

PAN Parks [PAN - protected area network]

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1.1 Organisation

PAN Parks Foundation

1.2 Primary methodology reference

PAN Parks Verification Manual, January 2002, [last update of PAN Parks Verification Manual - January 2008], PAN Parks Foundation, Gyor, Hungary

1.3 Brief description of methodology

The PAN Parks verification system is design to provide an independent audit to demonstrate that the management of the protected area reaches the PAN Parks Quality Standard known as PAN Parks Principles and Criteria <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Principles> .

PAN Parks verification system is focusing not only on 1/management effectiveness of protected areas (Principle 1-2) but also on 2/quality of visitor management (Principle 3) and 3/sustainable tourism in the region around protected areas (Principle 4) and 4 local/business partners (Principle 5). The foundation provides marketing and communication support to promote the PAN Parks concept and Certified PAN Parks.

This made PAN Parks approach very complex because of direct engagement with parks management, local stakeholders and the tourism industry. This marriage however rise serious questions due to knowledge that tourism sector can be a key threat to conservation in many areas. Controlled and carefully planned tourism however can be also unique opportunity for protected areas and conservation. This complex approach is fundamental to maintain a high level of management effectiveness in long-term.

PAN Parks philosophy focuses on positive element of this relationship but simultaneously is extremely aware about threat and damage, which can uncontrolled tourism cause to protected areas. Because of this awareness the Foundation decided to allocate a lot of resources and capacity to develop sophisticated and demanding verification system to minimise this threat and provide transparency and credibility to the overall system.

1.4 Purposes

- ✓ to develop network of well-managed protected areas
- ✓ to improve management [support implementation of adaptive management]
- ✓ to set up detail quality standard for well-managed protected area
- ✓ increase awareness and support for wilderness protection

1.5 Objectives and application

The PAN Parks Foundation connects certified partners through its quality brand, and helps to improve the management of protected areas by utilizing and implementing the following essential goals:

- to ensure the long-term survival of well-managed protected areas while encouraging local communities to flourish,
- to promote wilderness management in protected areas in Europe,
- to facilitate sustainable tourism development in and around these protected areas,
- to increase knowledge of and pride in Europe's wilderness heritage.

PAN Parks provides policy makers and protected area authorities comprehensive information about management effectiveness trends and identifies issues that need to be addressed for improving management effectiveness. Through implementing PAN Parks assessment, protected area authorities are able to

- identify priorities for well-managed protected areas and wilderness protection
- analyse the range of major threats and opportunities
- identify benchmarks and set priorities
- agree on needed corrective actions that improve also system-level management effectiveness

PAN Parks methodology has been implemented in eight European countries and in 10 protected areas. More protected areas in Portugal, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, etc are in preparatory face. PAN Parks methodology because of strict conditions identified in PAN Parks Quality Standard e.g. size limit of protected area, minimum size of PAN Parks wilderness area, tourism potential, capacity to develop sustainable tourism in surroundings, etc has in some extent restricted use. However, this methodology fully combines with original aim to create the network of the well-managed wilderness protected areas and set the quality standard also for other protected areas.

Useful verification, monitoring and renewal reports of the protected area status are produced <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/History> .

1.6 Origins

The system was designed as a tool to assess management effectiveness in selected protected area - potential PAN Parks and create quality standard - benchmark, for well-managed protected area generally. The system is based on WCPA PAME Framework and can be described as “in-depth” and “evidence-based” methodology.

The system was described as the world’s first operational, third party certification system under the WCPA [World Commission on Protected Areas] Framework for Management Effectiveness. It was developed by WWF between 1997 and 2001 with field-testing in 17 European countries [2001]. First PAN Parks were certified in 2002 and today a network of 10 PAN Parks is stretching from Arctic Circle down to the Mediterranean.

1.7 Strengths

The most obvious strength of PAN Parks system is ability to create incentives and motivation to fulfil PAN Parks requirements. This is partially achieved through attractive aim - become member of well-managed wilderness protected area network and partially through support offered by PAN Parks Foundation in the field of communication and marketing particularly for [local business partners].

This approach ends up with very concrete, site-specific solutions to solve identified bottlenecks and threats, prioritised actions and so contributes to the improvement of management effectiveness.

Other strengths:

- Ambitious and philosophy turning threats into opportunities
- Support concept of large unfragmented protected areas
- Allows objective and transparent verification
- Link PA management effectiveness with regional development and local economy
- Offer benefit of well-managed protected areas to the local business partners,etc.

1.8 Constraints and weaknesses

PAN Parks assessment methodology was developed as a tool to implement PAN Parks concept.

Because ambition of PAN Parks Foundation is to create a network of the well-managed wilderness protected areas implementation of PAN Parks assessment methodology can be interpreted as seemingly limited.

However, lessons learned in previous years proved that experience learned from PAN Parks verification process can be widely used and reach far beyond network of certified PAN Parks. www.panparks.org/projects/lessonslearnedseries

1.9 How the methodology is implemented

PAN Parks Verification Manual provides a comprehensive guideline to implement this methodology. Short version can be found at <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Howtoapply>

The process of PAN Parks verification includes following steps:

- The applicant submits application package that can be downloaded from <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Howtoapply> to the PAN Parks Foundation
- As a first filter, the PAN Parks Conservation Manager analyses the application documents
- The PAN Parks Foundation sends a verification proposal including a timeline and costs estimate to the applicant
- The applicant decides whether or not to approve the proposal
- PAN Parks Conservation Manager form verification team
- The applicant submits its documentation for review to the Lead verifier
- The Verification team conducts a site verification
- The Verification team submits a verification report including a recommendation whether or not to award the certificate and an annual monitoring plan
- Based on the verification report the PAN Parks Foundation agree with the applicant about awarding ceremony
- The PAN Parks Foundation awards the certificate
- First local business partners can be verified
- Local PAN Parks Group and protected area agree with PAN Parks Foundation about awarding ceremony for local business partners
- The Verification team conducts annual monitoring
- Renewal verification is conducted after a 5-year period.

Lessons learned [or how to make implementation of PAN Parks easier]

- Ensure the commitment of government protected area authority
- Ensure that all involved parties including local stakeholders understand complexity of PAN Parks concept
- Choose committed protected area: a PAN Parks is seen at its best when a large protected area confirm interest and commitment to meet PAN Parks Quality Standard because they see obvious benefit of this process
- Involve key local stakeholders and potential future business partners to the PAN Parks process at the early beginning
- Make clear that to become a PAN Park is long-term commitment
- Identify one reliable contact person with close links to the park director and key stakeholders
- Start pre-verification procedure well in advance of site assessment
- Maintain regular contact with all key stakeholders and partners, etc

1.10 Elements and indicators

PAN Parks Quality Standard sets a new standard for conservation and sustainable tourism. The standard is described in the format of **PAN Parks Principles, Criteria and Indicators** <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Principles>. This approach allows for objective verification and transparency. Every PAN Parks and they partners must meet all five comprehensive principles.

Principle 1 Natural values

Any protected area applying for PAN Parks certification must define the scope of protection, the international importance, and size of the protected area.

Principle 2-3 Management effectiveness

Principle 2 (conservation management) and principle 3 (visitor management) are management and process principles, which reflect the management effectiveness of the protected area administration applying to become a PAN Park.

Principle 4-5: Sustainable Tourism Effectiveness

Principle 4 [Sustainable Tourism] and principle 5 [Business Partners], like 2 and 3, are management /process principle. Principle 4-5 are different from the Principle 1, 2 and 3, because fulfilling fall outside of the responsibility of the management of the National Park. The Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy (STDS) is a multi-stakeholder project, formalised as a Local PAN Parks Group. Principle 4-5 are stakeholder principle.

Structure of P&C

1. The body text of P&C includes the principles, criteria and indicators.
2. Footnotes are something added to criteria or indicators. These footnotes aim to provide an explanation on how to interpret and understand the criterion or indicator correctly.
3. Glossary includes commonly agreed upon terms and definitions.
4. Appendix includes a short overview of the PAN Parks Foundation's philosophy in the area ecosystem integrity, conservation management and visitor management

The following table provide example how the PAN Parks methodology combine with WCPA Management Effectiveness Framework.

WCPA Elements	PAN Parks criterion [examples]	To meet the Criterion, the following achievements are required
	1. Background	<i>Include specific management objectives and critical management activities</i>
Context	2. Pressure and threats e.g. Criterion 2.3 The protected area has a long-term conservation strategy that is actively implemented ...	<i>Indicator 2.3.11: The conservation strategy / management plan is successfully implemented (e.g. via an annual work plan) including research and monitoring activities, threat prevention and mitigation, and restoration.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.12: The annual plan implementation and the overall management effectiveness are regularly monitored and the plan then updated, etc...</i>
Context	3. Biological importance	<i>Indicator 1.2.1: The protected area is internationally recognised and/or supports</i>

	e.g. Criterion 1.2 Importance for the conservation of biological diversity...	<i>protection of internationally threatened species and/or habitats, etc...</i> <i>Indicator 1.2.2: The protected area contains Natura 2000 sites, etc...</i>
Context	4. Socio-economic importance e.g. Criterion 4.2 The Local PAN Park Group formulates and approves the STDS ¹ for the PAN Park region.	<i>Indicator 4.2.1: The PAN Park region has a STDS, which respects the PAN Parks conservation goals and aims at increasing the quality of tourism products and the quality of the visitor experience in and around the certified park. In particular, the STDS has</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>a vision, goals, long- and short-term targets, including environmental objectives/care plan,</i> • <i>a description of the PAN Park region (with defined boundaries of the area that is subject to this STDS - shown on a map indicating the protected area and the involved municipalities) and its zoning system</i> • <i>an assessment of the ecological carrying capacity of different PAN Parks region zones, etc...</i>
Context	5. Vulnerability e.g. Criterion 2.4 Protected area management makes use of zoning or some other system that achieves the conservation strategy...	<i>Indicator 2.4.1: There is a zoning system or another system that ensures effective protection of the area</i> <i>Indicator 2.4.2: The zoning is based on a clear method of demarcating boundaries, both around the protected area and in between its zones.</i> <i>Indicator 2.4.3: The zoning system allows human activities compatible with the conservation strategy and, if existing, the long-term preservation of existing cultural heritages within.</i>
Planning	6. Objectives e.g. Criterion 2.1 Design of the protected area aims to maintain natural ecological values.	<i>Indicator 2.1.1: Priority of the management objectives (e.g. as per the act or decree) is the maintenance of natural ecological values.</i> <i>Indicator 2.1.2: The design of the protected area allows all key natural values (ecological processes and biodiversity) to exist and be maintained.</i> <i>Indicator 2.1.3: There is evidence of bio-geographical connections inside the protected area, with its adjacent areas, and/or with other protected areas.</i>
Planning	7. Legal security: e.g. Criterion 1.1 The area is adequately protected by means of an enforced act or decree, or private initiative.	<i>Indicator 1.1.1: The area is legally protected by means of an act or decree.</i>

¹ STDS – Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy

Planning	8. PA site design and planning e.g. Criterion 1.3 The minimum size of the protected area is 20 000 hectares.²	<i>Indicator 1.3.1: The protected area is large enough and its composition (one block, fragmented) ensures the conservation of internationally important wildlife and ecosystems.</i> <i>Indicator 1.3.2: There is information if the size of protected area has been changed in the past.</i>
Inputs	9. Staff and finance e.g. Criterion 2.3 The protected area has a long-term conservation strategy³ that is actively implemented...	<i>Indicator 2.3.9: The conservation strategy / management plan is addressing needed capacities to effectively manage the protected area, including staff and their range of skills, equipment, organisational structure (functions of board, advisory committee etc.). The protected area management is adequately funded.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.10: The conservation strategy / management plan is addressing existing and future external and internal threats and pressures to the protected area.</i>
Inputs	10. Communication and information inputs e.g. Criterion 3.3 Visitor management creates understanding of and support for the conservation goals of the protected area.	<i>Indicator 3.3.1: There are different visitor target groups that need to understand and support the conservation goals of the protected area and that are addressed by specific messages and different techniques.</i> <i>Indicator 3.3.2: A code of conduct for visitors is communicated to all visitors, specifying for which visits a qualified guide is needed.</i> <i>Indicator 3.3.3: The protected area has a communications and marketing plan that is successfully implemented in communication with the tourism marketing of the surrounding region.</i>
Process	11. Management planning e.g. Criterion 2.3 The protected area has a long-term conservation strategy that is actively implemented...	<i>Indicator 2.3.1: There is a conservation strategy that is implemented through nature, visitor, administration and marketing management (sub-) plans.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.4: The conservation strategy/ management plan has long- and short-term goals.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.5: A conservation strategy / management plan goal is that ecological processes and biological diversity will be maintained over the long-term.</i>
Process	12. Management decision-making practices e.g. Criterion 2.3 The protected area has a long-term conservation strategy that is actively implemented...	<i>Indicator 2.3.2: The conservation strategy / management plan(s) is developed through a planning process that includes procedures for revision and approval and the participation of different parties in these steps. The plan is communicated to different target groups and achieved via identified funding sources.</i>

² An area smaller than 20 000 hectares, but having formal national and / or international transboundary cooperation with another protected area can also be verified, if its partner area also qualifies as a PAN Park. These partner areas would be awarded the PAN Parks Certificate together, as well as lose their certificate together (see also Criterion 2.10!). Also a group of connected PAs can qualify to become a PAN Park.

³ The long-term strategy is usually presented in the management plan and involves a period of 25 - 50 years.

		<i>Indicator 2.3.3: There are links between the area's (nature conservation) management, the visitor management, and the national/regional sustainable tourism development strategy.</i>
Process	13. Research monitoring and evaluation e.g. Criterion 2.3 The protected area has a long-term conservation strategy that is actively implemented ...	<i>Indicator 2.3.6: The conservation strategy / management plan includes research programmes designed to improve knowledge and contribute to protected area management.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.7: The conservation strategy / management plan includes programmes designed to improve the socio-cultural and economic benefits of the protected area for surrounding communities and tourism development.</i> <i>Indicator 2.3.8: The conservation strategy / management plan is based on an adequate site assessment, which includes abiotic and biotic data and an evaluation of past and present human activities and their impacts.</i>
Outputs	14. Output e.g. Criterion 2.8 The protected area management system pays particular attention to threatened and endemic species and habitats, and to ecosystem dynamics.	<i>Indicator 2.8.1: The management plan and other sources provide information, in particular in relation to the current management regime, on endemic, red-listed, vulnerable or other rare species occurring in the protected area, as well as on other, native species that have decreased or become extinct</i> <i>Indicator 2.8.5: There is a habitat or ecosystem restoration plan, according to which, if necessary, conservation values are being restored on the basis of studies from adequate reference areas. The implementation of the restoration plan and its impacts are regularly monitored, etc...</i>
System level questions	16. Policy environment e.g. Criterion 2.1 Design of the protected area aims to maintain natural ecological values.	<i>Indicator 2.1.1: Priority of the management objectives (e.g. as per the act or decree) is the maintenance of natural ecological values.</i> <i>Indicator 2.1.2: The design of the protected area allows all key natural values (ecological processes and biodiversity) to exist and be maintained.</i> <i>Indicator 2.1.3: There is evidence of bio-geographical connections inside the protected area, with its adjacent areas, and/or with other protected areas.</i>
System level questions	15. Protected area policies e.g. Criterion 2.5 The protected area has an ecologically unfragmented⁴	<i>Indicator 2.5.1: The protected area has an ecologically non-fragmented wilderness area of at least 10,000 ha, which embraces all important habitat types and ecological processes, and</i>

⁴ This criterion allows for the wilderness area to be divided into more than one area as long as it is not fragmented ecologically. If the wilderness is in one area, but is ecologically fragmented by a fence, road or other infrastructure, the area does not meet this criterion. Verifiers will use their professional judgement during evaluation. The PAN Parks Foundation always prefers to identify road-less wilderness areas; however the old existing roads can be within wilderness area if clear rules and strict limits of use are agreed, e.g. only emergency use, restoration, low key maintenance without vehicles etc.

	wilderness area of at least 10,000 hectares⁵ where no extractive uses⁶ are permitted and where the only management interventions are those aimed at maintaining or restoring natural ecological processes and the ecological integrity.	<i>adequately represents the highest value for nature conservation of local natural ecosystems. Indicator 2.5.2: The management plan includes a clear management strategy and plan for managing the wilderness area at long term, Indicator 2.5.3: Ecological processes within the wilderness area are undisturbed those missing are under restoration...</i>
System level questions	16. Policy environment e.g. Criterion 2.1 Design of the protected area aims to maintain natural ecological values.	<i>Indicator 2.1.1: Priority of the management objectives (e.g. as per the act or decree) is the maintenance of natural ecological values. Indicator 2.1.2: The design of the protected area allows all key natural values (ecological processes and biodiversity) to exist and be maintained. Indicator 2.1.3: There is evidence of bio-geographical connections inside the protected area, with its adjacent areas, and/or with other protected areas.</i>

1.11 Scoring and analysis

PAN Parks Verification

Generally speaking the third party (independent) verification lends credibility to something, which is under the control of one party and of interest, and/or significance to another. Independence of the verifiers both from the owner of verification methodology [PAN Parks Foundation] and the applicants [protected area] helps to develop trust in the network. This “true and fair view” builds credibility.

Process & Performance

While verification programmes all share certain common components, they are distinguished by whether they use a **process** [systems for monitoring certain criteria through management, there is no universal standard] or **performance** [include a set of benchmarks, often in the form of yes/no questions] methodology.

Certification Trend

There has been a growing consensus that strong certification programmes need to be performance-based, have onsite third-party audits, and include environmental, social and economic standards and criteria that measure impacts both within the business and/or protected area and within the wider community.

Inline with this trend, our PAN Parks verification system represents a hybrid of the process-based environmental management system and the performance-based standards/benchmarks.

⁵ The wilderness area still can meet the size criterion when part of it is under an ecosystem rehabilitation process and long-term active restoration management is needed due to missing critical segments of ecosystems dynamics, e.g. crucial elements of ecosystems were extinct and have been replaced by semi-natural components [e.g. reindeer, semi-wild sheep, cattle, horses, etc.]. The management must have a clear goal to fully meet this criterion by a defined rehabilitation/restoration schedule and deadline. Verifiers will use their professional judgement during evaluation.

⁶ The following human activities are not accepted in the wilderness area: hunting/culling, fishing, collection of animals and (parts of) plants, of rocks and minerals, mining, logging, livestock grazing, grass cutting, fencing, road maintenance, road and building construction, motorised transportation, large-scale cultural and sporting events, etc. These activities are not accepted even if they are based on traditional use; immediate consumption is not considered an extractive use. Obsolete infrastructure should be removed. Verifiers will use their professional judgement during evaluation.

Analysis of the data is usually presented as very concrete and site specific proposals, recommendations, and strict conditions named Minor Corrective Action Requests- CARs. Major Corrective Action Requests prevent PA to be certified as a PAN Park. Detailed procedure is described in the PAN Parks Verification Manual 2008.

1.11 Further reading report

PAN Parks Verification Manual <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Howtoapply>

PAN Parks Verification Audit <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Audit>

PAN Parks Quality Standard <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/Principles>

Public Part of Verification Reports

<http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Verification/PAsandLocalPartners>, full text of verification reports is available only with special permission of all three involved parties

PAN Parks Network <http://www.panparks.org/Network/OurParks>

PAN Parks Wilderness Concept <http://www.panparks.org/Introduction/Vision/WildernessConcept>

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