



Protected Areas

Cornerstones of Biodiversity Conservation

There are now more than 100,000 protected sites—geographically defined areas which are designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives—around the world that now cover about 12% of the Earth's land surface. This system of establishing protected areas forms a central element of any national strategy to conserve biodiversity, and experience shows that a well designed and managed system of protected areas can significantly boost a nation's overall efforts to protect its biodiversity, inside and outside of the protected areas. Globally, the number of protected areas has been increasing significantly over the last decade.

Why it is important:

Well designed and managed protected areas:

- Protect biological diversity, and ecological and evolutionary processes
- Prevent and reduce poverty by supporting livelihoods, providing social and cultural governance and subsistence values, and maintaining ecosystem services
- Mitigate the effects of natural disasters by acting as barriers and buffer zones for storms, floods, and drought
- Provide capacity to adapt to climate change
- Act as enormous natural carbon sinks and plays a key role in global climate regulation
- Generate tremendous direct economic benefits and serve as key assets for the tourism industry and are critical to the economies of the majority of less developed, developing and island states
- Offer space for people to enjoy recreation as well as spiritual and physical renewal
- Hold irreplaceable and immeasurable spiritual value for particular communities and faiths
- Protect the territories and rights of indigenous and local communities providing them the resources and space to continue traditional lifestyles and retain control of their destinies

What the CBD is doing:

Setting aside areas for special protection has long been used as a way to counter an unprecedented loss of biodiversity over the last century. Yet the established protected areas have not always been representative of all the biomes, species and genetic resources requiring protection, nor have they been managed effectively to protect biodiversity. For example, only 5% of the world's temperate needle-leaf forests and woodlands, 4.4% of temperate grasslands and 2.2% of lake systems are protected. Marine coverage lags far behind with only about 0.6% of the ocean's surface area and 1.4% of the coastal shelf areas protected.

To address major gaps in the system of protected areas, CBD Parties have agreed on measures to support the establishment and maintenance of ecologically representative national and regional protected areas in order to stem the increase in biodiversity loss by 2010, or by 2012 for marine areas. In Bonn, Parties will evaluate progress and elaborate recommendations for improved implementation on protected areas for the achievement of global targets.



For more information:

Protected Areas: www.cbd.int/protected

CBD COP decisions on Protected Areas: www.cbd.int/ecosystem/decisions.shtml

Documents: www.cbd.int/ecosystem/documents.shtml



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Convention on Biological Diversity

