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Protected Area Management System (PAMS) - Introduction

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework aims to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030. This is an important step toward slowing biodiversity loss, tackling climate change, and protecting natural habitats.

At the Endangered Species Fund (ESF), we support this goal. However, simply giving land legal protection is not enough. Around the world, many protected areas still face threats such as poaching, deforestation, and habitat destruction. To protect wildlife effectively, protected areas also need effective day-to-day management.

The Protected Area Management System (PAMS) is a practical guide that helps managers build and improve those management systems. It is designed to be simple, flexible, and adaptable, whether a protected area is large or small.

Protected Area Management System Overview (PAMS)

The Protected Area Management System is built around a simple idea:

Inputs → Processes → Outcomes

Every protected area has resources available to it (Inputs). Protected Area Managers use those resources through day-to-day management activities (Processes) to achieve conservation results (Outcomes).

Inputs

Inputs are the people, information, and resources available to manage the protected area. We divide these into three main groups:

Resources: These are the basic tools needed to operate the protected area, including: Funding, Staff, Equipment and Technology.

Organizational Structure: Every protected area needs clear direction. This includes: Defined roles and responsibilities, Clear management objectives, A management strategy, Decision-making processes.

Environmental Factors: No two protected areas are the same. Day-to-day management of Protected Areas is influenced by factors such as: Terrain, Wildlife, Climate, Local communities, National laws and regulations.

Understanding these factors helps managers make informed decisions that suit their protected area.

Processes

Processes are the activities managers carry out every day, every week, and over the long term. These activities turn available resources into better conservation outcomes.

For example, a manager may combine resources such as rangers, patrol equipment, data from SMART, and information from a threat assessment to produce a weekly patrol plan for a Protected Area's Ranger team. Better patrol planning leads to more effective law enforcement, reduces illegal activity, and improves protection for wildlife and habitats.

Good management is not about having the most resources, it is about making the best use of the resources available.

Outcomes

The goal of the Protected Area Management System is to improve four key outcomes:

1. **Biodiversity and Conservation**: The primary purpose of a protected area is to protect biodiversity. An effectively managed protected area reduces threats to wildlife, protects habitats, and maintains healthy ecosystems.

2. **Public Benefit:** Protected areas should also benefit people, especially nearby communities. They provide opportunities for recreation, education, tourism, and nature-based activities such as hiking, birdwatching, camping, and wildlife viewing. Where possible, protected areas should also create economic opportunities through employment, tourism, or other local investment.

3. **Financial Sustainability:** Long-term conservation depends on reliable funding. Protected areas should aim to secure sustainable income through a combination of government support, NGO partnerships, tourism, conservation funding, carbon projects, or other appropriate sources.

4. **Scientific Research:** Protected areas are valuable places for research. By supporting scientists and research organizations, protected areas contribute to a better understanding of ecosystems and help improve conservation practices.

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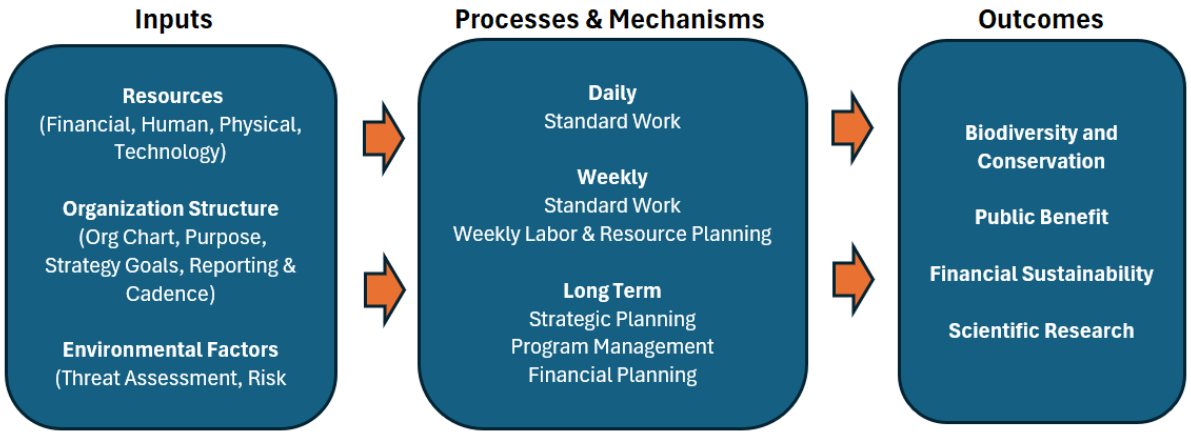


Implementing PAMS with ESF

ESF provides practical support to organizations that want to use the Protected Area Management System. This includes management templates, assessment tools, and standard operating procedures covering topics such as: Organizational Structure, Threat Assessments, Resource Planning, Standard Work, and Strategic Planning.

Organizations can use the documents that best match their current needs.

ESF also supports implementation through a simple three-step approach:

Assess → Action → Support

Step 1 - Assess - The first step is to understand the current state of the protected area. ESF partners with the Protected Area management team to identify strengths, challenges, and gaps in both resources and management practices. The assessment provides a clear picture of where improvements will have the greatest impact.

Step 2 - Action – Some problems can be solved by improving how existing resources are used. After the assessment, priority is given to practical changes that can be made immediately. Examples include process improvements such as: Completing a threat assessment, improving patrol planning, introducing regular labor and resource planning, and developing clear standard work. These changes can improve outcomes without requiring significant new funding or resources.

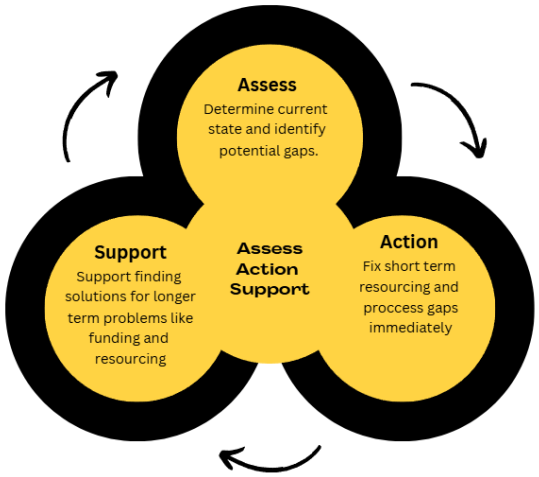
Step 3 - Support - Some challenges cannot be solved through improved management alone. Many protected areas need additional funding, equipment, technology, or specialist expertise. Where long-term resource gaps are identified, ESF works with protected area partners to help secure the support needed to strengthen management over time.

Example:

A protected area conducts regular ranger patrols but has never completed a formal threat or risk assessment. Rangers also lack the equipment needed to collect patrol data using spatial monitoring software. Although patrols are taking place, they are not focused on the areas of greatest risk. The assessment identifies these gaps.

As an immediate action, the protected area completes a threat assessment, carries out a risk assessment, and introduces weekly labor and resource planning. These changes help managers deploy rangers more effectively using the staff and equipment already available.

Over time, ESF works with the protected area to secure funding for Android devices and spatial monitoring software. Better data allows patrols to be planned even more effectively.



Conclusion

Protected Areas succeed when they combine legal protection with effective management. PAMS provides a practical, adaptable system that helps managers organize their resources, improve daily operations, and achieve better conservation outcomes. By focusing on simple management practices that can be improved over time, PAMS helps protected areas make the best use of the resources they have while building toward long-term success. It creates a management system that can be quickly adopted by any Protected Area globally. As more Protected Areas use PAMS, more data is gained on what works, and what doesn't, creating a cycle of continuous improvement that leads to stronger protection for wildlife and habitats.