

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and outputs from the assessments in 3 working groups, workshop participants discussed and developed conclusions and recommendations, which specifically included the following main points:

REVIEW AND MODIFICATION OF PROTECTED AREA SYSTEM-LEVEL DESIGN

Analysis shows that the existing protected area system-level design needs to be reviewed and modified to increase the overall capability of the system. This includes the creation of a multi-sectoral coordination commission with the involvement of stakeholders to review and determine the main directions of future change to the protected area system and an action plan for implementation.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Despite that national PA policies clearly articulate a vision, goals, and objectives for the PA system and that substantial intervention in the last decade from foreign countries and international donors took place, Georgia's PA policies require further development and improvement in terms of its integration into the overall framework of social, financial, economic, spatial and land-use planning national system. Thus, PA policies shall be formalized and coordinated in a way that will better meet demands of a transitional economy and ongoing structural reforms.

IMPROVEMENT OF SYSTEM-LEVEL POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Changes in political, social and economic spheres call for an improvement of the system-level policy environment. The revitalization of PA-related laws could serve as one of the effective instruments of such an improvement. For example, there are concerns with the structural framework of the current Law on the System of Protected Areas. One of the main shortcomings of the existing law is its lack of detail. The law seeks to cover such divergent topics as establishment, subordination and financing of protected areas, protected areas categories, natural resource use, planning and management, public participation etc. The lack of substantive guidance makes the law very unpredictable and fails to provide sufficient applicable requirements, making it difficult to evaluate compliance. For example, there is no indication as to how the government will implement and enforce the law, other than some general breakdown of responsibilities. Presently, the current law reads more like a list of tasks Georgia would like to see undertaken, rather than legal requirements which public and government agencies must comply with.

The existing law would be effective if it stated that regulations will be issued to detail substantive requirements of the law and set specific deadlines for the enactment of these

regulations. Problems arise when a law, such as this one, requires that regulations be passed but does not provide any guidance regarding the substance of those regulations. The government agency charged with passing regulations would have full discretion in determining the substantive content of those regulations. Under the present version, the implementation of regulations could be very strict or very loose there is no way to predict this from reading the law. To avoid this unpredictability, the substantive principles should be outlined in the law itself. The law should cite a responsible government agency required to write regulations based on those principles.

The large-scale scope of the current law also creates problems of consistency. With its various sections covering a wide range of disparate subjects, the law needs a tight and clear organizational structure in order to be implemented efficiently. Considering that the law has not been amended essentially since its enactment in 1996, provisions of the law have appeared to be in conflict with other laws passed after 1996 especially with those which regulate the structure of the government, land use, land transfer, user rights, territorial planning, forestry, natural resource use, taxation, financial and budgetary matters.

At present, this conflict represents a very evident and real obstacle for the management of protected areas. These circumstances cause administrative, legal, planning, financial and managerial difficulties for the implementation of the internationally supported protected areas projects, demonstrating a clear need for substantially changing the existing law. Unfortunately it is not possible to make easy fixes through amendments to adequately address the problem. The law must be totally rewritten. That is why there is a need to draft a new one along with the drafting of relevant detailed regulations.

IMPROVING PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT INPUTS

FINANCES

The core costs (i.e., basic annual operational costs composed of wages and other recurring expenditures) for all of Georgia's protected areas combined, for 2003 amount to approximately 160,000 USD per year. This compares quite favorably (i.e., very low) to international standards. According to existing data, the highest operational costs per unit area are recorded for the Borjomi-Kharagauli

National Park. This is explained by the high investment costs for this NP during the past four years, thanks to the substantial German bilateral aid program that facilitated the infrastructure development and the successful establishment of a functioning management structure for the park. The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park may serve as an example of the frequently ignored fact that financial interventions, especially those that are related to infrastructure development, come at a cost. Operational costs may increase in proportion to the size of investments for a protected area as a direct result of an expanded maintenance program and additional manpower requirements following the development interventions. This has to be taken into account when forecasting future operational costs for those protected areas subject to financial aid for infrastructure development (e.g. GEF/WB supported Kolkheti, Lagodekhi, Vashlovani PAs, etc.).

In this context it should also be noted that there has not been any substantial increase in wages for PA staff over the past years in Georgia, although the living costs in the country have sky-rocketed within the same time-period. Realistically, wages could be expected to at least triple over the next five years, resulting in a substantial increase in the overall operational costs of protected areas.

Therefore, the funding of PAs remains one of the major problems for the whole system. It is crucial to increase funding from the state budget and at the same time to establish a fund raising capacity for the PA local administrations.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The need for a clear internal organization of the PAs was recognized as a priority action. Most PAs do not have formally approved statutes (charters), which would serve as a main instrument for the establishment of clear internal organization structures within PAs. Also, a great need for the continuous training and motivation mechanisms for PA staff was cited.

IMPROVING PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT PLANNING

LEGAL STATUS

The legal status of existing protected areas established before the 1990s is not yet fully and clearly defined by Georgian legislation. The current legislation does not distinguish between the legal status of protected area administration and the legal status of a protected area's category (protected area land). Most of the protected areas were established in soviet times according to the decisions of the soviet government (decrees of the council of ministers). At the same time, since 1996 several protected areas were established under the

laws passed by the Parliament of Georgia. For this reason protected areas have different (unequal) legal statutes. This situation generates many difficulties for the administrations (staff) of protected areas. Thus, the legal status of protected areas, established before the adoption of the Law on the System of Protected Areas of 1996, requires a clear definition and unification under the law.

MANAGEMENT PLANNING, RESEARCH AND MONITORING, PREVENTION AND RESTORATION, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND EVALUATION

The current legislation of Georgia requires PAs to have PA management plans. Despite this requirement, most part of the PAs does not have a formally approved management plan. Moreover, there isn't any regulation (instruction) concerning the methodology, content, format and planning techniques for the PA management plans. Most PAs still operate on the bases of the 10-year "Forestry Development" plans. To improve the situation, guidelines and adequate capacity to develop and implement the PA management plans are required.

Research, monitoring, prevention, restoration, environmental education and evaluation processes have to be improved and optimized. Once adapted, RAPPAM methodology could serve as an evaluation instrument at PA level.

LAND TITLE REGISTRATION AND ACQUISITION

The integration of PA lands within the existing land title registration system and the registration of PA lands in the public register constitutes one of the biggest issues in Georgia. It was strongly recommended that the process of land registration begin immediately.

Special research should be conducted to help the PA land acquisition national program deal with privately owned land plots or land plots under servetute rights which fall within the boundaries of PAs.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The continuing financial and technical support of Georgia's protected area system by the international donor community over the past decade has significantly contributed to the overall protection of Georgia's biodiversity. Thanks to this international support and to Georgia's pledge to dedicate 20 percent of the country's area to conservation as a "gift to the earth", and to convert another 15 percent of its forests into strict protection forests (IUCN Cat.

I-IV) by 2010, the country's protected area system has been expanded and conservation efforts have increased. International conservation efforts support the country's biodiversity and focus on areas with a special protection status. This is justified considering the global significance of the Caucasian ecosystems which are unique in the world. They have been identified as one of the global ecological hotspots by Conservation International and as one of the global 200 Ecoregions by WWF. This has qualified the Caucasus region for financial assistance under the umbrella of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

Although the Government of Georgia is seriously committed to biodiversity conservation, it also does not have the adequate internal financial means to provide sustainability to its conservation efforts. The long-term security of the ecological integrity of Georgia's PAs cannot be guaranteed through by the government due to the urgent needs to address other important national priorities. However, a realistic and feasible long-term financial strategy must be developed in order to meet this challenge. It is evident that this cannot be achieved without outside assistance.

Georgia's protected areas service DPA, which is entrusted with the management of the country's protected area system, continues to be under-staffed and under-financed, unable to effectively fulfill its mandate without outside assistance. Furthermore, revenue-generating opportunities by protected areas in Georgia promise little hope for the near future. Thus, financial mechanisms (e.g., trust funds, etc.) other than government contributions and opportunities from internal revenue generation have to be found to achieve financial sustainability for the protected areas of Georgia.

MEASURES AND PRIORITIES WITH REGARD TO VULNERABILITY AND URGENCY OF EACH PROTECTED AREA

The following are priorities and recommendations according to the vulnerability and urgency of each protected area in Georgia:

- Waste collection and disposal (Kazbegi SNR, Ajameti SNR and Gardabani S).
- Preparation and implementation of pest control programmes (Algeti SNR, Liakhvi SNR, Ajameti SNR and Gardabani S, Kintrishi SNR, Sataplia SNR, Katsoburi S).
- Development and implementation of a special program against invasive plant species (all sanctuaries).

- Research and identification of measures aimed at the mitigation and reduction of cross-boundary influences (all PAs).
- Hydrological and geological survey of irrigation infrastructure (including dams/water reservoirs) in order to develop flood management plan (Chachuna S).
- Implementation of measures for the establishment (transfer of lands, demarcation and preparation of management plans) of Nedzvi S, Ktsia-Tabatskuri S and Tetrobi S.
- Development of a management plan in connection with pressures and threats identified during the assessment (Kazbegi SNR).
- Development of management plans for zoning systems and wildlife management (all sanctuaries).
- Development of a special project for the urgent conservation of Sataplia Dinosaur's Foot Prints (Sataplia SNR).
- Special research to identify RAMSAR sites located outside the boundaries of protected areas including data and analyses on the enforcement regime on these sites (Kolkheti lowlands).
- Special appraisals in all PAs (especially in sanctuaries) to identify an accurate situation with wildlife inventory and monitoring.
- Identification of needs for computer equipment, means of communications and other necessary equipment for those PAs, which are not subject to international financial and technical intervention.
- Strengthening of fund raising and international relations capacity on the DPA's central office level.
- Land transfer of Paliastomi Lake (Kolkheti NP)
- Arrangements to organize Second Participatory Workshop on a national level at least during the upcoming 2-3 years.

FOLLOW-UP ACTION

Next steps include:

- Prepare data, results and recommendations of the assessment in a short, simple report in the Georgian language that will: outline the application of the methodology; include the questionnaire and a list of participants; share the analysis of the results; and distribute them to the relevant governmental organizations, conservation NGOs, international donor organizations and other stakeholders.
- Prepare relevant documentation on the results of the study for its further distribution in Armenia and Azerbaijan to allow other stakeholders in the Caucasus ecoregion to become familiar with the outputs of RAPPAM application in Georgia. This will contribute to the use of the Rapid Assessment Methodology in Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- Promote in-depth ongoing assessments on national and regional levels, as well as assessments for individual PAs.
- Provide recommendations based on RAPPAM methodology adapted to conditions in Georgia to the relevant governmental agencies for the further approval of related laws and regulations.
- Develop and periodically update relevant databases on the effectiveness of protected area management.
- Integrate analysis and recommendations on overall effectiveness of the protected area management system for Georgia into the Ecoregional Conservation Plan of the Caucasus. These may also be used by donor organizations involved in the identification of future interventions in Georgia and in the ecoregion as a whole.
- Develop initial funding proposals connected with internationally identified issues (e.g. tourism, economic sustainability, etc.) based on the analyses and recommendations on overall effectiveness of protected area management.

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS

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| RAPPAM | Rapid Assessment and Prioritization of Protected Area Management |
| GEF | Global Environmental Facility |
| WB | The World Bank |
| KfW | German Credit Bank for Reconstruction |
| IUCN | World Conservation Union |
| IUCN Cat. | IUCN Category |
| RAMSAR Convention | Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat |
| DPA | State Department of Protected Areas, Nature Reserves and Hunting Management [since February 13, 2004 - part of newly established Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources] |
| SDF | State Department of Forestry [since February 13, 2004 - part of newly established Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources] |
| MoE | Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection [since February 13, 2004 - part of newly established Ministry of Environment Protection and Natural Resources] |
| NTFP | Non-Timber Forest Product |
| PA | Protected Area |
| SNR | State Nature Reserve |
| S | Sanctuary |
| NP | National Park |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| WWF | World Wide Fund For Nature |
| WWF Caucasus | WWF Caucasus Programme Office |

Annex

List of Protected Areas of Georgia covered by the RAPPAM Assessment (2003)

| N: | PROTECTED AREA | TERRITORY (IN HECTARES) | IUCN CLASSIFICATION |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1. | Lagodekhi State Nature Reserve | 17,932.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 2. | Vashlovani State Nature Reserve | 8,034.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 3. | Akhmeta State Nature Reserve | 16,297.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 4. | Saguramo State Nature Reserve | 5,359.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 5. | Algeti State Nature Reserve | 6,822.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 6. | Kintrishi State Nature Reserve | 13,893.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 7. | Ajameti State Nature Reserve | 4,848.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 8. | Sataplia State Nature Reserve | 354.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 9. | Kazbegi State Nature Reserve | 8,922.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 10. | Liakhvi State Nature Reserve | 6,388.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 11. | Mariamjvari State Nature Reserve | 1,040.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 12. | Borjomi State Nature Reserve | 17,948.00 | IUCN Cat. I |
| 13. | Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park | 57,964.44 | IUCN Cat. II |
| 14. | Kolkheti National Park | 44,313.00 Of which : terrestrial area - 28,571.00 aquatic area - 15,742.00 | IUCN Cat. II |
| 15. | Iori Sanctuary | 1,336.00 | IUCN Cat. IV |
| 16. | Gardabani Sanctuary | 3,484.00 | IUCN Cat. IV |
| 17. | Korugi Sanctuary | 2,068.00 | IUCN Cat. IV |
| 18. | Katsoburi Sanctuary | 295.00 | IUCN Cat. IV |
| 19. | Chachuna Sanctuary | 5,200.00 | IUCN Cat. IV |



National Participatory Workshop, (Workshop Participants)
Bakuriani, Georgia, 9-11 July, 2003



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