



Fact Sheet

What is inclusive conservation and why is it important to biodiversity conservation and protected area management?

October 2019



'Inclusive Conservation' is a trans-disciplinary approach to balancing stakeholder visions, and promoting shared agreements for the future management of protected areas through the development and application of multiple tools and processes.





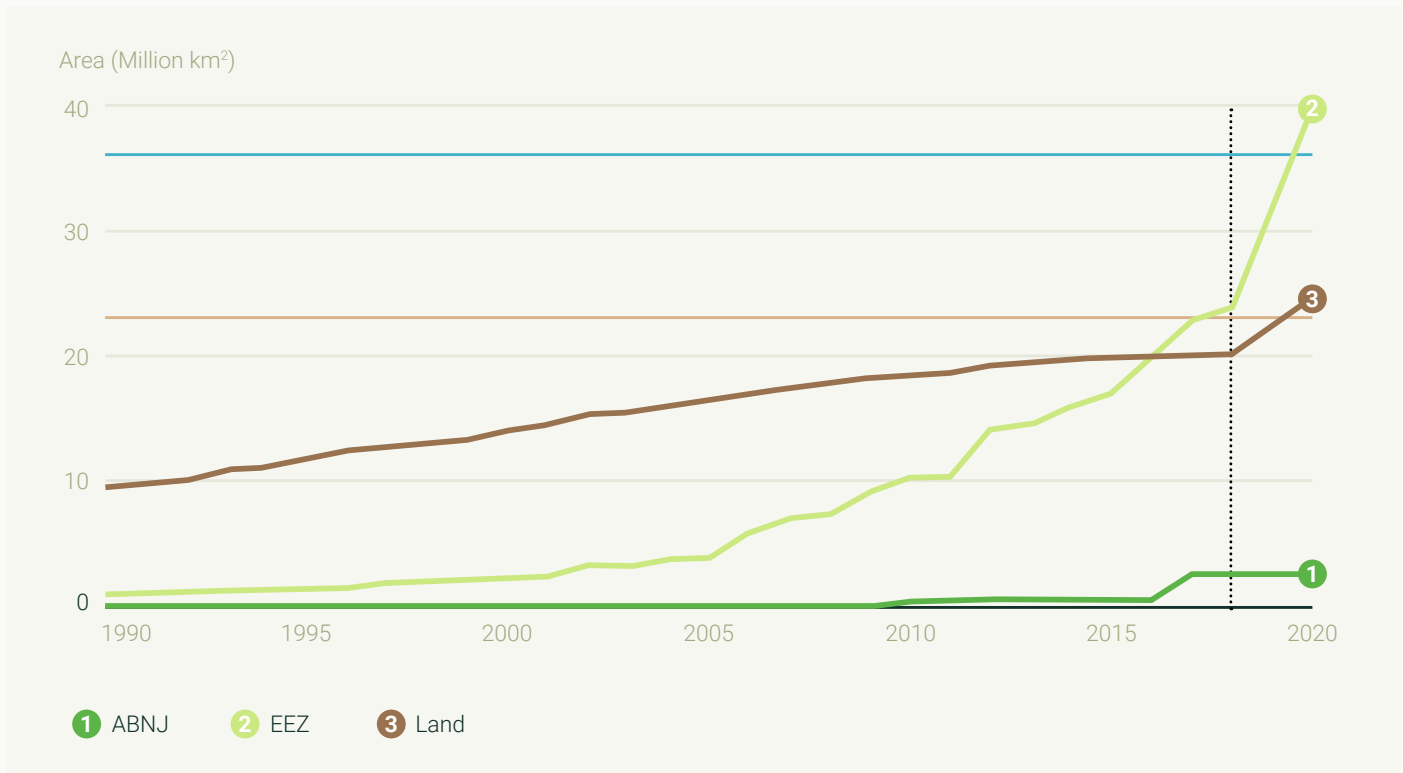
Protecting our natural areas

Global context

Protected areas are clearly defined geographical spaces, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.¹ Protected areas are critical for conserving local to regional biodiversity, particularly the characteristic of threatened species, habitats and ecosystems.^{2,3}

At a global level, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) agreed in 2010 to a target of protecting at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10% of coastal and marine areas (Aichi Target 11), by 2020. Currently, protected areas cover almost 15% of land and inland waters and 8% of the world's oceans.⁴ (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Growth in protected area coverage on land and in the ocean (Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)) between 1990 and 2018 and projected growth to 2020 according to commitments from countries and territories.⁵



Despite this expansion, protected areas only partly cover important sites for biodiversity, and there are issues associated with their ecological representativeness and equitable management⁶. Also, there are major threats to the quality of protected areas, such as drought, wildfire, habitat fragmentation, contaminants, pollution, invasive species, diseases, and a rapidly changing climate^{7,8}.

Given these and other challenges, CBD parties are now discussing a post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is expected to include a new set of targets for biodiversity and conservation and associated strategies for the management of protected areas. This new framework will be considered by CBD parties in October 2020.

European Union context

Within the European Union, the Natura 2000 network of protected areas was created under the Birds and Habitats Directive (also known as the “EU Nature Directives”). Covering 18% of the EU’s land area and 9% of its marine territory, it is the largest network of protected areas in the world^{7,9}. With varying levels of success, multiples countries have engaged in public discussions about how best to implement the EU-wide Natura 2000 network in a way that advances biodiversity conservation while meeting the needs of local communities¹⁰.

In 2011, the European Commission presented a new strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity (EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020) and improve the state of Europe’s species, habitats, ecosystems and the services they provide. It includes six major targets, the first of which focuses on the full implementation of the EU Nature Directives. EU Member States and the European Commission will strive to complete the establishment of the Natura 2000 network and ensure good management and adequate financing of Natura 2000 sites, increasing stakeholder awareness and improving and streamlining monitoring and reporting⁹. In 2016, the fitness check of the EU Birds and Habitat Directive concluded that the key challenges ahead for the Natura 2000 sites are associated with implementing management strategies in protected areas. The subsequent EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy prioritized the need to enhance a bilateral dialogue with EU Member States and stakeholders aimed at improving the implementation of Natura 2000 and promoting cooperation in its management.



United States context

The United States is the birthplace for the protected area movement, and as such, nearly 120 million hectares of public lands have been set aside for resource protection, human enjoyment and revenue to support local, regional and national economies. There are multiple agencies tasked with balancing resource use with the protection measures necessary to ensure these special places can be appreciated by future generations. Federal, state and local governments all play a role in increasing the resilience of these settings in the face of climate change and other stressors, and expand their capacity through partnerships to create, restore, and maintain landscape-scale connectivity.

While most protected areas in the U.S. are publicly owned, the management of natural and cultural resources and landscapes has become increasingly complex, involving the management of public and private lands and various stakeholder interests. The U.S. Department of the Interior created the “Landscape Conservation Cooperatives” (LCC) program in order to manage this complexity. LCCs are public-private partnerships composed of states, tribes, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities and others. LCCs recognize that these challenges transcend political and jurisdictional boundaries and require a more networked approach to conservation - holistic, collaborative, adaptive and grounded in science - to ensure the sustainability of North America’s land, water, wildlife and cultural resources. Many collaborative successes of the LCC program have endured, despite changes in federal government administrations.





Challenges associated with protected area management

Global challenges

Despite the achievements of expanding protected area networks, global biodiversity targets are far from being achieved¹¹. Nevertheless, there are positive developments related to protected areas. In the 12th update of the World Database on Protected Areas (2017), there were over 236,200 records covering a combined area of just over 45 million km²; wherein 25 million km² of our oceans and 20 million km² of our land were covered by protected areas⁴. These data show that we are heading in a positive direction to meet the Aichi Target 11, but on a global level, important questions concerning the quality of biodiversity protection and ecosystem services remain. Overall, the biggest challenge is in finding the balance between the conservation of biodiversity, and providing the basis for the social and economic development of local residents. Other common issues include the lack of connectivity between protected areas, lack of funding (especially in developing countries and for marine protected areas), and poor management, closely linked with threats from illegal human activities.



Challenges in the European Union

In the EU, the 2010 biodiversity target of achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss was not reached¹²; the assessment of the implementation of the current EU Biodiversity Strategy suggests that the 2020 target will not be reached¹³. Many of the Natura 2000 sites are still without a management plan, or their existing plans have yet to be implemented. Key factors behind the shortcomings in the implementation include limited resources, weak enforcement, poor integration of nature objectives into other policy areas, insufficient knowledge and access to data, and poor communication and stakeholder involvement¹⁴. In response, the aforementioned EU Action Plan for Nature, People and

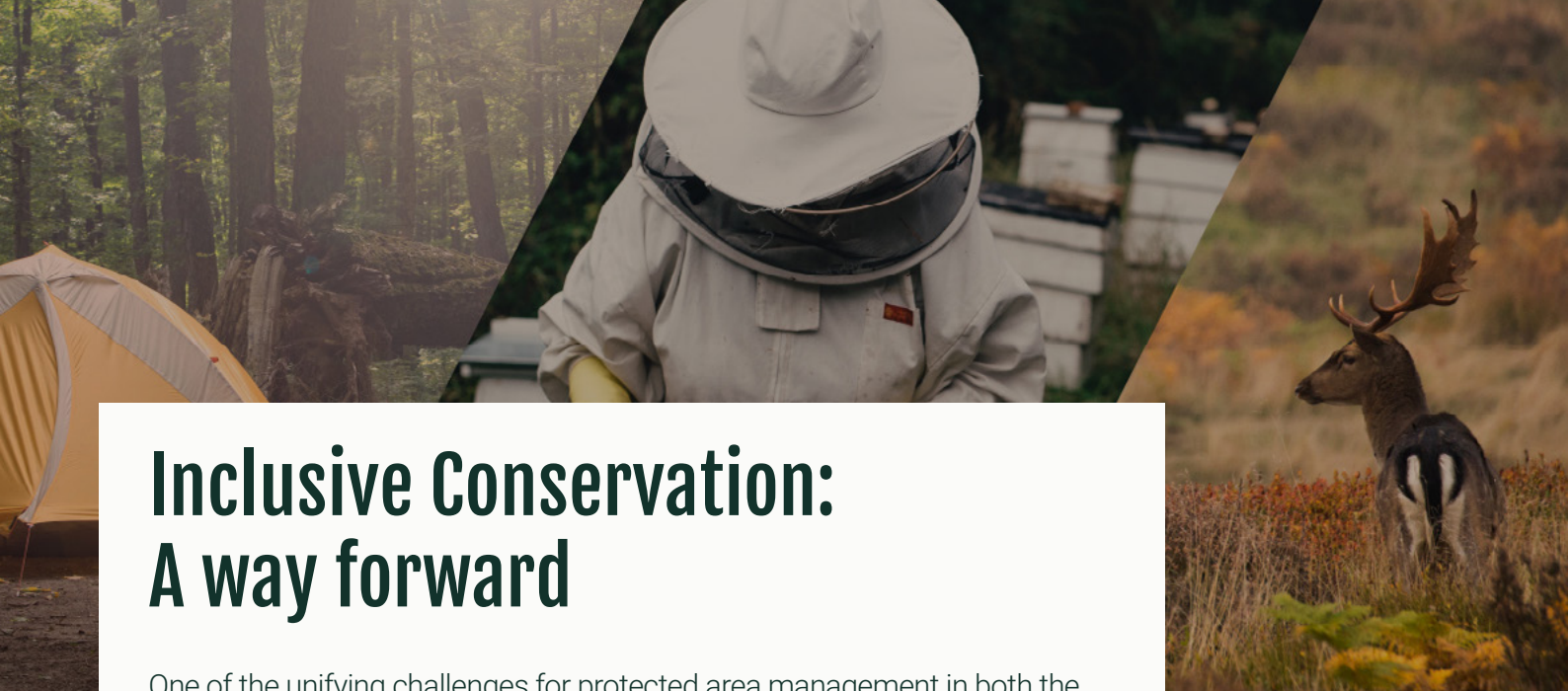


the Economy identified the need to enhance the implementation of the EU Nature Directives, including building political ownership and strengthening compliance¹⁴. Recognising and balancing a variety of visions for protected area management is crucial to building this support and compliance.

Challenges in the United States

The situation in the United States is unique, as it is the only country of the three largest North American countries to show a net loss in overall protected areas in any year¹⁵. It is also one of the few countries that has not ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. The country faces important challenges, such as decreasing support from the current Administration for expanding directives to protect endangered and threatened species. Other development pressures come from growing populations and the loss of habitat through the development and suburbanization of rural areas. New directives from the current Administration's U.S. Department of the Interior have caused concern since they resulted in increased resource impacts from changes in hunting, fishing, and motorized access on some public lands¹⁶. Directives from the current U.S. Administration have also catalysed the scaling back of public land by transferring land to local states or private landholders, as well as rescinding protected area boundaries established by Executive Order by former U.S. Presidents. Therefore, extending and broadening the stewardship of protected areas, by including the diversity of stakeholders' visions in protected areas and public lands management, is vital. Furthermore, assessing and balancing the consequences of diverse visions on biodiversity, ecosystem services, and well-being across stakeholder groups remains a critical research gap^{17,18}.





Inclusive Conservation: A way forward

One of the unifying challenges for protected area management in both the EU and the U.S. is the necessity to extend and broaden the stewardship of protected areas, by including the diversity of stakeholders' visions. Inclusive conservation is an approach for accommodating and balancing different visions for protected area management and for achieving socially relevant, economically productive and environmentally sustainable outcomes in protected areas. Inclusive conservation has the potential to integrate multiple visions for growth, development and the conservation of protected areas. A cornerstone of inclusive conservation is the application of multiple methods that function to expand the space for engagement and dialogue across the various stakeholders of a protected area, such as recreational users, local residents, local businesses, land managers, farmers, researchers, and local governments. The approach involves considering multiple visions for protected area management, assessing the consequences of each vision, social learning and collectively defining new visions, assessing uncertainty and building resilience, acknowledging power relations and rethinking governance, and informing biodiversity and protected area management policy (**Figure 2**).



Our inclusive approach to conservation

Transforming visions into integrated protected area management strategies; improving biodiversity and human well-being

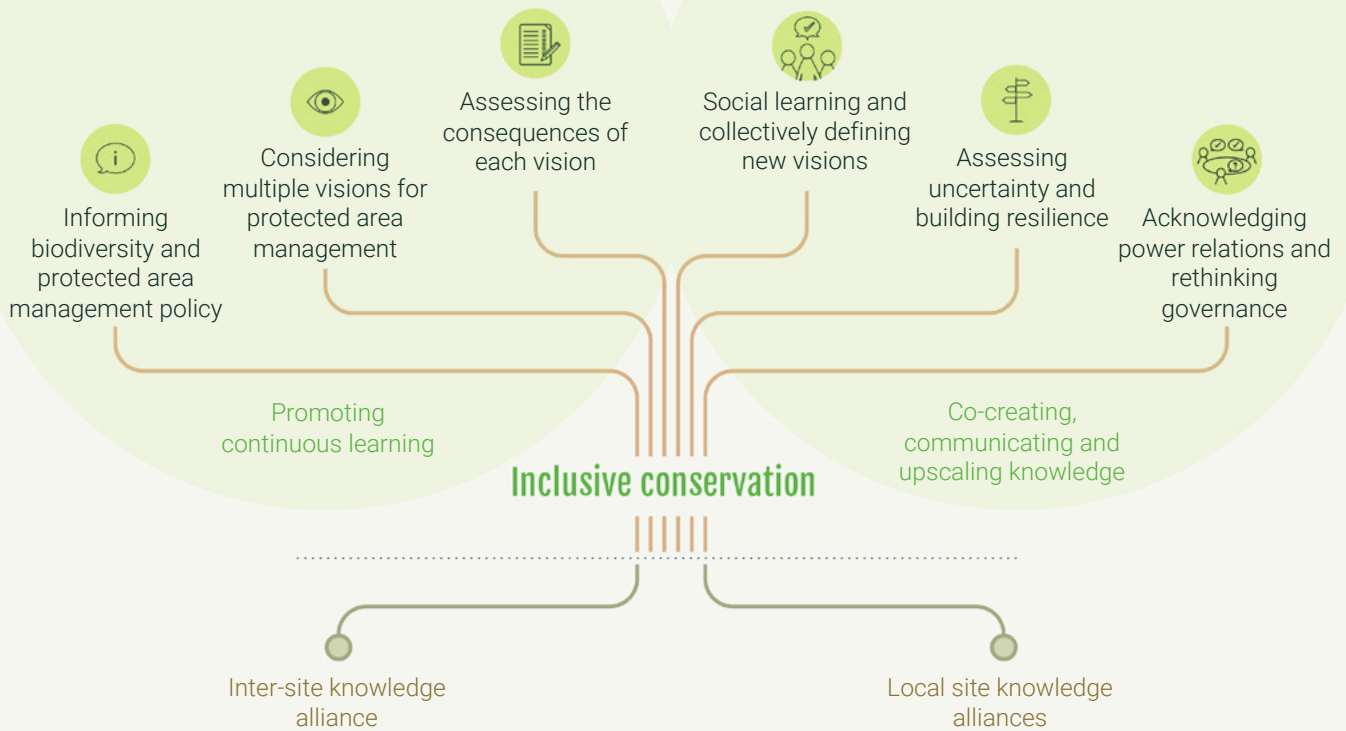


Figure 2: Conceptual model of the ENVISION inclusive conservation approach.



Inclusive Conservation is supported by the ENVISION project

The ENVISION project aims to demonstrate the benefits of inclusive conservation. Its timeline neatly coincides with the ongoing development of the post-2020 global biodiversity policy framework. We aim to support this process by investigating evidence-based approaches and taking part in critical discussions with policy-makers in the lead-up to, and following, the adoption of this global framework. We will seek the support of policymakers to promote the integration of a more inclusive approach to the management of protected areas in the EU biodiversity policy framework, and U.S. protected area management frameworks.



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