

Action Plan for Implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Protected area information:

PoWPA Focal Point:

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Lead implementing agency:

In Trinidad the lead agency is the Forestry Division, Ministry of Housing and the Environment. In Tobago the lead agency is the Tobago House of Assembly.

Multi-stakeholder committee: (Add description)

Various multi-sectoral committees have been established, with representatives from government, and civil society, to advise on and assist with coordinating the management of protected areas. Some of the committees are specifically mandated by enabling legislation (e.g. the Wildlife Conservation Committee under the Conservation of Wild Life Act, Chap. 67:01) or were established by Cabinet to achieve a specific purpose, while others may be *ad hoc* in nature. These committees include:

Wildlife Conservation Committee: to advise the Minister on all matters pertaining to the conservation of wildlife in Trinidad and Tobago;

Interim Management Committee of the San Fernando Hill Natural Landmark: to establish policy guidelines, make recommendations for facility management services, establish an appropriate fee structure, and advise/determine rental and lease fees for lands and facilities acquired by the State;

Honorary Game Wardens' Administrative Committee: to advise and report to the Minister on activities of the Honorary Game Warden Programme and develop and administer the programmes, activities, funding and human resource management (appointment, disciplinary procedures, termination) of the Honorary Game Warden Programme;

National Wetlands Committee: to provide technical and scientific advice on wetlands conservation, management and wise use; to advise on, coordinate, and oversee activities for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention; to formulate and review development plans and management plans, and to develop and implement education/public awareness programmes. The National Wetlands Committee proposes to create **Local Wetlands Committees** for individual wetlands;

Caroni Swamp National Park and Bird Sanctuary Management Committee: to direct the management and affairs of the protected area, including financial planning and fee collection, advertising and promotion and educational programmes; and

ESA Stakeholder Management Committees (SMCs): established by the EMA's Board of Directors under the Environmental Management Act Chap. 35:05 (No. 3 of 2000) and the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Rules (2001) for each ESA. These are jointly chaired by the EMA and the relevant legal management authority and include representatives from key government agencies, nongovernmental organisations, (NGOs), community based organisations (CBOs) and academic institutions. At present, there is no private sector representation. They primarily have an advisory role, although discussions to expand this role are ongoing in existing SMCs. It should be noted that there is no formal specific legislative arrangement in place that will allow an EMA established SMC to provide advice to other Government agencies that are involved in PA management.

Note: A role is also played by **Boards established to direct Statutory Authorities**, for example the Chaguaramas Development Authority.

Description of protected area system

National Targets and Vision for Protected Areas

(Insert national targets for protected areas/Target 11 of the Aichi Targets. Include rationale from protected area gap assessment, if completed, along with any additional information about the vision for the protected area system, including statements about the value of the protected area system to the country)

The Importance of Protected Areas in Trinidad and Tobago

- **Protection of Biodiversity:** The primary reason of establishing PAs is the conservation of genetic diversity, species, ecosystems and natural habitats and as a tool for the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of rare or threatened species in their natural environment.
- **Ecosystem Goods and Services:** PAs support the ability of ecosystems to provide a wide range of goods and services. Goods include food (such as game animals, fish and plant products), timber, craft materials, medicinal plants and other forms of biodiversity directly used by people. Ecosystem services include wildlife habitats, the formation, conservation and stabilisation of soil, removal of carbon dioxide from the air, watershed and coastline protection, provision of water, maintenance of natural processes such as pollination that are important to agricultural systems, climate regulation, and maintenance of physical buffers to natural disasters. PAs also support a variety of valuable non-consumptive uses including tourism, recreation, education, non-destructive scientific research and spiritual activities. In addition, PAs also protect biodiversity for its intrinsic value.
- **Facilitating International Cooperation:** Regional or trans-boundary PAs enable countries to cooperate in the protection of ecosystems (e.g. Meso-American corridor and the regional marine PA known as the Caribbean Seas Initiative).
- **Meeting International Obligations:** International obligations under multi-lateral environmental agreements (MEAs¹) can give rise to the international designation of protected natural areas in Trinidad and Tobago. This places added priority on the protection of such internationally recognized areas, and requires the country to ensure that such PAs receive protection under national legislation.

¹ MEAs include the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Protocol Concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (or SPAW Protocol), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

- Building Resilience to Climate Change:** Small islands such as Trinidad and Tobago are especially vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change. This vulnerability provides an additional justification for designation and effective management of PAs, because they provide significant ecosystem services that can contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Adaptation measures facilitate coping and recovering from the impacts of climate change. In this regard, PAs can function as buffers against the impacts of catastrophic weather events and in protecting water resources in the face of changing weather patterns, including rainfall reduction. Mitigation measures enable the removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. PAs function as natural greenhouse gas sinks, particularly protected forests and wetlands. PAs can also be used to secure well functioning and robust ecosystems that are resilient to climate change impacts such as temperature changes and changes in rainfall patterns, and thereby continue to provide necessary ecosystem services in spite of climatic change.

Vision for Protected Areas in Trinidad and Tobago

The establishment of an integrated system of PAs that ensures conservation of the full diversity of natural ecosystems in Trinidad and Tobago whilst allowing for the sustainable use of these resources and providing equitable access to opportunities for their recreational, educational, research, cultural, spiritual/religious and sustainable livelihoods.

Targets

Designate five new protected areas with combined coverage of 35,000 ha

Coverage

(Amount and % protected for terrestrial and marine; maps of protected area system)

The total terrestrial protected area under jurisdiction of the State is approximately 164,167 ha or about 32% of the combined land area of Trinidad and Tobago. These protected areas include: nature reserves, game sanctuaries, and forest reserves. National parks are also found within the forest reserves or may include game sanctuaries.

In terms of marine protected areas (MPA), only one legally declared MPA, the Buccoo Reef Marine Park (about 7km² ha) currently exists in the country.

Marine Area of Archipelagic Waters:	about 7 158 km ²	About 0.1% protected
Marine Area of Territorial Sea:	about 9 337 km ²	About 0.07% protected

Description and background

(Summary description)

Since the 1970s there have been various attempts to create a system of PAs in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1972, a Multi-Ministerial National Environment Conservation Council (NECC) was established, which recommended the establishment of a Statutory Authority with responsibility for national parks and wildlife conservation. This proposed National Parks Service would reside within the Forestry Division and the manage National Parks at Navet Dam, Valencia Dam and Caroni Wildlife Sanctuary. It was also proposed that the National Parks Service would develop and manage a wider park system including Forest Parks, Local Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Nature Reserves, Historical Sites, View Points and Private Parks.

In 1978, the Organization of American States (OAS) assisted Trinidad and Tobago in developing a plan for a national parks and protected areas system and in the preparation of a policy from which enabling legislation could be enacted. The resulting National Parks Systems Plan included sixty-one PAs in six categories (thirteen scientific reserves, eight national parks, eight natural landmarks, thirteen nature conservation reserves, six scenic landscapes and thirteen recreational parks). A Policy for the Establishment and Management of a National Parks System in Trinidad and Tobago was approved by the Government in 1982 and is commonly referred to as the 1980 Systems Plan. While this Policy currently guides the Forestry Division activities concerning PAs, the enabling legislative and institutional changes recommended by the plan were never implemented.

Draft Forest Resource and National Park Conservation Bill, including Regulations and Model Conservation Area Regulations were prepared and released for comment in 1990. This legislation was never enacted. In 1991, a Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) reviewed the 1980 National Parks System Plan and the Draft Legislation, and recommended funding of a 5-year Development Project for a National Parks and Protected Areas System under TFAP programme. However, no funding materialized for this development project.

In 1992, the Inter-American Development Bank Land Rationalization and Development Programme served as the genesis of a National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Programme, which included a five-year protected area development project. This project was designed to kick-start the original OAS Systems Plan and drew on the prioritization of areas in the Forestry Resources Policy. The proposed project aimed to strengthen the Forestry Division's National Parks Section through technical assistance and staffing. The project was to be funded under the Inter-American Development Bank-funded Investment Sector Reform Programme and Agriculture Sector Investment Programme.

In 1993, the World Bank took over the development of the protected areas project. The National Parks Project then became the Protect Areas and Wildlife Management Project. In 1995, the Government established a Project Task Force to oversee and coordinate the preparation of the World Bank Project. The Project focused on the creation of three (3) national parks at Matura and Maracas in Trinidad, and Main Ridge in Tobago, and two (2) marine/coastal protected areas at Nariva in Trinidad and Speyside in Tobago, as well as the creation of a National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Authority.

A World Bank funded revised plan for national parks in Trinidad and Tobago, which was based on current scientific thinking and management practice, was approved by the Cabinet in 1996 but subsequently stalled due to contention surrounding the establishment of a new institution to manage these national parks.

In 1997, a Bill was drafted for the Establishment of a National Parks and Wildlife Authority in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1999, the Bill was separated into a National Parks and other Protected Areas Bill and the Conservation of Wild Life Bill. The fact that PAs were coupled with Forests in the 1990 Draft Bill, then with Wildlife in the 1997 Draft Bill, and subsequently emerged on its own in the 1999 Draft Bills illustrates the policy vacuum in which the draft legislation was being prepared. This contention dogged the Protected Areas legislation due to a lack of a policy basis for key provisions, particularly the designation of a body to administer the system of PAs, and the areas of the country to be declared protected areas.

The Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Rules that were enacted in 2001, has been utilized to address the legislative gap by designation of areas in need of protection and their classification into various management categories. However, these Rules exist in the absence of primary legislation for the establishment of a system of PAs, which is still needed to provide an administrative system for the management of PAs. Additionally, as subsidiary legislation the Rules cannot supersede the provisions of existing primary legislation governing the existing types of land use, such as the Forests Act (Chap. 66:01), Conservation of Wild Life Act (Chap. 67:01) and State Lands Act (Chap. 57:01). This imposes severe limitations on the efficacy of the ESA rules, particularly with regard to the administration of protected areas.

The numerous attempts by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to create a system of national parks and other protected areas in Trinidad and Tobago, has been hampered by the absence of enabling legislation to implement a comprehensive systematic approach to wildlife, national parks and other protected areas management.

The overriding reason for the inability to finalize the National Parks Bill has been the lack of national consensus on key elements of the protected areas system, primarily, the administrative structure for managing parks and wildlife. This problem stems from the fact that a National Parks and Wildlife Policy - a necessary prerequisite to drafting of enabling legislation - is outdated.

Trinidad and Tobago has several legally designated protected areas, along with categories that have evolved without legal status, which are outlined hereunder:

Legally Designated Protected Areas in Trinidad and Tobago

The protected areas categories that have legal status include:

- (a) **Forest Reserves** designated under the Crown Lands Act, which is now the State Lands Act (Chap. 57:01). These reserves were established to manage timber resources by imposing fines, restrictions and the use of permits to regulate extraction of high-grade timber species. There are 36 such areas in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (b) **Wildlife or Game Sanctuaries** are designated under the Conservation of Wild Life Act (Chap. 67:01); there are 13 in Trinidad and Tobago. They are intended to protect wild animal species by restricting hunting and collection of animals in and from such sanctuaries;
- (c) One **Protected Marine Area**, the Buccoo Reef, Tobago, was designated under the Marine Areas (Preservation and Enhancement) Act (Chap. 37:02) to preserve and enhance the natural beauty; protect the flora and fauna; promote the enjoyment by the public; and promote scientific study and research;
- (d) The **North-West Peninsula of Trinidad** is vested in the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA), which is responsible for the management of the biological resources contained in the forests and marine areas of the lands vested to it. In this regard, the Authority manages the Chaguaramas Peninsula (including the offshore islands and the marine area) primarily for recreational use, as a de-factor national park;
- (e) Two categories of **Prohibited Areas** exist under law in Trinidad and Tobago. There are 19 prohibited areas designated under the Forests Act (Chap. 66:01) with restricted entry either for set period of year (e.g. at certain nesting beaches during sea turtle nesting season from 01 March to 31 August), or throughout the year (e.g. Aripo Savannas). Some Prohibited Areas include areas that were also declared as Forest Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries. The Fisheries Act (Chap. 67:51) also provides for the declaration of prohibited areas that may be used to protect spawning grounds of commercially important species, however, no such areas have been declared;
- (f) **Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)** are designated under the Environmental Management Act's (Chap. 35:05) Environmentally Sensitive Areas Rules, for the conservation and management of biologically significant areas. To date, three have been declared and five further areas are proposed and are at different stages of the approval process. They are intended to serve several objectives relating to biodiversity, species, ecosystem and livelihoods conservation, fulfilling international obligations and the promotion of scientific research. The existing and proposed ESAs include Ramsar-designated wetlands of international importance (Buccoo

Reef, Nariva Swamp and Caroni Swamp) the Aripo Savannas and the Main Ridge Forest Reserve;

- (g) Two (2) areas protected under the Water and Sewerage Authority Act (Chap. 54:40) – the upper Courland River Basin in Tobago (above the intake) and the Quare River valley in Valencia (between the Hollis Dam and the intake). These areas are protected only in so far as potentially polluting activities are prohibited within the designated area.
- (h) Some 100 sites were inventoried for designation as **heritage sites** under the National Heritage Trust Act (Chap. 40:53), which was developed to protect any monument and any fossil, place or site of natural beauty or national, historic, scientific or archaeological interest. However, no designations have been made to date. Three of the proposed heritage sites are under international consideration for designation as UNESCO World Heritage Sites;

Other Categories of Protected Areas in Trinidad and Tobago

In addition to the *de jure* categories identified above, there are several *de facto* PAs that are managed by government, civil society and private citizens. These include:

- (a) **Un-proclaimed Forest Reserves** that are managed by Forestry Division but are legally classified as State Lands, there are five such sites in Trinidad and Tobago;
- (b) A **Natural Landmark**, the San Fernando Hill, is managed by the Forestry Division as proposed under the 1980 Systems Plan. It was never legally designated;
- (c) Fort George and Lopinot are managed as **Historic Sites** as proposed under the 1980 Systems Plan and are not legally designated;
- (d) Cleaver Woods is managed by the Forestry Division as a **Recreation Park**, one of the proposed areas under the 1980 Systems Plan, but both the site and the category have not been legally designated; and
- (e) **National Heritage Parks** were proposed and are being partially implemented by the Local Government including the Devils' Woodyard. However, there is no legal status for such parks.

Governance types

(Summary matrix of governance types)

Most of the protected areas in Trinidad and Tobago are under the jurisdiction of the Government and many are managed by government paid staff. Few protected areas are privately owned and managed, and fewer still are managed in partnership with an NGO or private sector.

Key threats

(Description of key threats, and maps, if available)

Threats to Natural Heritage in Trinidad and Tobago

Protecting the country's natural heritage is increasingly important in the face of the driving factors that are destroying and degrading natural ecosystems including:

- increased rates of conversion of natural ecosystems to built development (industrial, commercial and residential);
- unsustainable agricultural practices such as slash and burn, leading to loss of natural ecosystems especially on hillsides and critical watersheds;
- expansion of roads, utility networks, oil and gas pipelines and other infrastructure in a manner that increases fragmentation of natural ecosystems;
- intentional or accidental destruction of forest by fire, resulting in a fire climax which prevents natural regeneration of the native vegetation type;
- invasion by non-native species into native ecosystems (e.g. elephant grass invades burnt forested areas and forms a "fire-climax", bamboo invades forest);
- over-exploitation of biodiversity resources (e.g. over-hunting of wildlife, unsustainable timber harvest, over-fishing and over-extraction of orchids and other ornamental plants);
- the impacts of pollution and climate change on natural ecosystems.

These have resulted in various negative impacts including:

- escalating habitat degradation and fragmentation and loss of natural ecosystems (e.g. forests, savannas, coral reefs), including loss of habitats for plant and animal species;
- declining populations of key animal and plant species, with several becoming threatened or endangered (e.g. ocelot [*Leopardus pardalis*], West Indian manatee [*Trichechus manatus*], black coral [*Antipatharians* spp.]), Blue and Gold Macaw [*Ara ararauna*]), or confined to remote and isolated areas (e.g. Pawi or Trinidad Piping-Guan [*Pipile pipile*]);

- decreasing quality and quantity of water generated for human usage due to the degradation of watersheds; and
- increased possibilities for transmission of diseases such as Yellow Fever due to human encroachment into forested areas.

Barriers for effective implementation

(Description of key barrier s for effective implementation)

There have been several challenges to the establishment and management of a comprehensive system of protected areas including:

- **Outdated Legislation:** although there are legally designated PAs in Trinidad and Tobago, they have been designated under legislation that is outdated and requires revision to reflect current management practices including: the use of the ecosystem approach; recognition of the value of ecosystem services; the need for minimum areas for conservation of viable species populations; participatory management; zoning for multiple use; implementation of international commitments; and addressing the impacts of climate change;
- **Outdated Policy:** The only existing comprehensive policy on PAs is the “Policy for the Establishment and Management of a National Parks System in Trinidad and Tobago”, which is now twenty-seven (27) years old having been developed in 1982, and needs to be revised to reflect the current national socio-economic context. In addition, many of the sixty-one (61) potential PAS identified in the Policy, are now degraded. Finally, there have been several policy, legislative and institutional changes since 1982, including the development of the National Environmental Policy (2005), passage of the Environmental Management Act (Chap. 35:05) and the establishment of Environmental Management Authority.
- **Lack of a Current National Land Use Planning Framework:** to address the zoning of the country for multiple land use which would ensure balance between the need for designation of areas to protect biodiversity (including to maintain ecosystem services) and demands for built development.
- **Multiple Legal Designations:** several PAs have been designated under multiple categories. This state of affairs reflects successive attempts to address weaknesses in the enforcement, monitoring and surveillance, administrative, and legislative framework for managing PAs. For example, the Aripo Savannas has been declared a Prohibited Area as well as an ESA and is being managed by the Forestry Division as a “Scientific Reserve”.

- **Multiple Managers of a Protected Area, Each Providing Different Functions:** Multiple designations have complicated administrative arrangements, with multiple agencies having various roles and responsibilities for the management of a particular PA. Thus, management often involves a variety of government agencies and other stakeholders which complicates the overall management and protection of the site particularly the enforcement, monitoring and surveillance of the enabling legislation for the PA. This challenge is reviewed in detail in section 1.3.

Status, priority and timeline for key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

Status of key actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on assessing gaps in the protected area network (1.1) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing protected area integration (1.2) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in establishing transboundary protected areas and regional networks (1.3) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in developing site-level management plans (1.4) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing threats and opportunities for restoration (1.5) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing equitable sharing of benefits (2.1) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing protected area governance (2.1) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing the participation of indigenous and local communities in key protected area decisions (2.2) 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing the policy environment for establishing and managing protected areas (3.1) 	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing the values of protected areas (3.1) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing protected area capacity needs (3.2) 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing the appropriate technology needs (3.3) 	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress in assessing protected area sustainable finance needs (3.4) 	0

• Progress in conducting public awareness campaigns (3.5)	2
• Progress in developing best practices and minimum standards (4.1)	0
• Progress in assessing management effectiveness (4.2)	0
• Progress in establishing an effective PA monitoring system (4.3)	0
• Progress in developing a research program for protected areas (4.4)	2
• Progress in assessing opportunities for marine protection	2
• Progress in incorporating climate change aspects into protected areas	0

Status: 0 = no work, 1 = just started, 2 = partially complete, 3 = nearly complete, 4 = complete

(Insert notes as appropriate)

Priority actions for fully implementing the Programme of Work on Protected Areas:

(Insert priority actions)

1. Improvements to legal and institutional arrangements for protected areas management.
2. Development and testing of sustainable financing system.
3. Monitoring, evaluation and information dissemination.

Timeline for completion of key actions

(Insert timeline)

The priority actions listed above will be implemented over a four year period beginning in October 2012. A Project Identification Form (PIF) was recently submitted to the GEF and approved for full sized project funding.

Action Plans for completing priority actions of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas

(Insert detailed action plans)

Action 1: Improvements to legal and institutional arrangements for protected areas management.

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget (USD)
1.1 National legislation enacted for wildlife conservation, national parks and other protected areas.	2014	Ministry of Housing and the Environment	20,000
1.2 National protected areas system plan agreed and published (130,000ha).	2015		80,000
1.3 A minimum of five new sites designated as formal protected areas under the new legislation (expected to cover about 35,000 ha)	2016		15,000
1.4 National Forest and Protected Areas Management Authority staff (about 100) trained in current best practices in protected area management and biodiversity conservation.	2015		40,000
1.5 Management plans produced for the five pilot sites.	2014		80,000
1.6 Threats to biodiversity conservation identified and appropriate actions taken.	2015		60,000

Action 2: Development and testing of sustainable financing system.

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget (USD)
2.1 National Forest and Protected Areas (NFPA) Fund established through legislation and board of trustees appointed.	2016	Ministry of Housing and the Environment	25,000
2.2 Operating procedures and manuals agreed and produced	2014		30,000
2.3 National Forest and Protected Areas Management Authority staff (70) trained in operation of the new system.	2015		10,000
2.4 Senior staff and protected area managers (25) trained in budget planning, PES and other innovative financing techniques.	2015		10,000
2.5 Funding requirements for management of protected area system assessed and agreed.	2016		10,000
2.6 Strategic plan for sustainable financing produced.	2016		20,000
2.7 System of user fees designed, piloted and operating in two protected areas.	2016		30,000
2.8 NFPA fund capitalised by implementation of the new financing system.	2017		200,000

Action 3: Monitoring, evaluation and information dissemination.

Key steps	Timeline	Responsible parties	Indicative budget
3.1 Management Information System (MIS) developed and implemented for protected area monitoring and assessment and reporting to international conventions.	2015	Ministry of Housing and the Environment	80,000
3.2 Ecological research and monitoring programme to guide protected area management prepared.	2014		15,000
3.3 Public education and awareness programme redesigned and implemented.	2015		60,000
3.4. Project monitoring system operating providing systematic information on progress in meeting project outcome and output targets.	2016		20,000
3.5 Project-related “best-practices” and “lessons-learned” evaluated and published.	2017		25,000
3.6 Website to share the experience and information dissemination.	2015		15,000

(Insert more as needed)

Key assessment results

Ecological gap assessment (insert summary findings if available)

N/A

Management effectiveness assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

N/A

Sustainable finance assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

N/A

Capacity needs assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

From NCSA?

Policy environment assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

New National Protected Areas Policy and National Forest Policy approved by Government in 2011.

Protected area integration and mainstreaming assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

N/A

Protected area valuation assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

N/A

Climate change resilience and adaptation assessment (Insert summary findings if available)

N/A

(Insert other assessment results if available)