

Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Information Module

Methodology Description

Park profiles

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1.1 Organisation

ParksWatch in cooperation with local partners

1.2 Primary reference

website <http://www.parkswatch.org/main.php>

1.3 Brief description of methodology

ParksWatch conducts multi-disciplinary evaluations of the state of tropical parks based on an analysis of threats, local socioeconomic conditions, relationships with local, regional and national organizations, and management needs.’

The ParksWatch (PW) questionnaire is a detailed survey form composed of approximately 600 questions focused on managerial aspects and pressures/threats to the protected area (considering both direct pressures and threats such as logging or poaching, and less tangible problems such as mismanagement of funds, future developments projects, macroeconomic forces, etc). It thus provides both a comprehensive status and threat assessment of the park surveyed, which forms the basis of the Park Profile published after each PW evaluation.

With the exception of Outcomes, this methodology covers all the elements of the WCPA framework (Context, Planning, Inputs, Process, and Outputs). It is based on a Scorecard system and structured according to four indices: Intrinsic Sensitivity, Consolidation, Human Pressures and Threats. It also provides a way to compute a composite rating as an indication on the protected area’s overall vulnerability status.

In 2006 a GIS component was added to the ParksWatch methodology, in which conservation values are mapped against pressures and threats in order to determine the distribution of environmental conflicts and the geography of management needs across the protected area. Based on brief workshops with park personnel and key experts, this approach forms the basis of a continuous monitoring system, whose results will be accessible on the Web as interactive maps by late 2007.

1.4 Purposes

- ✓ to improve management (adaptive management)
- ✓ to raise awareness and support

1.5 Objectives and application

ParksWatch works through partnerships with individuals and local organizations in seven Latin American countries (Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina) to conduct on-the-ground evaluations of protected areas, assessing their levels of implementation and identifying threats. Results of each evaluation are compiled into cross-disciplinary diagnostic reports called “Park Profiles.”

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Each Park profile prescribes actions to abate or remove the most serious threats and lists recommendations to improve each area's management. These reports are posted on the ParksWatch website (www.parkswatch.org) and printed copies provided to government agencies, conservation organizations, and other park management stakeholders.

Based on the results of their findings, ParksWatch partners undertake a variety of activities to support park management and raise awareness among conservation specialists and the general public. Such activities may include the organization of forums, meetings, and workshops or involvement in media campaigns, production of video documentaries and the publication of news articles in the local press.

In addition, ParksWatch has launched GreenVest, (www.greenvest.org) a program that seeks resources for the parks' most pressing logistical needs by means of an online donation system destined to three broad target audiences: citizens, institutional grantmakers and private businesses.

1.6 Origins

ParksWatch was created in 1999 as a program of Duke University's Center for Tropical Conservation to document the state of protected areas throughout the Tropics. There was very little information available about the values of and the threats facing many of these parks.

1.7 How the method is implemented

The evaluation process consists of:

Information gathering:

- *Literature review*
- *Structured interviews*
- *Field data collection (2 to 4 weeks)*
- *Photographic and video documentation*
- *Collection of spatially explicit (GIS) data*

The questionnaire is completed through both field observations and interviews with the park administration and other stakeholders, such as scientists, consultants, NGO workers, tourists, and, local residents, so that the results contained in the final survey reflect the view of a broad respondent base.

Typical PW evaluations involve an average of 2-4 weeks of field work depending on accessibility, size and other features specific to each protected area, of which a significant part is dedicated to filling the survey form, which contains a large number of descriptive fields later used for the creation of the park profile. Sufficient and independent information will often imply the interview of a representative sample of the local stakeholder community (including park rangers from all districts), which generally involves field trips and extended stays in stations or communities within and around the park. Therefore, at present assessments are programmed to be conducted every 3-4 years.

Data analysis: Data analyses place a strong emphasis on determining the relationships between management capacity indicators (i.e. budget, staffing, equipment, institutional capacity) and observed trends in the conservation status of selected resources.

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Further analyses are generally tailored to specific information needs and to PW's main target audiences (governments officers, NGO executives, donors, etc.). A systematic analysis of the PW database is currently underway, after which full access will be provided to PW's datasets via an online data query system.

Dissemination of results: Results of PW park evaluations are disseminated through a variety of communication channels:

- *Park profiles (Web and print)*
- *News reports (Web)*
- *Press articles (print)*
- *In preparation: online database providing access to all PW raw data*
- *In preparation: RSS feeds and podcasts on individual protected areas*

1.8 Elements and indicators

A long questionnaire is used to gather information – the following table summarizes the indicator groups.

Table 1: Indicators for the Parks Profile methodology (new version)

Category	Indicator
Identification	General administrative information
Characterization	Area and limits Management category Biogeography
Intrinsic Sensitivity	Size Maturity of ecosystems Genetic isolation Landscape diversity Number of threatened species Human footprint Resilience Watershed integrity Natural hazards / Climatic changes
Consolidation Index (similar to WWF:WB Tracking Tool)	Ownership Management agency PA objectives PA design Personnel (numbers and training) Personnel management Management infrastructure Management equipment Maintenance of equipment and facilities Budget Financial plan Financial security Management of Budget Management plan Annual operational plan Enforcement activities Controlling access and use Stakeholder engagement Education and awareness-raising PA boundary Zoning Legal status National policies PA regulations Judicial system response Knowledge on the PA

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Monitoring and evaluation Visitor facilities Fees
Human Pressure Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research, conservation and development projects Tourism Human settlements and invasions Hunting (legal hunting and poaching) Fishing (legal and illegal) Firewood Collection Non-Timber Products (NTPs) Collection Agriculture Livestock raising Fires Logging Mining Oil exploration/extraction Infrastructure development Industrial activity Pollution Military activity Invasive species
Threat Index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to human influence Access to PA Transit Inside PA Legal conflicts Negative Political Interests Positive Strategic Importance Threats

1.9 Scoring and analysis

Information from the questionnaires is entered on the Parkswatch database. Descriptive reports with recommendations are written for each park and these are available on the internet.

Subindicators and indicators are rated according to a logarithmic scale (0-3) similar to that used in most Scorecard-based methodologies (TNC Scorecard, Tracking Tool, RAPPAM, etc). When relevant, subindicators are subject to two measurements: Intensity and Extent.

Intensity is the more important measurement because it measures the gravity of human impacts on the park's resources. Regardless of the Extent value, if the Intensity score is 0, the impact is not significant. However, extent gives extremely important information that can be followed in order to see how the impact is evolving over time.

Each score has a specific descriptor, assembled in a logical framework meant to minimize the subjectivity inherent to human judgment.

Overall, data is used to rate the park according to a scale based on IUCN's system for classifying threatened species.

Score	Park Status	Description
0	Currently not threatened	The area has been evaluated and does not satisfy the criteria for any of the anterior categories. There is no evidence that gives reason to believe that the protected area will fail to protect and maintain biological diversity in the near future.
1	Vulnerable	There is a tangible risk that the protected area will fail to protect and maintain biological diversity in the medium term future. Monitoring is needed.

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2	Threatened	There is a high risk that the protected area will fail to protect and maintain biological diversity in the near future. Remedial action is needed.
3	Critically threatened	The protected area is currently failing to protect and maintain biological diversity; or, there is an extremely high risk that the protected area will fail to protect and maintain biological diversity in the immediate future. Urgent solutions are needed.

1.10 Further reading and reports

All reports are available from the website <http://www.parkswatch.org/main.php>

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