

IUCN WCPA Technical Note Series No. 1:

Privately protected areas: international reporting and their relationship with OECMs

IUCN defines a **privately protected area** (PPA) as a protected area under private governance - i.e. individuals and groups of individuals; non-governmental organisations; corporations – both existing commercial companies and sometimes corporations set up by groups of private owners to manage groups of PPAs; for-profit owners; research entities or religious entities.

In 2018, signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) provided a definition of “**other effective area-based conservation measures**”¹ (OECMs), bringing clarity to the wording of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 of the CBD Strategic Plan 2011-2020². Protected areas³ and OECMs are both expected to result in the long-term and effective *in situ* conservation of biodiversity. However, whereas **protected areas** have nature conservation as the primary (or joint-primary) management objective, **OECMs** are areas of effective *in situ* conservation of biodiversity that may or may not have nature conservation as an objective. OECMs come in three broad types:

1. **Ancillary conservation:** areas delivering *in-situ* conservation as a by-product of management, i.e. where biodiversity conservation is *not* an objective (e.g. some military training grounds).
2. **Secondary conservation:** active conservation of an area where biodiversity outcomes are a *secondary* management objective (e.g. some watershed management areas);
3. **Primary conservation:** areas meeting the IUCN definition of a protected area, but where the governance authority⁴ does not wish the area to be reported as a protected area. This is likely to be a relatively rare category of OECM, and would be used to avoid unintended consequences, such as in countries where government regulations forbid human occupation in a protected area.

Reporting PPAs

It has become apparent that guidance is needed about how PPAs might be reported on internationally in cases where the **governance authority** recognises them as protected areas but the **government** does not report them to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA). The 2016 IUCN World Conservation Congress confirmed that *privately protected areas should be recognised as protected areas*.⁵

Key message

Privately protected areas should always be reported to the World Database on Protected Areas as protected areas, contingent on the consent of the private governance authority.

¹ **Other effective area-based conservation measure** (OECM) is defined by the CBD in decision 14/8 (CBD, 2018) as: *A geographically defined area other than a protected area, which is 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*

² <https://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/rationale/target-11/>

³ A **protected area** is defined by IUCN (Dudley, 2008) 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 services and cultural values. IUCN's definition is clarified by some principles, the foremost being: "For IUCN, only those areas where the main objective is conserving nature can be considered protected areas; this can include many areas with other goals as well, at the same level, but in the case of conflict, nature conservation will be the priority"*

⁴ The term '**governance authority**' refers to the entity responsible for decision-making at the level of the protected area or OECM. In the case of PPAs and privately governed OECMs, this may be an individual landowner, non-profit organisation or for-profit organisation.

https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2016_RES_036_EN.pdf

However, some governments have not reported all types of protected areas or OECMs to the WDPA and World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM) in the past, either because they decided not to, or are not aware that these areas can be reported. In further instances, governments may not have access to the necessary data for reporting. In all such cases PPAs and private OECMs may still be reported, and additional guidance and capacity development can help support more complete reporting. The Q&A below provides some initial guidance.

Question	Answer
<p>If a PPA is not reported by governments to the WDPA (protectedplanet.net) can it be reported as an OECM to the WD-OECM?</p>	<p>If an area fits the IUCN protected area definition, and the private governance authority agrees for it to be reported as a protected area, then it must be reported as a PPA. However, if an area fits the IUCN protected area definition, but the private governance authority does not want it to be recognised as a protected area, it can be reported to the WD-OECM if it meets the definition of an OECM (see type 3 “primary conservation” above), and the private governance authority consents to its inclusion.</p>
<p>Who can report PPAs and OECMs to the WDPA and WD-OECM?</p>	<p>National governments are asked to provide data formally by the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) (the managers of the WDPA and WD-OECM), as supported by multiple CBD decisions; this data is tagged “state verified” in the WDPA or WD-OECM. Alternatively, governments can appoint another competent authority to report. Such data is also considered “state verified” if the authority has been officially appointed in writing by the government. IUCN and UNEP-WCMC encourage governments to report with the agreement of the relevant governance authority, i.e. the individual or organisation responsible for the PPA or OECM.</p> <p>Data can also be provided by non-government sources. These sources may be individuals and organisations directly responsible for PPA or OECM governance or supporting organisations. Where non-government data-providers report directly to UNEP-WCMC, data is tagged “expert verified” after UNEP-WCMC has facilitated the verification of the data by non-government experts. Alternatively, the data-provider can request verification by the national government, in which case the data is tagged “state verified”.</p> <p>In some cases, the government may not recognise an area reported by non-government sources. In such cases, provided the area has been “expert verified”, UNEP-WCMC will not remove the data from the databases. This approach enables the databases to represent the full range of areas meeting the PA or OECM definitions, while clearly differentiating between data that has been verified by governments, and data that has not.</p>
<p>Does all data provided to the WDPA and WD-OECM have to be publicly available?</p>	<p>No. Although it is encouraged that data be made publicly available, UNEP-WCMC accepts data with restrictions on use and dissemination. In cases where information is considered sensitive by the data provider, it can be used by the WDPA/WD-OECM managers for analyses (e.g. on progress towards national and international area-based conservation targets) without being shared further. Data providers should contact UNEP-WCMC to discuss options for any restricted use of reported data.</p>
<p>What happens if an area which experts/data providers think is an OECM is already reported as a protected area on the WDPA?</p>	<p>These decisions will have to be resolved by national level processes (often by national or sub-national governments, IUCN National Committees, NGOs, etc.). If data on protectedplanet.net is out of date or incorrect, countries or governance authorities may set up processes to review the data against IUCN’s guidelines and work with stakeholders to review and revise national data for entry in the WDPA or WD-OECM (see: Stolton et al, 2013, in Dudley, 2008). Users of the databases are welcome to alert UNEP-WCMC to potential errors or updates so that these can be discussed with the original data-provider. However, changes to the data will not normally be made without the data-provider’s agreement.</p>

For more information on PPAs see: <http://privateconservation.net/index.html>

For more information on OECMs see: <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/oecms>

For further guidance on reporting to the WDPA and/or WD-OECM, please contact protectedareas@unep-wcmc.org

References and sources of further information

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