

# World Commission on Protected Areas Climate Change Specialist Group

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### I. Context

Current global challenges, such as achieving a sustainable development low in carbon emissions while increasing economic growth, reducing poverty, improving human wellbeing, and facing climate change are leading nations to make major policy and economic changes. 2015 has been pointed out as a year of decisions. In the following months, sustainable development goals (SDG's) will be announced and world nations expect to construct a new climate agreement during the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

More than ever, nations are open to discussing new solutions to historical problems. There is an opportunity to reconsider the role that nature and protected areas play in global solutions to collective challenges. Nature conservation faces numerous threats and these are being exacerbated by climate change. Although ecosystem based adaptation approaches to tackle climate change are gaining more ground in national and international arenas, there is still work to do in order to increase their resilience. Moreover, mitigation opportunities that rely on the services provided from various ecosystems are facing a turning point. Enhanced protection of these systems is critical if they are to continue to provide for the well-being of people and nature. Therefore, international cooperation is essential to find new answers.

From this point of view, protected areas become key instruments for the future as they intersect biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and climate change agendas across landscapes. The 6<sup>th</sup> IUCN-World Parks Congress, held in Sydney, Australia in November 2014 (WPC 2014), made clear the importance of moving from a passive-isolated management of protected areas to an active-inclusive and collaborative approach working with other sectors. This effort was exemplified in the Promise of Sydney and the six Recommendations that emerged from the Responding to Climate Change Stream at the Congress. The conservation community now has the challenge to construct a common work plan to achieve collective objectives and keep the momentum of this monumental event. The sustainable development goals and the climate agreement are just the beginning. COP12 of the Convention to Combat Desertification (2015) and the IUCN World Conservation Congress and COP13 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2016 offer additional opportunities to position protected areas in discussions of the global agenda.

The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) has an opportunity and a responsibility to strengthen its leadership role in fostering effective responses to climate change in protected and conserved areas by promoting the role of these areas in providing natural solutions, in collaborating with others on this collective challenge, and in supporting opportunities for land and water managers to understand and mainstream best practices within their own jurisdictions and organisations.

## II. Purpose/Function

The WCPA Protected Area Climate Change Specialist Group (PACCSG) builds on the expertise and contributions of many WCPA members and other relevant experts and practitioners. The Specialist Group coordinates with others to identify both long term strategies and short term actions aimed at three broad goals:

- 1. Enhance Awareness of Climate Change and its Impacts to Protected Areas and biodiversity in surrounding landscapes.** Desired outcomes for this goal are that communities in and around protected areas understand how climate change is affecting these landscapes and seascapes, biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods
- 2. Promote the Capacity of Protected Area Managers to Respond to Climate Change**  
Desired outcomes will include development and dissemination of best practice guidelines and tools so that PA managers can effectively access and apply current knowledge and tools toward strengthening planning and management of PAs under a changing climate, now and into the future, to protect and connect key features and processes as landscapes transform and adapt to climate change..
- 3. Mainstream Natural Solutions and especially Protected Areas into Sectoral Strategies, Plans and Programmes for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change**  
Desired outcomes for this goal are that all sectors of society adopt protected areas as natural solutions in their climate change responses and that new coalitions are created to work together across protected areas, business, climate science, cultural boundaries and geographies to integrate Protected Areas into mitigation and adaptation strategies at all levels.

Specific objectives and priorities for the PACCSG will implement the recommendations that emerged from the Responding to Climate Change Stream at WPC 2014 (see Section IV on Products and Activities).

## III. Structure

### 1. Leadership

Two Co-Chairs were identified by the WCPA Steering Committee in April 2015 to lead the PACCSG, Leigh Welling with the US National Park Service and Andrew Rhodes with the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas in Mexico. The Co-Chairs will organize the roster of professionals for the PACCSG membership and conduct in person and remote meetings as defined in this Terms of Reference document. It is expected that at least one senior member of the WCPA Steering Committee will participate in the further development of the PACCSG strategic direction, in determining the priorities for near term action, and in helping to ensure ongoing support, continuity and technical leadership for WCPA's work on climate change and protected areas.

### 2. Proposed Membership

The WCPA Climate Change Specialist Group will interact with other Themes, Specialist Groups, Tasks Forces and Working Groups, as well as with other Commissions and the IUCN Secretariat (i.e. Global Protected Areas Programme, Regional Offices) and other regional or global networks, as appropriate, to set cross-cutting priorities, raise funds and operate harmoniously in all regions.

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A global network on climate change response requires specialized members, capable of effectively contributing to the SG outcomes. Such members should have an education and technical background and/or an extensive practical experience and demonstrated positive results in climate change and related fields, especially with respect to management and the conservation of nature.

Demonstrated capacities and leadership in developing, supporting and running climate change projects, programs, and initiatives aimed at the conservation of nature, carrying out relevant communication and advocacy work, academic research, and capacity building and training on climate change mitigation and adaptation will be an appreciated plus. Proficiency in English and/or Spanish and/or French will be important to facilitate interaction with the other members of the Group, but is not necessary if other members can bridge the communication gap. Any additional language possessed by willing members will be taken as an asset.

### **3. Partnerships and Collaboration**

From commitments made at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014, it is expected that the WCPA Climate Change SG will collaborate with IUCN GPAP, other IUCN programmes and other WCPA SGs including the Capacity Development, Connectivity and Natural Solutions SGs, to promote good practice and integration of Protected Areas into strategies to combat global challenges. The PACCSG will also collaborate with these and other partners to obtain financial and in-kind resource contributions and to carry out priority activities. Because climate change is a broad-reaching issue, the number of related initiatives, groups, programs, and opportunities for collaboration are endless. It will be critical for the PACCSG to demonstrate situational awareness from the outset and to lay a strong foundation of collegiality with the climate change work already underway in many parts of the IUCN and partner organizations. This approach will help to reduce redundancy, maximize leveraging of resources, and ensure the work undertaken by the WCPA is aimed to add value and further the unique mission and goals of the Commission.

### **4. Meetings**

The PACCSG will hold annual face-to-face membership meetings and regularly scheduled remote meetings, the frequency of which will be determined by the members. The first face-to-face meeting is scheduled for October 6-9, 2015 in Morelos, Mexico (see attached agenda).

### **5. Terms**

The minimum term for members and leadership of the PACCSG is two years beginning October 2015. The current Co-Chairs are expected to serve at least through September 2017. Options to renew or extend terms are at the discretion of the WCPA Steering Committee.

## **IV. Products and Activities**

The PACCSG will take the lead within WCPA to develop and implement products and activities to address the following six recommendations that emerged from the World Parks Congress Responding to Climate Change Stream. Priorities for action under each recommendation will be discussed and agreed upon at the CCTF meeting October 6-9, 2015 in Morelos, Mexico. These activities will include dissemination of Best Practice Guidelines to help PA managers address climate change responses within and beyond PA boundaries and collaboration with other IUCN and WCPA groups as appropriate.

## **Recommendations from the World Parks Congress Responding to Climate Change Stream – Full English Version**

Recommendation 1: *Countries should bring into the UNFCCC process and COP21 in 2015 outcome the full recognition of biodiversity, ecosystems and particularly protected areas as key to enable countries to adapt and mitigate to climate change.*

Recommendation 2: *All countries should mainstream the concept of “Protected areas as natural solutions to climate change” into national development plans, communication and financial strategies, for natural and social resilience.*

Recommendation 3: *Governments and relevant stakeholders should enhance adaptation and mitigation strategies within and outside protected area boundaries through carbon management, long term monitoring, and integrated landscape connectivity.*

Recommendation 4: *Protected areas must actively engage new thinking in planning and management to ensure equitable participation from society, including youth, women and indigenous and local communities, building on traditional knowledge and working together in finding solutions to climate change.*

Recommendation 5: *Protected areas should adopt and apply innovative, appropriate, and context-specific adaptation measures to ensure that in the face of transformative climatic change they can continue providing the full array of values, functions, and services for people and nature, including climate protection and disaster risk reduction.*

Recommendation 6: *New partnerships must be formed and strengthened within and beyond national boundaries to protect and connect landscapes and seascapes as they transform and adapt to climate; we especially must support coalitions in the polar regions, such as the Arctic Council and the Antarctic Treaty System because these areas are experiencing rapid change.*

### **V. Reporting and Communication**

The Co-Chairs of the PACCSG will report on an annual basis to the WCPA Steering Committee, and will provide other periodic updates as requested by the Commission Chair. Reports from implementing organizations in climate change related projects will also be monitored and offered to the attention of the WCPA SC and membership of the CCTF. The primary basis of communication will be remote via electronic and social media, while “bridging” persons will assist in contacting in-the-field experts and communities.

IUCN outreach channels such as newsletters and mailing lists will be used for progress dissemination, calls for proposals, engaging new members, etc. Social media (e.g. from WPC) will be included as part of the communications strategy.

### **VI. References**

Dudley, N., S. Stolton, A. Belokurov, L. Krueger, N. Lopoukhine, K. MacKinnon, T. Sandwith and N. Sekhran [editors] (2010); *Natural Solutions: Protected areas helping people cope with climate change*, IUCNWCPA, TNC, UNDP, WCS, The World Bank and WWF, Gland, Switzerland, Washington DC and New York, USA

Gross, John E., Woodley, Stephen, Welling, Leigh A., and Watson, James E.M. (eds.) (2016). *Adaptation to Climate Change: Guidance for protected area managers and planners*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 24, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. Xvii + 129 pp.