

VI MARINE PARK PROJECT

SYSTEM PLANNING FOR PROTECTED AREAS

Individual protected areas, by themselves, cannot address the range and scope of environmental management issues in a country or territory. In many instances, protected areas stand out as gems in an otherwise degraded environment. As such, unless the links between protected areas, national conservation strategies, and national development strategies are identified and addressed, it becomes difficult to resolve basic conservation issues. In many cases, economic pressures and threats external to the protected area result in areas being taken out of protected area status, and used for development. In other words, system planning is one form of approach to integrated planning, linking environment and development.

A national protected area system helps to address conservation issues at a macro level. Davey (1998) explains protected areas system planning as:

- ◆ Defining the priority of protected areas as a worthwhile national concern; defining the relationships between (a) different units and categories of protected areas; and (b) protected areas and other relevant categories of land;
- ◆ Taking a more strategic view of protected areas;
- ◆ Defining roles of key players in relation to protected areas and the relationships between these players; this may include building support and a constituency for protected areas (i.e. as a means to that end, not as an end in itself);
- ◆ Identifying gaps in protected area coverage (including opportunities and needs for connectivity) and deficiencies in management; and
- ◆ Identifying current and potential impacts – both those affecting protected areas from surrounding lands and those emanating from the protected areas which affect surrounding lands.

Reasons for Adopting a System Approach to Protected Area Planning

Adrian Davey, 1998

- ◆ To relate protected areas to national priorities, and to prioritise different aspects of protected area development;
- ◆ To facilitate access to international and national funding, by defining priorities for investment in protected areas and increasing the level of confidence in the efficient use of funds and resources.

- ◆ To get away from a case by case, ad hoc, approach to resource management decision making;
- ◆ To target proposed additions to the protected area estate in a more rational and persuasive manner than ad hoc planning;
- ◆ To facilitate integration with other relevant planning strategies, such as those for national tourism, national biodiversity conservation, or sustainable development;
- ◆ To help resolve conflicts, assist in making decisions relating to trade-offs, clarify roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and facilitate diverse stakeholder involvement;
- ◆ To provide a broader perspective for addressing site-specific issues, such as tourism management;
- ◆ To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the way in which budgets are developed and spent;
- ◆ To assist in meeting obligations under international treaties;
- ◆ To assist countries to be more proactive in conservation management, and in developing effective protected area systems;
- ◆ To encourage consideration of a "system" which incorporates formal protected areas and areas outside of protected areas;
- ◆ To provide a structured framework for a system of protected areas, ranging from areas managed for strict conservation to areas managed for a range of conservation and appropriate ecologically-sound activities;
- ◆ To assist protected area agencies to build political support for protected areas as a worthwhile concern;
- ◆ To define a better process of decentralisation and regionalisation of protected area activities, resources and responsibilities, including the involvement of NGOs and the private sector; and
- ◆ To foster transboundary collaboration.

SYSTEM PLAN FOR THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

The BVI system plan is in its third iteration, building on a system plan that was first developed in 1980. The BVI has a number of marine and terrestrial sites currently under management.

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References Cited.