australia
- Linking governance to the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories
- Improving the Effectiveness of IUCN Management Category Designation
- Applying the categories in Vietnam
- Standardising names of protected areas
- Influence of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories on National, Regional and International Legal and Policy Frameworks
- Use of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories in regional criteria and indicator processes for sustainable forest management
- Using the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories to measure forest protected areas in the UNECE/FAO Temperate and Boreal Forest Resource Assessment

- Certification of good forest management and its relationship to protected areas
- Hydrocarbon Extraction and the IUCN categories
- Mining and protected areas
- Marine protected areas categories
- Applying the IUCN categories to large multiple use protected areas
- Using the IUCN categories – from management plan zones to bioregional planning
- Transboundary conservation areas
- Use of IUCN categories by non-governmental organisations including in campaigns and targets.

A vision for the system of protected area categories

In the final section of this report, a vision is presented for how the categories might appear at the VIth World Parks Congress, scheduled for 2013

By the time of the next World Parks Congress in 2013: the IUCN definition and management categories of protected areas are respected as the practical and philosophical framework for planning, managing and monitoring protected areas. They are widely understood and are used as an important tool in protected area management by national agencies, international bodies such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the business sector, NGOs and many local communities.

As such, they provide accepted guidance to help plan protected area networks in the broader context of sustainable development across the whole landscape and seascape. They also help to make rational decisions about issues of policy that affect protected areas.

Because of their management implications, designation of IUCN protected area categories is an important part of any protected area planning process. The system is increasingly decided with the full involvement of stakeholders, who can draw on a wide range of tools to help them in the form of agreed principles, material in local languages and additional guidance on use in particular situations.

Questions and disagreements are addressed through a globally-agreed grievance system and some national protected area agencies already use independent assessors working to a certification system, to ensure that categories have been successfully assigned.

The IUCN WCPA provides support for the categories system, ensuring that guidance is up to date, helping to build capacity within countries and coordinating research, developing additional advice and monitoring use of the system.

Data on protected areas are stored, analysed and made widely available by the UNEP-WCMC, providing a global information source not only on the size, location and management aims but also the success of the protected area in terms of management effectiveness, information about its governance and values and reference material such as management plans. The database is maintained by national agencies working directly with UNEP-WCMC.

Appendix 1: The Speaking a Common Language Project

Speaking a Common Language is a project to assess the ways in which the IUCN protected area management categories can be used to further conservation action on the ground. The objectives of the project are to:

- Establish the impact and effectiveness of the 1994 IUCN guidance, and previous incarnations, in terms of the adoption and influence of the categories system, nationally, regionally and internationally
 - Examine what needs to be done to develop and promote the objectives-based system of protected area categories itself, and consider how it should be linked to other initiatives
 - Involve a wide range of stakeholders in the work, notably through the World Parks Congress (Durban, South Africa, September 2003);
 - Guide the programme of work on protected areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity
 - To provide technical advice on the category system to a proposed programme of work on protected areas for IUCN.
-
- The project assumes comment and approval from a wide range of stakeholders. Outputs should lead to:
 - Better appreciation of the significance of the objectives-based categories system
 - Improved understanding of the impact of the system
 - Critical appreciation of the successes and difficulties encountered
 - Advice on capacity building to improve application of the system, particularly at the national and sub-national level
 - Recommendations to IUCN and the international conservation community on the further development of the system.

Between May 2002 and December 2003, the project canvassed a wide a range of stakeholders for input into the discussions, and to research and write the 18 case studies and papers intended to provide input into this final report. A number of steps have been taken:

- Creation of a web site (www.cf.ac.uk/cplan/sacl/) and related features and links to the site on web sites, i.e. IUCN and WCPA
- Development of a questionnaire to stimulate discussion and generate ideas. This was mailed to all WCPA members and was incorporated into the questionnaire sent by UNEP-WCMC to national protected area agencies as part of the exercise to up-date the UN list
- A series of meeting around the globe (travel budget provide by other projects) to discuss the project: in Cameroon, Austria, Switzerland, Uganda, South Africa, Italy, Australia, Thailand and Vietnam
- Two workshops, one in the UK in May 2003 and one at the Vth World Parks Congress (WPC) in South Africa in September 2003
- The research team also developed a recommendation for the WPC and delegates and others had the chance to comment on this at the workshop.

This final draft report will be distributed at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in February 2004. Further copies will be distributed by email and notice of the draft being open for comment will be disseminated through WCPA. The final report will be launched at IUCN World Conservation Congress in November 2004.

Appendix 2:

WPC Recommendation 19

IUCN Protected Area Management Categories

Recommendation 17 of the 4th WPC held in Caracas, Venezuela, February 1992 calls for a system of six categories of protected areas based upon management objectives.

Resolution number 19.4 of the IUCN General Assembly in Buenos Aires (January 1994) endorses the system developed at Caracas and urges all governments to consider the relevance of the categories system to national legislation.

Publication of the *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories* by IUCN in 1994 provides advice on the new system agreed to at Buenos Aires. Also, the results of the research work (*Speaking a Common Language*) undertaken in preparation for the 5th World Parks Congress on the impact of the 1994 categories system, provide insights.

Finally, the new ways in which the category system is now being used – none of which was clearly envisaged in 1994 – serve to raise the importance of the system, for example:

1. In determining appropriate activities in protected areas (e.g., in respect of mining and protected areas);
2. In establishing relevant criteria to assess management effectiveness;
3. In advocacy in relation to protected areas;
4. As the basis for national protected area legislation and policy, and international agreements; and
5. As a tool in bioregional planning.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Stream on Management Effectiveness: Maintaining protected areas for now and the future at the Vth World Parks Congress, in Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003):

1. DECLARE that the purpose of the IUCN protected area management categories system is to provide an internationally-recognized conceptual and practical framework for planning, management and monitoring of protected areas;
2. REAFFIRM that in the application of the management categories IUCN's definition of a protected area ("an area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity and of natural and associated cultural resources and managed through legal or other effective means") must always be met as the overarching criterion;
3. REAFFIRM the value to conservation of the 1994 system of protected area management categories, and in particular that the six category, objectives-based approach should remain the essential foundation for the system;



4. REAFFIRM that the integrity of the protected area categories system is the responsibility of IUCN, and that it should reinforce its efforts, through its membership as well as through WCPA and other commissions, to promote the understanding of the full range of IUCN categories at national and international levels;
5. ADVISE, however, that the new uses of the system require that IUCN, working in collaboration with partner organisations, urgently produce, through an open, participatory process, a revised, up-dated edition of the 1994 guidelines, which:
 - a. Builds on the existing objectives set out for each category, including by improved summary definitions of the categories;
 - b. Includes a set of criteria and principles which should underpin the categories system and its application;
 - c. Explains how the categories relate to ecological networks and wider regional planning;
 - d. Considers removing generic names of protected areas from the category system, as these may have different meanings in different countries, and using only management objectives and numbers for each category;
 - e. Redesigns the “matrix of management objectives and IUCN protected area management categories” in the 1994 edition, so as to relate better to current experience in protected areas;
 - f. Gives more emphasis to marine and freshwater protected areas;
 - g. Gives more consideration to the linkage between protected areas and sustainable livelihoods;
 - h. Gives greater recognition of cultural and spiritual values, so that the full range of special qualities of each protected area are fully recognized;
 - i. Provides guidance on the inclusion, within the system, of private protected areas, and of those managed by local and indigenous communities;
 - j. Enables protected areas to have more than one category when zones within them have been legally defined for different management objectives;
 - k. Suggests how protected areas, which are assigned to their category by primary management objectives, can also be described by reference to the organisation responsible for their governance, the effectiveness of their management and the degree to which they retain their naturalness;
 - l. Clarifies the recommended process by which categories are assigned to protected areas; and
 - m. Makes these revised guidelines available in IUCN’s official languages and also in other languages as permitted by available resources;

6. ADVISE further that IUCN, in collaboration with partner organisations, urgently invest in awareness raising and capacity building about the use of the categories system, based upon the foregoing and working with partners such as UNEP/World Conservation Monitoring Centre, through training, case studies and additional published guidance (linked to the updated 1994 guidelines);
7. RECOMMEND that in such awareness raising and capacity building, priority should be given to:
 - a. Advocating an open, inclusive and transparent procedure for assignment of protected areas to categories for application at the national level, including an IUCN review procedure in relation to reporting;
 - b. Providing supplementary guidance on Category VI protected areas;
 - c. Providing supplementary guidance on the application of the categories in the marine and freshwater environments; and
 - d. Promoting the use of the categories for protected areas in forest, marine and freshwater environments;
8. URGE IUCN to develop a monitoring and research programme around the use of the categories, including the legal implications of using categories in legislation, and the implications of the categories system for indigenous and community rights;
9. CONSIDER that the foregoing would be aided by the creation of a task force on the protected area management categories within the WCPA Management Effectiveness theme;
10. URGE IUCN to work with parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in preparation for, and during the CBD/COP7, so as to secure:
 - a. Inter-governmental recognition of the IUCN protected area management categories system as the international method for categorizing protected areas; and
 - b. Agreement to use the system as a basis for national data collection and reporting to the CBD Secretariat on protected areas;
11. Further URGE IUCN to work with the parties and Scientific and Technical Review Panel of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to promote application of the categories to the global network of Wetlands of International Importance;
12. CALL on all governments to recognise the importance of the decisions that they take on category assignment, made at the request of IUCN and UNEP/WCMC, and to undertake this exercise in a timely manner through open, inclusive, and transparent procedures;
13. RECOMMEND that UNEP/WCMC reviews the format used in the UN List of protected areas to depict clearly all protected area categories and associated information; and
14. RECOMMEND that IUCN's Inter-sessional Programme Framework for 2005-2008 accommodate a programme of work to further develop and promote the IUCN protected area categories system, which will be considered by IUCN's members at the 3rd World Conservation Congress (November 2004).

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The IUCN Protected Area Management Categories

Twenty-five years ago, IUCN developed a preliminary system of protected area management categories, defined by the main management objective to provide the conservation world with a 'common language' with which to discuss protected areas. The Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas (now World Commission on Protected Areas - WCPA), reviewed these, the 4th World Parks Congress in Caracas recommended changes, and the IUCN General Assembly approved them in 1994. The definition and categories follow:

Definition: *An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means.*

Category Ia: *Strict nature reserve/wilderness protection area managed mainly for science or wilderness protection* – an area of land and/or sea possessing some outstanding or representative ecosystems, geological or physiological features and/or species, available primarily for scientific research and/or environmental monitoring.

Category Ib: *Wilderness area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection* – large area of unmodified or slightly modified land and/or sea, retaining its natural characteristics and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural condition.

Category II: *National park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation* – natural area of land and/or sea designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations, (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, all of which must be environmentally and culturally compatible.

Category III: *Natural monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features* – area containing specific natural or natural/cultural feature(s) of outstanding or unique value because of their inherent rarity, representativeness or aesthetic qualities or cultural significance.

Category IV: *Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention* – area of land and/or sea subject to active intervention for management purposes so as to ensure the maintenance of habitats to meet the requirements of specific species.

Category V: *Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation or recreation* – area of land, with coast or sea as appropriate, where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the area's protection, maintenance and evolution.

Category VI: *Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural resources* – area containing predominantly unmodified natural systems, managed to ensure long-term protection and maintenance of biological diversity, while also providing a sustainable flow of natural products and services to meet community needs.