

AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM: PROTECTED AREAS

U.S. FOREST SERVICE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Across Africa and the Middle East, the U.S. Forest Service cooperates with partners to improve protected area management on a number of fronts, including strengthening biodiversity conservation and sustainable forest management in a multiple use environment.

The U.S. Forest Service works both on the ground – with land managers and park conservationists, communities, NGOs and the private sector – as well as with national headquarter staff to strengthen sustainable management of national parks, wildlife reserves and corridors, community forests, and other types of protected areas.

U.S. Forest Service personnel provide technical cooperation and capacity building on issues such as landscape level land use planning and zoning; park management plans; buffer-zone strategies; community engagement, fire management; and trail, tourism, and interpretive program development.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State support U.S. Forest Service programs abroad.

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BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

According to the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (2014), protected areas cover approximately 15.4% of the world's land area (and 3.4% of the global ocean area). Not one of the thousands of protected areas in the world is exactly alike, as each differs to some extent in form and function. Some protected areas seek to preserve wilderness in its purest form, restricting recreational activity in the interest of limiting anthropogenic disturbance, while others allow upwards of millions of visitors a year for an array of pursuits. Further, many protected areas exist to provide a service beyond an intangible value, be it economic (e.g., timber), ecological (e.g., biodiversity conservation), or a mixture of both (e.g., provision of water, erosion control, disturbance mitigation, and others). Whatever the case, protected areas exist for multiple reasons and it follows that such diversity in purpose necessitates multiple management approaches and skill sets. Sound protected area management requires a diverse technical skillset, engagement of a broad suite of key stakeholders, and coordination across multiple sectors, among other things – a confluence of factors that is often challenging for national agencies charged with managing its varied and dispersed protected area network.

The U.S. Forest Service manages over 80 million hectares of protected forests and grasslands, making it one of the largest protected area management agencies in the world. This protected area network is, in some ways, a microcosm of the global protected area network – approximately 14 million hectares of U.S. Forest Service lands are “wilderness” lands (IUCN category 1a and 1b) while the remainder of other protected lands are a mosaic of other management tiers, such as community managed, extractive, tourism based, and others. In other words, the U.S. Forest Service manages a true “multiple use” protected area network. This multiple use approach underpins the U.S. Forest Service philosophy to protected area management.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Forest Service provides short- and long-term technical advisors to work with partner institutions on a range of protected area management issues, including capacity building, institutional strengthening, eco-tourism, cross-sector management plans, and other issues. U.S. Forest Service experts work across all management tiers, partnering with national agencies that direct and implement policy all while working with other key stakeholders like communities, civil society, and the private sector.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT AREAS

Institutional Organization and Capacity Building

As a national land management agency with over 100 years of experience, the U.S. Forest Service has extensive experience in protected area management and is uniquely placed to work collaboratively with other countries' land management agencies as an implementing peer. With more than 35 thousand employees, the



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U.S. Forest Service has experts in every technical discipline related to protected area management. International technical cooperation fosters institution-to-institution partnership and exchanges that benefit all sides, providing different perspectives and context for best practices and lessons learned in protected area management.

Land-Use Planning & Zoning

Protected areas are discrete, precisely mapped zones that must account for resources that may not always conform to those zones, like water and wildlife. A landscape scale planning approach helps to incorporate a more expansive, ecosystem-based view.

In **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** and the **Congo Basin**, the U.S. Forest Service works with the Forest Zoning Department to facilitate improved coordination with surrounding commercial and community zones. U.S. Forest Service experts worked with national park staff in **Gabon** to design a buffer zone strategy to management and planning.

In **Kenya**, the U.S. Forest Service implements the Kenya Water Tower Climate Change Resilience Program, a USAID-supported effort that centers on developing data and capacities for improved management of three of Kenya's five major water towers, an area that includes all or significant portions of two national parks, two national reserves, and 43 forest reserves.

Tourism & Recreation

The U.S. Forest Service operates a variety of tourism, recreational, and interpretive programs on its lands, including ski resorts, guide contracts, historic building management, and environmental education, among others; needless to say U.S. Forest Service experts have a diverse range of skills.

In **Uganda**, the U.S. Forest Service provided trail management and tourism expertise in Kidepo Valley National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Rwenzori National Park, Lake Mburo National Park, and Kalinzu Forest Reserve. U.S. Forest Service experts trained **Angolan** park staff and helped design flyers, brochures, and field guides for eco-guards. The U.S. Forest Service partners with the Wildlife Conservation Society on ecotourism trail development within Makira Biega national Park in **Madagascar** and Kabuzi Biega National Park in **DRC**.

U.S. Forest Service experts help design park tourism infrastructure – including roads, buildings, and trails – in **Gabon's** Pangora and Lope National Parks,

Fire Management

U.S. Forest Service technical expertise in fire management is world renowned. Natural and manmade fire is both an ecological necessity and danger to many protected areas. Fire management requires substantial resources, up-to-date science and research, and organization. The U.S. Forest Service works with protected area agencies to prepare and implement fire management plans to main ecological health and protect biodiverse areas.

In **Zambia**, U.S. Forest Service experts worked with the Government and The Nature Conservancy to better understand fire ecology and develop a fire management for Kafue National Park. In partnership with the Carr Foundation, USAID, and the Government of **Mozambique**, U.S. Forest Service experts similarly work with the Gorongosa Park staff on fire management and prevention. In **Malawi**, U.S. Forest Service experts helped establish and sustain an in-country network of fire management specialists across multiple sectors.

Community Engagement

Protected areas are linked, if not interlaced, with communities. Sound protected area management demands community engagement. Human-wildlife conflict, economic development, traditional uses, and recreation are important issues to local populations around protected areas.

In **West Africa**, U.S. Forest Service experts work with local governments and partners around the Outamba-Kilimi national Park and the Mount Nimba world Heritage Nature Reserve to support community forestry and co-management of buffer zones for sustainable livelihood development.

Scientific Research

The U.S. Forest Service works with a variety of government partners, universities, and research institutions to advance ecological and climate change research that affect protected areas. Current examples of such research include work in **Tanzania**, the **Republic of Congo**, and **Mozambique**.