

IUCN WCPA: PROPOSED TASK GROUP ON GEODIVERSITY AND PROTECTED AREAS

Steering Committee action

1. The WCPA Global Steering Committee is asked to agree to the establishment of a WCPA Task Group on Geodiversity and Protected Areas.
2. The Steering Group should invite those WCPA members listed in para 14 to constitute the initial group and request that they invite other relevant WCPA membership should be drawn from WCPA and representation from the relevant international geological and geomorphological societies.
3. Formal terms of reference should be produced by the group (including timescales, programme and priorities for activity, resources required and potential funding sources) for approval by the WCPA Executive Committee and the Head of the PPA.

Need for activity

4. Geodiversity has tended to take a second place to biodiversity in the development of thinking and guidance on protected areas in IUCN. With the revised definition of a protected area in IUCN *Guidelines for Applying Protected Areas Management Categories* there is a need to raise the profile of the geodiversity component and to determine what further advice and guidance is needed to raise capacity in the network to deal with geodiversity issues and whether the links with the international geological societies require to be strengthened to improve overall performance and specifically on IUCN input to World Heritage sites. A resolution on conservation of Geodiversity and Geological Heritage (4.040) was also passed by WCC Barcelona in 2008 and calls on IUCN's Commissions, especially the World Commission on Protected Areas, to support the Secretariat of IUCN in requested actions. The present paper proposes the establishment of a Task Force of WCPA to address these issues and develop appropriate outputs.
5. The *Guidelines* gave some limited guidance on the geo components of nature and it was recognised that more work was required to codify the application of geodiversity to the Categories system.
6. WCPA members engage in providing advice on earth heritage sites considering World Heritage nomination and on the evaluation of nominations when submitted. IUCN also relies on international geological organisations for expert input to review of nominations. The guidance on this input is in need of review to ensure that those putting forward the cases and those independently commenting on the case are as well informed as possible.
7. UNESCO is actively developing its Geoparks programme and an increasing number of sites are being designated around the world under this scheme, especially in Europe. IUCN is represented in the governance of this initiative, however, there is no formal WCPA input at present and no obvious connection made between Geoparks and protected areas. Guidance on this issue is needed as a matter of some urgency.
8. More generally, the excellent Good Practice Guidelines Series has only covered earth heritage and geodiversity incidentally. There is an argument for suggesting that a Good Practice guide on geodiversity would be helpful to WCPA members and to protected areas professionals in the field in building their capacity to deal with this component.

9. Finally, the connection between geodiversity and biodiversity is not adequately understood in wider IUCN circles. Given the recently established Species Survival Commission/WCPA group on links, adding a geodiversity dimension, particularly in terms of earth's systems and processes which are a fundamental underpinning of biodiversity, should be useful.
10. For the above reasons some action in WCPA is called for. Issues to be dealt with in order of priority from the initial assessment are: guidance in relation to application of the Categories, link with Geoparks, capacity building materials for PA staff, protected areas and biodiversity in general, and geodiversity and WHSs.
11. The paper has been drawn up in consultation with other WCPA members and Protected Areas Programme staff.

Proposal for a WCPA Task Group on Geodiversity and Protected Areas

12. An obvious way to take these issues forward is to establish working group (or whatever other mechanism is appropriate) of WCPA. Its task would be in the first instance to review the issues and determine how they should be addressed, identify the individuals to take the lead and to deliver the outcomes, the resources required and the timescales.
13. The ultimate outcome of activity should be to increase the types and areas of coverage of geodiversity in protected areas globally through the provision of
 - ✓ capacity building materials for protected staff on geodiversity/earth heritage and protected areas, including a Best Practice Guideline;
 - ✓ an appendix to the Categories Guidelines on geodiversity akin to Marine Protected Area guidelines currently being prepared;
 - ✓ an updated WCPA approach to providing assessments on WHS candidate sites under criterion viii and the relationships with international geological and geomorphological organisations; and
 - ✓ the WCPA perspective on UNESCO Geoparks.
14. The following WCPA members have expressed an interest in participating: Paul Dingwall, Paul Williams, Nigel Dudley, Graeme Worboys, Patrick MacKeever and Roger Crofts. Input on behalf of GPAP/WHP through Tim Badman has also been offered. Involvement of members of the international geological and geomorphological bodies would be valuable.

Roger Crofts
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