IUCN Category II - National Park

DEFINITION

Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

DESCRIPTION

IUCN Management Category II (National Park) refers to the large protected areas that play a role in the connectivity of the landscape/seascape. They are defined by IUCN as *"large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities".* [1] The primary objective of protected areas in this category is to protect natural biodiversity, its underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes, and to promote education and recreation. Other objectives include to manage the area in order to perpetuate in as natural a state as possible representative examples of nature, to maintain viable and ecologically functional populations of native species and to contribute to local economies

through tourism.

SUPPORTED BY

Developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with support of the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and other international institutions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and assigned by national governments.

YEAR OF CREATION

The current IUCN Categories were approved in 1994, and revised guidelines were published in 2008. [1]

COVERAGE

Globally applicable.

CRITERIA

These areas are typically large and conserve a functioning “ecosystem”, although to be able to achieve this, the protected area may need to be complemented by sympathetic management in surrounding areas. [1]

- The area should contain representative examples of major natural regions, and biological and environmental features or scenery, where native plant and animal species, habitats and geodiversity sites are of special spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational or tourist significance.
- The area should be of sufficient size and ecological quality so as to maintain ecological functions and processes that will allow the native species and communities to persist for the long term with minimal management intervention.
- The composition, structure and function of biodiversity should be to a great degree in a “natural” state or have the potential to be restored to such a state, with relatively low risk of successful invasions by non-native species.

MANAGEMENT

These areas are managed to maintain large natural landscapes/seascapes, and this can be carried out by a range of actors depending on the governance type of the area (see IUCN Protected Area Management Categories for information on governance types). While these protected areas are designed to protect or restore natural areas, they are generally not as strictly conserved as category Ia, and will receive greater visitor numbers than category Ib. However, category II areas where ecological functions and native species composition are relatively intact should be more strictly protected, according to the IUCN Protected Area guidelines. [1]

BUSINESS RELEVANCE

Legal and compliance – The classification of a category II protected area requires that such areas are managed for conservation by legal or other effective means, and therefore legal recognition and protection at the national or sub-national level is likely to be present in these sites. The level of legal protection will however vary between countries, and will depend on the governance type of the area, as they receive differing levels of recognition by government in different countries. Nonetheless a number of national laws are likely to apply to these sites that deter large-scale economic activities in order to maintain the conservation values of these large unmodified areas.

As designated protected areas, these sites receive international attention and have been incorporated into a number of environmental safeguard standards. These include those of multilateral financial institutions such as but not limited to the World Bank [2] and the International Finance Corporation [3]. For details on environmental safeguard standards which are applicable to all protected areas, please see the Protected Areas page.

In addition, a number of sector specific safeguard standards refer to protected areas, many of which are related to certification programs, including the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) that declares categories I to IV as ‘no-go’ areas. [4] For details on certification programmes which are applicable to all protected areas, please see the Protected Areas page.

Biodiversity importance – These areas are protected for their biodiversity conservation values based on their size and intactness. These areas are therefore likely to hold high biodiversity value due to their potential role in maintaining natural processes and species that are perhaps threatened in more modified landscapes. Although relatively large in size, these areas form distinct management units that therefore of high relevance for avoiding and mitigating biodiversity loss.

Socio-cultural values – These areas are largely free of human habitation and activity and therefore the presence of socio-cultural values are less likely due to a lack of human presence and intervention at sites. Nonetheless, some small-scale activities and human presence may exist within these areas, and many will hold some cultural value as a result of recreational use at these sites. Consideration of the needs of indigenous people and local communities is an objective of the category guidelines, therefore these should be actively safeguarded by the management plan of category II areas. These areas can also be of significant tourism value.

REFERENCES & WEBSITE

1. Dudley, N. (Ed). Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories. (2008).
2. The World Bank. World Bank Operational Manual. Revised Version 2013. OP 4.04 Natural habitats (2013).
3. International Finance Corporation (IFC). Performance Standard 6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources (2012).
4. Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials. RSB Conservation Impact Assessment Guidelines, version 2.0, 1–23 (2011).

Los Glaciares National Park, Argentina. IUCN Management Category II. Robert Cicchetti/Shutterstock.com

Category:

Protected areas

Related pages

IUCN Protected Area Management Categories (Areas)

IUCN Category Ia - Strict Nature Reserve (Areas)

IUCN Category Ib - Wilderness Area (Areas)

IUCN Category III - Natural Monument or Feature (Areas)

IUCN Category IV - Habitat / Species Management Area (Areas)

IUCN Category V - Protected Landscape / Seascape (Areas)

IUCN Category VI - Protected Area with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources (Areas)

Tools

Protected Planet a tool for visualizing information on protected areas at the site level, country level, regional level and global level. This includes information on the IUCN category where known. Protected Planet brings together spatial data, descriptive information and images from the World Database on Protected Areas, WikipediaTM and PanaramioTM.

The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) provides a visualisation and GIS download tool for protected areas, including the IUCN category where known.

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