

CONSERVING AT LEAST ~~30%~~ OF THE PLANET BY 2030 – *What should count?*

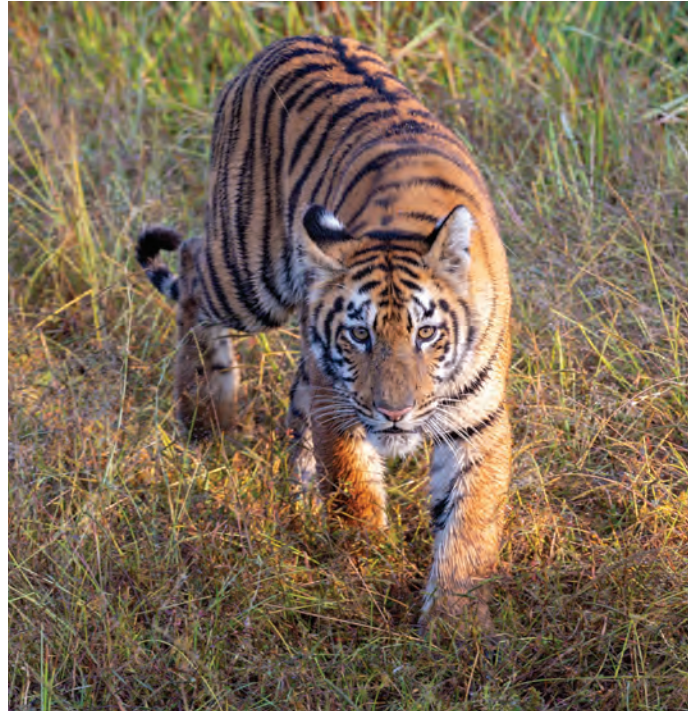


The world is facing both a global biodiversity and a climate change crisis. There is growing recognition that we need to act now to address these inter-related challenges. Agreement on this comes from science-driven institutions like the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services** and the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**, as well as from **human rights organizations** and business-orientated bodies like the **World Economic Forum**. As governments negotiate the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, there is **strong and growing global support** for effectively protecting and conserving *at least* 30% of the earth's land, sea and freshwater ecosystems by 2030, as a key requirement for halting and beginning to reverse biodiversity loss, as well as contributing to addressing the climate crisis. Protecting and conserving at least 30% by 2030 must be addressed in the context of recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, and combined with applying effective sustainability measures across the remaining 70% of the planet.

Biodiversity is lost when wildlife habitat is either degraded, often through fragmentation, or destroyed by human activities. Climate change amplifies these pressures. Well-managed protected and conserved areas are an essential part of solving the global biodiversity crisis while protecting carbon stocks in nature helps to address the climate crisis.

This brief seeks to bring clarity to the question of what could count toward the 30% global minimum target

- ▶ Many species of wildlife are found primarily in protected areas. Young tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Tadoba National Park, India. | GREGOIRE DUBOIS
- ▼ The Flathead Valley, connecting British Columbia, Canada, and Montana, USA: an area of high terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity value, also critical for wildlife movement. | HARVEY LOCKE





▲ Communal conservancies, owned and managed by local communities, cover more than 20% of Namibia. They include 9% of Namibia's population and are managed for biodiversity conservation and livelihoods. | STEPHEN WOODLEY

within the context of recognized area-based conservation measures and their ability to deliver positive long-term conservation outcomes. It is based on guidance from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other published sources, and is consistent with decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Why at least 30%?

A comprehensive review of the scientific literature¹ shows that 30% is a *minimum* target for land, sea and freshwater to protect and conserve key biodiversity values, including species at risk, high-biodiversity areas, key migration sites, spawning areas, and ecologically intact areas which protect large-scale ecological processes. Adding in climate refugia and areas of high carbon density increases the area required to over 50%. Achieving effective protection and conservation on at least 30% of the planet by 2030 is a critical step toward achieving the CBD's 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature, as well as post-2020 ambitions for biodiversity. IUCN has already adopted a **resolution** in 2016 that calls on IUCN State Members to designate at least 30% of each marine habitat in a network of highly protected marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs; also referred to here as “conserved areas”).

Percentage coverage targets are useful but merely reaching a number is not enough; the quality of the areas being protected or conserved must be considered too. Any area-based conservation target must include areas that are of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services; effectively and equitably managed; ecologically representative; part of well-connected systems that link protected areas and OECMs; and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes. Including these quality elements is the key to success in effectively implementing the 30% target.

What can be counted toward the 30% target?

The “at least 30%” figure should include *only* protected areas and OECMs. Both these types of area-based conservation measures are well defined under the CBD and both have extensive CBD and IUCN guidance. Beyond protected and conserved areas there is a clear need to apply the best sustainability practices to the remaining 70% of the globe in a Whole Earth approach.

A protected area is defined by IUCN as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem

Global Biodiversity Framework Draft 1 – Target 3. *Ensure that at least 30% globally of land areas and of sea areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and its contributions to people, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.*

services and cultural values.”² There are six categories of protected areas, which can be governed and managed by governments, the private sector, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) or any combination of these (Table 1; see also [IUCN’s guidance on protected areas categories](#)).

Ensuring protected and conserved areas deliver effective conservation outcomes is essential in meeting any area-based target, including the 30% target. Thus, the following considerations should be applied by all countries:

- All protected areas should have clear ecological objectives, be managed with nature conservation as the dominant priority, and be free of any environmentally damaging activities.
- IUCN has long supported the recognition of four governance types for both protected areas and OECMs (see Table 1). All governance types are important, and protected and conserved areas governed and managed by IPLCs should be recognized and supported by governments in accordance with rights-based approaches.
- OECMs must demonstrate they are delivering the effective long-term conservation of important biodiversity.
- OECMs complement protected areas and are equally important for maintaining biodiversity, even though they may not be managed primarily for conservation. They should achieve the same level of in-situ or whole ecosystem biodiversity conservation as protected areas.
- OECMs are not meant to be multiple-use production areas (e.g. production forests, plantations and fisheries areas) that are managed with some biodiversity considerations. While such areas are important, they should be counted toward additional sustainable use targets and not toward the 30% conservation target.
- All protected areas and recognized OECMs should be reported to the two **Protected Planet** databases: the **World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)** and the **World Database on OECMs (WDOECM)**, both managed by the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

GOVERNANCE TYPE MANAGEMENT CATEGORY	A. Governance by government			B. Shared governance			C. Private governance			D. Governance by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities	
	Federal or national ministry or agency in charge	Subnational ministry or agency in charge	Government-delegated management (e.g. NGO)	Transboundary governance	Collaborative governance (various forms of pluralist influence)	Joint governance (pluralist governing body)	Conserved areas established and run by individual landowners	Conserved areas established and run by non-profit organizations	Conserved areas established and run by for-profit organizations	Indigenous Peoples’ conserved areas and territories – established and run by Indigenous Peoples	Community-conserved areas and territories – established and run by local communities
1a Strict Nature Reserve	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
1b Wilderness Area	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
II National Park	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
III National Monument	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
IV Habitat/Species Management Area	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
V Protected Landscape/ Seascape	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
VI Protected Areas with Sustainable Use of Natural Resources	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

▲ **Table 1.** IUCN protected area management categories (I–VI), OECMs, and governance types.

Other effective area-based conservation measure (OECMs) are defined by the CBD as *“geographically defined area[s] other than a Protected Area, which [are] governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”* OECMs are meant to provide effective long-term conservation of whole ecosystems with high biodiversity value, with conservation outcomes equivalent to those of protected areas. As with protected areas, all four governance types are valid.

[IUCN Guidance here](#)

Equitable conservation – How can territories of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities best be counted?

It is well established that Indigenous and community-governed territories often effectively retain their biodiversity conservation values.³ It is also clear that protecting at least 30% of the earth will not occur without the leadership, support and partnership of Indigenous Peoples. Protected and conserved areas can provide enormous benefits at the local level,⁴ but they should be established and managed with due regard for human rights.⁵ Conservation works best when it is equitable: based on full participation, shared and transparent decision-making, rights-based approaches and fair benefit sharing.⁶ The 30% minimum target provides a huge opportunity to strengthen security of tenure and support to IPLC-led conservation by demonstrating the global environmental values of such management. Conservation interests must work with IPLCs under the following conditions:

▼ Protected and conserved areas provide a wide range of benefits to people beyond biodiversity conservation. Torres del Paine National Park, Chile, provides jobs and tourism revenue. | GREGOIRE DUBOIS





▲ Corals are thriving inside Ras Mohammed National Park, Egypt, an IUCN Green Listed protected area. | GREGOIRE DUBOIS

- Governments should recognize and support Indigenous and community-governed territories, lands and waters where those places are important for biological and cultural diversity. Any establishment of new protected and conserved areas in these territories, lands and waters must be initiated or approved by the community through a process that respects human rights obligations, including the right of **Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)** and equitable benefit sharing and governance.
- Indigenous territories may be counted toward the 30% target so long as they deliver effective long-term conservation of important biodiversity, but only when the traditional owners have given their consent. Such territories may be counted either as protected areas or OECMs depending on the goals established by the traditional owners.
- Recognition of Indigenous territories as protected areas or OECMs by governments should be based on respect for the local governance and management systems; strengthen rights to lands, territories and resources; and enhance support and funding to IPLCs for conservation.
- Governments should evaluate and encourage opportunities for equitably supporting Indigenous and community-led conservation of protected and conserved areas.

A focus on areas important for biodiversity

Biodiversity is not distributed evenly across the globe. Effective conservation requires identification of areas that are especially important for biodiversity values:

- Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are defined as “sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity.” IUCN has developed a **Key Biodiversity Area Standard** for countries to use to identify KBAs. The



▲ Protected and conserved areas should focus on areas of importance for biodiversity, such as Key Biodiversity Areas.
Spiny chameleon (*Furcifer verrucosus*), Madagascar. | GREGOIRE DUBOIS

Key Biodiversity Areas Partnership has identified over 16,000 sites globally and work is underway to assess them all against the criteria of the standard.

- In addition to KBAs, other important sites include **Ecologically and Biologically Significant Marine Areas**, or EBSAs, **Important Marine Mammal Areas**, and equivalent national high-priority areas.
- Important areas should be linked into effective ecological networks through systematic conservation planning to optimize biodiversity conservation.

Protected and conserved areas must be effective at conserving nature

Unfortunately many reported protected areas are in reality not being managed and governed to effectively conserve nature.⁷ Many protected areas do not have sufficient staff, funding, enforcement or legal protection. Some are threatened by agricultural expansion; others, by industrial-scale resource extraction. There is equally an ongoing problem with countries degazetting protected areas to allow for development. The following are essential to ensure effectiveness:

- Countries must act and invest to ensure long-term and effective management of protected and conserved areas in accordance with their obligations as Parties to the CBD and other international agreements.
- All protected areas and OECMs should set goals for conservation outcomes, monitor them and publicly report on their status.

Ecologically connected

With increasing habitat loss and fragmentation, maintaining and conserving ecological connectivity is essential, especially in a world that is impacted by climate change. **The Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals** and IUCN have jointly defined *ecological connectivity* as “the unimpeded movement of species and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth.” IUCN has produced **ecological guidelines for connectivity and conservation networks** with the following principles:

- *An ecological corridor* is a clearly defined geographical space that is governed and managed over the long term to maintain or restore effective ecological connectivity. Corridors should be identified, maintained or restored in areas where connectivity is required with the aim of building *ecological networks for conservation*.
- Ecological corridors should have specific ecological objectives and be governed and managed to achieve connectivity outcomes.
- Ecological corridors are not a substitute for protected areas or OECMs, both of which often also contribute to ecological connectivity.
- Ecological corridors should be established or restored to ensure functional long-term connection between protected areas and OECMs. This allows area-based conservation to move from site-based conservation to ecological networks for conservation. This shift is critical to increasing the chances of species survival and adaptation to a changing climate.

▼ Protected areas need to be included within ecological networks for conservation. Butterfly (*Paches loxus*) near Amboro National Park, Bolivia.

GREGOIRE DUBOIS



Standards to assess conservation

Common standards should be applied to protected and conserved areas so that they are well designed, well governed, and effectively managed in ways that lead to effective conservation outcomes. **The IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas⁸** provides a global standard that applies on land, freshwater and sea. The Green List criteria can be a conceptual basis to guide *all* managers in seeking to make their protected and conserved areas more effective. In addition, Green List certification for the most important protected and conserved areas can provide a measure of progress towards national and global targets for effective area-based conservation.

Can the world afford to conserve 30%?

A recent analysis showed that the economic benefits of conserving at least 30% of the planet far outweigh the costs, due to benefits from ecosystem services. Another study found that the protection of at least 30% of the ocean in no-take marine protected areas would actually restore and enhance fisheries stocks.⁹ This research found that a substantial increase in ocean protection could have triple benefits: by protecting biodiversity, boosting the yield of fisheries and securing marine carbon stocks that are at risk from human activities. Protecting at least 30% of the planet is affordable, beneficial and practical – at a fraction of the money invested in other forms of public and private spending.



▲ Protecting at least 30% of the earth will not occur without the leadership, support and partnership of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. Nearly 70 community associations help manage Makira Natural Park in Madagascar. | JULIE LARSEN MAHER © WCS

Does this apply equally in all countries?

The “at least 30%” figure is intended to be a global target and will be applied differently across countries, according to national circumstances. One way to implement the target is to think about the **world as being composed of three overall conditions** – large wild areas, shared lands, and cities and farms – based on remaining natural habitat, land-use drivers and human pressures.¹⁰ The Three Conditions framework shows that all countries can contribute to achieving the target with different objectives and strategies according to their unique conditions. In addition to direct conservation action, countries can also contribute through financial mechanisms to support efforts to meet the global target in other countries with more high-value ecosystems remaining.

The way forward

Through national efforts on Aichi Target 11, by the end of 2020 nearly 17% of land areas and nearly 8% of the ocean were recorded as protected areas and OECMs, but with notably less progress on the quality elements. Progress on area-based conservation will contribute to other **biodiversity targets**, as well as other multilateral environmental agreements. Increased area-based conservation provides many additional benefits, contributing to food and water security, healthy communities, livelihoods, and climate change adaptation and mitigation, among others.

The momentum on area-based conservation over the last decade provides encouragement to Parties to the CBD to continue their efforts for more ambitious conservation targets for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and strengthens hope for the 2030 United Nations’ Sustainable Development Agenda. Target 3 of Draft 1 of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework calls for protecting at least 30% of both the terrestrial and marine realms by 2030. Many countries are already endorsing these ambitions. These area-based conservation efforts will need to be supplemented and supported by more sustainable management across the remaining 70% of landscapes and seascapes in a Whole Earth approach.

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