Privately Protected Areas

DEFINITION

Areas protected under private ownership and governance.

DESCRIPTION

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) at the 2003 World Parks Congress defined Privately Protected Areas as *"a land parcel of any size that is 1) predominantly managed for biodiversity conservation; 2) protected with or without formal government recognition; and 3) is owned or otherwise secured by individuals, communities, corporations or non-governmental organisations"*. [1] Not all private conservation initiatives meet the IUCN definition of a protected area. Only those that do meet the definition are termed "Privately Protected Areas". This form of governance comprises protected areas under individual, cooperative, NGO or corporate control or ownership. Privately Protected Areas may be managed under not-for-profit or for-profit schemes, and can fall into any of the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories. Although most marine waters are not privately owned, an increasing number of privately-owned islands are being protected, along with their coastal and marine areas. [2] While some Privately Protected Areas are included within national protected area networks (and are available within the World Database on Protected Areas), if they are not part of the national network their locations are often difficult to obtain.

Privately Protected Areas can commonly be linked to tourism, serving the dual purpose of environmental conservation and economic development. For example, hotel-managed marine reserves in touristic coastal areas aim to preserve the natural coastal environment, which the tourism industry depends upon. Studies such as that of the hotel-managed Whale Island Bay Reserve in Vietnam suggest that this type of protection can be particularly successful in improving the health of the coral reefs. [3] Tourism-led initiatives can also be a successful source of funding for conservation in privately protected areas and can increase awareness among tourists and communities. [4]

The effectiveness of Privately Protected Areas at conserving biodiversity varies widely due to the different types of areas and management schemes that can exist. Privately Protected Areas can often have more flexible income sources and management structures than state-protected areas, and are less likely to be hindered by property right disputes. [5] However, Privately Protected Areas also tend to be small and therefore may not conserve megafauna as effectively as larger protected areas. [6]

The percentage coverage of privately protected areas varies between countries, and they are often not well documented. However, they can be proportionally important within countries. For example, 13% of the total area of Tanzania is contained within Privately Protected Areas. [7] Some of the oldest protected areas were originally established through private initiatives, and there is increasing acknowledgement of the importance of the private sector to conservation strategies and relevant contribution to biodiversity conservation. [8] The Convention on Biological Diversity's programme of work on protected areas comments on the importance of recognizing and promoting a broad set of protected area governance types including private nature reserves. [7]

SUPPORTED BY

Individuals, corporations and other private bodies.

YEAR OF CREATION

The earliest established Private Protected Areas for wildlife and their habitat can be traced back to around 200 BC, which were mainly for use by royalty. The conservation of land through private means grew substantially during the second half of the 20th century. [7]

COVERAGE

Globally applicable.

CRITERIA

There are no globally-recognised criteria for designation of Privately Protected Areas but it is generally accepted that they must be under some form of private ownership, and dedicated in perpetuity to the conservation of wildlife and natural resources. [6] In practice, however, commitment on perpetuity varies and may be renewed formally or informally at varying timescales depending on the owner's preferences and incentives.

MANAGEMENT

These areas can be managed under a range of different objectives (see IUCN Protected Area Management Categories for further information on management objectives). The authority for managing the protected land and resources rests with the landowners, who determine the conservation objectives, develop and enforce management plans and remain in charge of decisions, subject to applicable legislation. In cases where there is no official recognition by the government, the accountability of Privately Protected Areas to society may be limited. The conservation objectives of these areas vary with ownership. For example, those acquired by NGOs might be managed predominantly for conservation, whereas individual landowners, in addition to aiming to support conservation, may pursue revenues from ecotourism and hunting, or a reduction in levies and taxes. These differences in objectives will result in a varying of management regimes within such areas. Privately Protected Areas are in most cases managed to secure biodiversity conservation although the motivations to do so will vary.

BUSINESS RELEVANCE

Legal and compliance - The legal recognition and protection of different categories of privately protected areas varies. In some countries, Privately Protected Areas are legally gazetted through legislations or executive decrees and are monitored and evaluated by the government. Those areas which are protected under formal voluntary incentive programs designed to promote biodiversity conservation on private lands are also recognised and protected under the rules of the program for the contract period. Similarly, for other categories that are not

necessarily legally gazetted, different laws and regulations that relate to activities conducted within such areas are likely to apply in order to maintain the conservation values. As some of these sites are legally protected areas, many will be included in a number of international environmental safeguard standards (see Protected areas for further information on environmental standards safeguards that relate to protected areas).

Biodiversity importance - The biodiversity value of Privately Protected Areas varies as some sites are strictly reserved for the conservation of important species and habitats, while for others conservation is not the sole objective. Many Privately Protected Areas are contiguous with state protected areas, and therefore contribute to conservation not only by *in situ* protection but by serving as a buffer zone or ecological corridor for the state protected areas. [9] Several Privately Protected Areas are also maintained for their role in ecosystem services, where conservation may be one component of a diverse land-use strategy combined with agriculture, animal husbandry and watershed protection.

Socio-cultural values - These areas are not directly associated with socio-cultural values, although a variety of human activities can be expected within such areas, such as ecotourism and recreational hunting, and many may hold cultural values such as recreation, as well as economic values such as the sustainable extraction of resources and commodities. These areas are, however, not typically those where traditional practices are carried out by local and indigenous communities, although there are some documented conflicts between the people traditionally inhabiting certain areas and the landowners, such as in the Chilean Patagonia [10] and in South African [11] game reserves.

REFERENCES & WEBSITE

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Protected Planet is 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, Wikipedia TM and Panaramio TM.

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