

Protected Areas Management Effectiveness Information Module

Methodology Description

NSW State of Parks (Australia)

1.1 Organisation

NSW Department of Environment and Conservation and the University of Queensland

1.2 Primary references

Hockings, M., Carter, R.W., Cook, C. and James, R. (in prep.) Accountability, Reporting or Management Improvement? Development of a State of the Parks Assessment System in New South Wales, Australia.

N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service (2005) State of the Parks Proforma and Guidelines. NSW Department of Environment and Conservation.

1.3 Brief description of methodology

The methodology consists of a proforma which addresses each of the six elements of the IUCN-WCPA Framework. The proforma is designed to be completed for all or most protected areas in a system to provide data for compilation of a State of the Parks report. It is designed to be completed by small groups of staff involved in the management of each protected area in a small workshop setting. Assessments can be completed on a periodic basis (annually or every 2-3 years). Results from assessments can be used to track progress in individual sites over time, or analysed across a group of parks or the entire park system to provide data relevant to planning and decision making. Results across the entire park system can be used to develop a periodic State of the Parks report.

The proforma consists of four sections incorporating both quantitative and qualitative assessment items. Part A covers descriptive information about each reserve such as size, location, legal designation, IUCN Protected Area Category designation, and relevant legal and contextual information such as designation under international agreements (e.g. World Heritage or Ramsar Conventions). Part B compiles information on staff time and financial inputs into management of each reserve. Part C collects information on the existence and status of a plan of management and other plans (e.g. reserve or regional weed or fire management plans) that helped to direct management of the reserve and identifies the most important reserve values, most significant threats and key stakeholder groups and issues. Part D contains 30 assessment items that required staff to rate performance in a variety of aspects of park management against a four level ordinal scale. In all cases, where a qualitative assessment was required from staff, a justification for the assessment given and/or the sources of information used in making the assessment is required (N.S.W. National Parks and Wildlife Service 2005).

1.4 Purposes

- ✓ to improve management (adaptive management)
- ✓ to raise awareness and support
- ✓ for accountability/ audit
- for prioritisation and resource allocation
- to support budget submissions to government for increased funding.

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1.5 Objectives and application

The NSW SoP system is designed to provide an overview of management effectiveness in parks and to identify factors that influence conservation outcomes on parks. The SoP system aims to:

- improve the understanding of the condition of and pressures on the parks system;
- evaluate the effectiveness of management activities against objectives and planned outcomes;
- inform planning and decision-making at all levels of management from statewide to the park level, leading to more effective management;
- act as an induction resource for staff new to a park;
- assist in the allocation of funding and resources; and
- promote effective communication of our management performance to communities (i.e. through the State of the Parks report).

1.6 Origins

The starting point for the design of the system was a review of existing management effectiveness evaluation systems around the world, focusing particularly on those systems that had been designed using the IUCN-WCPA Framework. The basic structure of the NSW State of the Parks system was built around adaptations of components taken from:

- the World Bank/WWF Alliance Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (Stolton et al 2003), for identification of reserve values and qualitative assessment of management performance;
- WWF Rapid Assessment and Prioritisation of Protected Area Management (Ervin 2003), for assessment of threats; and
- UNESCO/IUCN Enhancing our Heritage Workbook (Hockings et al. 2001).

Additional features were added to improve the reliability and credibility of the staff assessments. These additions particularly focused on providing additional justification for assessments and documentation of sources of information used in making assessments.

1.7 How the method is implemented

The proforma has been used as both an Excel spreadsheet and as an online web-based form. The following method has been used in NSW and is recommended for any adaptation of the evaluation method to another protected area system (Hockings *et al.* in prep.):

1. Workshop indicators with staff to ensure that the methodology covers the most important aspects of management for the system being assessed and that the indicators reflect appropriate performance standards for the agency.
2. Revise indicators and guidance notes (if necessary) based on the results of the workshop(s).
3. Train staff in application of the methodology.
4. Assemble relevant information for each site in preparation for the assessment (budget information, results of monitoring programs being conducted in the protected area etc).
5. Conduct assessments for each protected area using a small working meeting of key staff involved in and other knowledgeable people (working session to complete the assessment normally lasts one day).
6. Compile and analyse results across the system of protected areas.
7. Feedback results to the protected area agency staff.
8. Periodically prepare State of Parks report (perhaps every 5-6 years).
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1.8 Elements and indicators

Indicators for NSW SoP methodology

WCPA Element	Criteria	Indicator
Context	Values	Top 5 values for which park is managed
		Significance of values (international, national or local)
	Threats	Top 5 current threats to values with assessment of impact and extent of threat
		Top 5 emerging threats to values with assessment of likely impact and extent of threat
Stakeholders	Five primary stakeholders/issues with assessment of the nature of relationship between agency and stakeholder group	
Planning	Plan of management	Existence and age of plan of management
	Subsidiary plans	Type, status, age and influence on management of other plans (e.g. fire management invasive species, visitor management)
	Planning and decision making	Identification and use of reserve values in management decision making
Existence of clear management directions		
Inputs	Budget	Recurrent budget by function (various aspects of natural resource management, visitor management, cultural heritage management administration etc)
		Capital works budget by function (various aspects of natural resource management, visitor management, cultural heritage management administration etc)
		Revenue raised from park user and other fees
Inputs	Staff time and other labour inputs	Staff time and other labour input by function (natural resource management, visitor management, cultural heritage management, administration etc)
		Information availability
	Adequacy of natural resource information to support decision making	
	Adequacy of historic heritage information to support decision making	
	Adequacy of indigenous heritage information to support decision making	
Adequacy of information about park visitors to support decision making		
Processes	Natural resource management	Existence and adequacy of planned approach to weed management
		Existence and adequacy of planned approach to pest animal management
		Existence and adequacy of planned approach to fire management (in relation to both natural and cultural resources)
		Existence and adequacy of planned approach to threatened species management
	Social/cultural management	Existence and adequacy of planned approach to visitor impact management
		Existence and adequacy of planned approach to indigenous heritage management
		Existence and adequacy of planned approach to historic heritage management
	Law enforcement	Existence and adequacy of planned approach to law enforcement
	Infrastructure/asset maintenance	Adequacy of maintenance program

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WCPA Element	Criteria	Indicator
	Consultation with stakeholders	Adequacy of consultation processes with indigenous communities Adequacy of consultation processes with local and general communities
	Monitoring	Existence of a planned approach to monitoring and evaluation
Outputs	Visitors, visitor facilities and information	Visitor numbers
		Adequacy and appropriateness of visitor facilities
		Adequacy and appropriateness of visitor information and signage
	Implementation of plans and work programs	Existence and adequacy of planned approach to interpretation and visitor awareness/education
Outcomes	Natural resource management	Extent to which weed impacts on park values are being controlled
		Extent to which pest animal impacts on park values are being controlled
		Extent to which fire is being managed to meet ecological and cultural heritage management objectives for park
		Condition of threatened species in park
		Condition of nominated principal natural resource values
		Whether change in condition of natural resource values can be attributed to management actions
		Condition of nominated wilderness resource values
		Whether change in condition of wilderness resource values can be attributed to management actions
	Social/cultural management	Extent to which visitor impacts on park values are being controlled
		Extent to which impacts on indigenous heritage values are being controlled
		Extent to which impacts on cultural heritage values are being controlled
		Condition of nominated principal indigenous heritage values
		Whether change in condition of indigenous heritage values can be attributed to management actions
		Condition of nominated principal historic heritage values
		Whether change in condition of historic heritage values can be attributed to management actions
	Other values	Condition of other nominated park values
		Whether change in condition of other park values can be attributed to management actions
	Law enforcement	Extent to which impacts of illegal activities on park values are being controlled
	Visitor information	Extent to which visitor and information needs are being met through awareness/education programs

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1.9 Scoring and analysis

The methodology uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Most qualitative indicators are scored on a four point ordinal descriptive scale. In addition to the rating on this scale, information is collected on the justification for the rating that is given, the sources of information used in making the assessment, the proposed actions to be taken in relation to the issue over the coming twelve months, and the extent to which actions for the previous twelve months had been achieved.

Analysis can be conducted on individual sites or, more commonly, on groups of sites or the whole system of protected areas. Performance can be reported on a site or area basis (i.e. the number of sites performing at a specific level or the percentage area of the total estate in different performance categories). Correlation and pattern analysis across a dataset for a protected area system can identify possible factors influencing park management performance.