



Site-level tool for identifying other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)

Harry D. Jonas, Kathy MacKinnon, Daniel Marnewick and Pete Wood

First edition



IUCN WCPA Technical Report Series No 6



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IUCN PROTECTED AREA DEFINITION, MANAGEMENT CATEGORIES AND GOVERNANCE TYPES

IUCN defines a protected area 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.

The definition is expanded by six management categories (one with a sub-division), summarized below.

Ia Strict nature reserve: Strictly protected for biodiversity and also possibly geological/ geomorphological features, where human visitation, use and impacts are controlled and limited to ensure protection of the conservation values.

Ib Wilderness area: Usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, protected and managed to preserve their natural condition.

II National park: Large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems, which also have environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

III Natural monument or feature: Areas set aside to protect a specific natural monument, which can be a landform, sea mount, marine cavern, geological feature such as a cave, or a living feature such as an ancient grove.

IV Habitat/species management area: Areas to protect particular species or habitats, where management reflects this priority. Many will need regular, active interventions to meet the needs of particular species or habitats, but this is not a requirement of the category.

V Protected landscape or seascape: Where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced a distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

VI Protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources: Areas which conserve ecosystems, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. Generally large, mainly in a natural condition, with a proportion under sustainable natural resource management and where low-level non-industrial natural resource use compatible with nature conservation is seen as one of the main aims.

The category should be based around the primary management objective(s), which should apply to at least three-quarters of the protected area – the 75 per cent rule.

The management categories are applied with a typology of governance types – a description of who holds authority and responsibility for the protected area. IUCN defines four governance types.

Type A. Governance by government: Federal or national ministry/agency in charge; sub-national ministry or agency in charge (e.g. at regional, provincial, municipal level); government-delegated management (e.g. to NGO).

Type B. Shared governance: Trans-boundary governance (formal and informal arrangements between two or more countries); collaborative governance (through various ways in which diverse actors and institutions work together); joint governance (pluralist board or other multi-party governing body).

Type C. Private governance: Conserved areas established and run by individual landowners; non-profit organisations (e.g. NGOs, universities) and for-profit organisations (e.g. corporate landowners).

Type D. Governance by Indigenous peoples and local communities: Indigenous peoples' conserved areas and territories - established and run by Indigenous peoples; community conserved areas – established and run by local communities.

For more information on the IUCN definition, categories and governance types see Dudley (2013). *Guidelines for applying protected area management categories*, which can be downloaded at: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/30018>

For more on governance types, see Borrini-Feyerabend, et al., (2013). *Governance of Protected Areas: From understanding to action*, which can be downloaded at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/29138>

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<https://www.bfn.de/en>



UNEP-WCMC

The UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) is a global centre of excellence on biodiversity and nature's contribution to society and the economy.

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wwf.panda.org

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Cover photo: Neville Yapp (LEAP Spiral) facilitates a participatory mapping exercise in Abai village, which is situated within the Lower Kinabatangan-Segama Wetlands Ramsar Site (Sabah, Malaysia). The site is the largest contiguous coastal and mangrove ecosystem in the Sulu Sea, providing critical habitat to several of Sabah's threatened and endangered species, such as Borneo elephant, orangutan, proboscis monkey, sun bear, banteng, Sunda clouded leopard, Irrawaddy dolphin, and eight species of hornbill. The area includes government-governed protected areas, privately conserved riparian reserves, and is home to Indigenous peoples and local communities, who live in eight villages – including Abai – and manage their resources using traditional ecological knowledge. The interplay of terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems creates highly dynamic local ecological conditions, which are important for biodiversity and provide ecosystem benefits to over a million people through fisheries, agriculture and tourism. © Harry D. Jonas.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are sites outside protected areas that deliver effective and long-term *in situ* conservation of biodiversity. Biodiversity conservation may be the primary objective of the site, a secondary objective of a site that is managed for other purposes, or it may be an unintended consequence of the way the site is managed. OECMs may be governed and managed by governments, private entities or Indigenous peoples and local communities, or a combination of these.

This tool guides an assessor through three steps to apply eight criteria which determine if a site qualifies as an OECM as set out under the Convention on Biological Diversity. For sites which do not currently meet all the criteria, the tool serves to highlight areas where further information or improvements in governance and management are required.

OECMs are integral to national commitments under Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and contribute to many other targets. They can be reported to the World Database on OECMs, held by UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Identification and reporting of an OECM is voluntary, and should be done by, or with the consent of, the governing authority, any Indigenous peoples and local communities whose self-identified territory overlaps with the site, and, where relevant, other rights-holders and stakeholders.

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Many members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas Specialist Group on OECMs provided inputs on the two drafts of the tool, and to the revision process leading to the publication of this first edition.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IP&LC	Indigenous peoples and local communities
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECM	Other effective area-based conservation measure
PA	Protected area
UNEP-WCMC	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WD-OECM	World Database on OECMs
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas

INTRODUCTION

Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) are sites outside protected areas that deliver effective and long-term *in situ* conservation¹ of biodiversity.

This site-level assessment tool enables users to **determine whether an individual site qualifies as an OECM** by assessing it against the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) definition and criteria (CBD decision 14/8) and IUCN guidance.

Examples of the reasons for identifying a site as an OECM include the following: to recognise the site's importance for biodiversity conservation, to recognise the conservation efforts of the governing authority (including indigenous territories), to involve stakeholders in protection and management, to leverage access to additional support for conservation, where it is available, and to fulfil national and international commitments, including under the CBD.

Who can use this tool to identify an OECM?

The assessment of a site as an OECM may be carried out by the site's **governing authority** (which may be government, Indigenous peoples and local communities,² private entities, or a combination of these groups) **or by another rights-holder or stakeholder** with the governing authority's consent.

The assessment should in all cases involve consultation with relevant Indigenous peoples, local communities and other rights holders, stakeholders and experts, for example through an assessment group and stakeholder workshops.

Sites that qualify as OECMs should be reported to UNEP-WCMC for inclusion in the World Database on OECMs (WD-OECM). OECMs reported by government are automatically added to the database, while reports from other entities are verified before being added.

The IUCN-WCPA Technical Report on OECMs (see key references, below) provides further information, definitions and explanations of how the CBD criteria are linked to the criteria in this tool.

The assessment tool consists of three steps (Figure 1):

- **Step 1: Screening** uses basic information on a site to determine whether it is a *potential OECM*.
- **Step 2: Consent** confirms that the governing authority, Indigenous peoples and local communities, and (as appropriate) other rights-holders have agreed to proceeding with the full assessment. Once these entities have given their approval for the process, the site is considered a *candidate OECM*.
- **Step 3: Full assessment** uses the defined criteria to confirm that the site meets the definition of an OECM. The full assessment contains six criteria, with a guiding question for each. The response to each guiding question can be 'yes', 'uncertain/partial', or 'no'.
 - ◆ A site with a **'yes' response to every criterion** is a *confirmed OECM*, subject to any stakeholder consent and approval by the governing authority.
 - ◆ A site with a combination of **'yes' and 'uncertain/partial' responses, or with all 'uncertain/partial' responses**, remains a *candidate OECM*, until further information or other changes allow it to be confirmed as an OECM.
 - ◆ A site with **one or more 'no' responses** is not *currently an OECM*, but might be re-assessed in the future if information suggests that the situation has changed.

¹ *In situ* conservation is defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity as 'The conservation of ecosystems and natural habitats and the maintenance and recovery of viable populations of species in their natural surroundings and, in the case of domesticated or cultivated species, in the surroundings where they have developed their distinctive properties.'

² This report follows IUCN's standard in capitalising the term Indigenous peoples.

Screening (step 1) may be carried out as a desk exercise. Consent for full assessment (step 2) should be freely given by the governing authority, as well as by any Indigenous peoples and local communities who use, claim, or own the site, and (as appropriate) by other rights-holders, before the full assessment process (step 3) is conducted.

The screening tool and full assessment have been designed with reference to the WD-OECM, simplifying the process of reporting data once the full assessment has been completed. Where applicable, instructions are given on how to complete the information in line with the WD-OECM data standards.

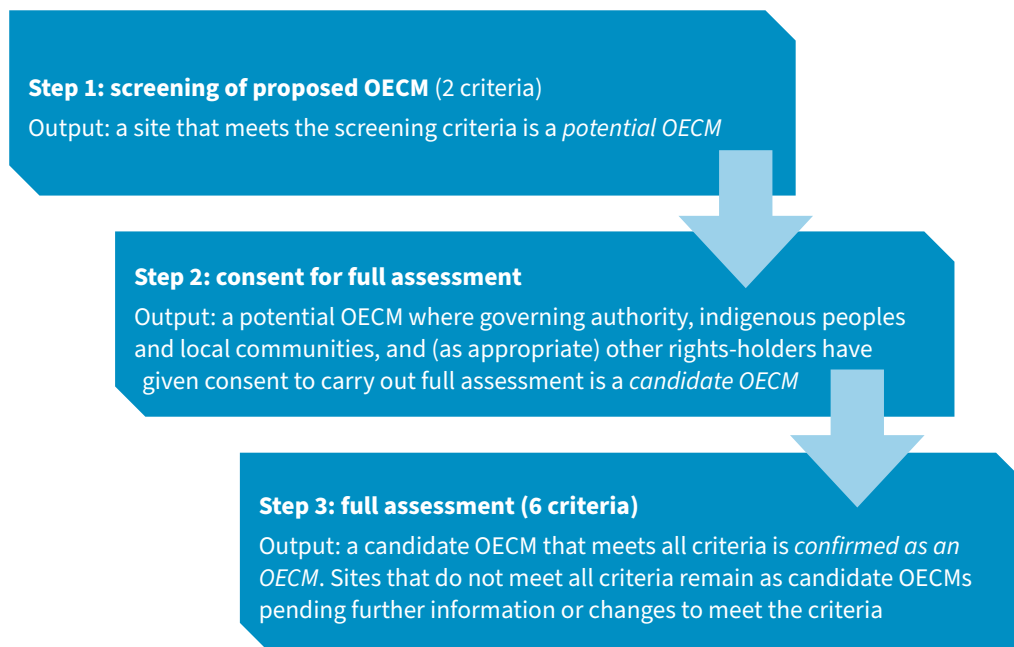


Figure 1: Illustration of the OECM site-level tool assessment process

Steps 1 and 2 can be carried out in any order, or combined.
Steps 1 and 2 should be completed before step 3 is implemented.

Key **references** for further information:

1. CBD decision 14/8 on protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (see paragraph 2 and Annex III of the decision). <http://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-14/cop-14-dec-08-en.pdf>
2. IUCN-WCPA Task Force on OECMs, (2019). *Recognising and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.: IUCN Protected Area Technical Report Series no 3. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2019.PATRS.3.en>
3. UNEP-WCMC (2019). *User Manual for the World Database on Protected Areas and world database on other effective area-based conservation measures: 1.6*. Cambridge, UK: UNEP-WCMC. http://wcmc.io/WDP_A_Manual
4. FAO (2022). *A handbook for identifying, evaluating and reporting other effective area-based conservation measures in marine fisheries*. Rome, Italy: FAO. <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc3307en/>
5. Further information and training materials are available on the WCPA OECM Specialist Group website, <https://www.iucn.org/commissions/world-commission-protected-areas/our-work/oecms>

STEP 1: SCREENING: IDENTIFYING A POTENTIAL OECM

1.1. PURPOSE

Step 1 records basic information and allows rapid assessment of a site, to determine whether it qualifies as a *potential OECM* through two screening criteria. To qualify, a site must score ‘yes’ for both screening criteria (see section 1.3).

1.2. INFORMATION NEEDED

Basic information on the site can be recorded using the following table:

INFORMATION REQUIRED	SITE DATA/RESPONSES
Site name:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site name (English) [Latin characters only: WD-OECM field = NAME] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site name in national or local language (if applicable) [WD-OECM field = ORIG_NAME, any language supported by UTF8] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporary site name or site code (if final name unavailable) 	
Site location:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country (countries) where site is located 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-national administrative division(s) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other description of location (e.g., name of a river, mountain, area) 	
Site designation (if applicable):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National or local designation of the site, national or local language [WD-OECM field = DESIG, any language supported by UTF8] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National or local designation of the site, English [WD-OECM field = DESIG_ENG, Latin characters only] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional or International designation linked to the site’s biodiversity value, e.g., Key Biodiversity Area, Ramsar site 	
Organisations/groups or individuals carrying out the screening process:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, address and contact details 	
Date of the screening	
Main biodiversity value(s):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the main important biodiversity values of the site (see criterion 2 for categories of biodiversity value and criterion 4 for further information) 	

1.3. SCREENING ASSESSMENT

TEST	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 1: The site is <u>not</u> a protected area (PA)	Is the site OUTSIDE any recognised PA?	YES (site is <u>not</u> within a recognised PA) NO (site <u>is</u> within a recognised PA)	<i>Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 1:

An OECM is a site that is NOT a recognised PA. The meaning of ‘recognised PA’ may vary from country to country, but the following guidance can be used:

- If a site (whatever the governance type) is recognised as a PA by a national or sub-national government agency that has the relevant mandate or authority, and meets the IUCN definition for a PA, then it is a PA and therefore is **NOT an OECM**.
- If a site is governed by a private, indigenous or community entity and meets the IUCN definition for a PA, and the governing authority recognises the site as a PA, then the site is a PA and therefore is **NOT an OECM**.
- A site that is a **proposed PA**, but is not yet recognised as a PA, in some cases **may be an OECM**. Recognition as an OECM may be appropriate for proposed PAs that are unlikely to be recognised as a PA in the short term, to give the site some recognition or protection. If an OECM is later recognised as a PA, data can be moved from the WD-OECM to the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA).
- If only part of the site is a recognised PA or overlaps with a recognised PA, then the part of the site outside the PA **may be a potential OECM**.
- If a site is **NOT** currently recognised as a PA by the governing authority, then it **may be a potential OECM**. However, in this case the following points apply:
 - A privately protected area (a PA under private governance by an individual, corporation or non-governmental organisation) that meets the IUCN definition of a PA should normally be reported to the WDPA as a PA. If the site is reported as a PA, then it is NOT an OECM. However, the private governing organisation may choose to report a site as an OECM instead of a PA.
 - A territory or area conserved by Indigenous peoples or local communities that meets the IUCN definition of a PA should normally be reported to the WDPA as a PA. If the site is reported as a PA, then it is NOT an OECM. However, the indigenous or community governing authority may choose to report the site as an OECM instead of as a PA.

Additional notes:

- Under the Convention on Biological Diversity, all PAs, whatever the governance type, should be reported to the WDPA, and all OECMs should be reported to the WD-OECM.
- If, as noted above, the governing authority chooses not to report a site that meets the criteria for PA as a PA, then it may be reported as an OECM, with the governing authority’s consent. Doing so may provide some recognition and protection and also may ensure that the site is included in relevant statistics.
- The recognition of a site as a PA or OECM can be updated in the future to accommodate changes in status. The WDPA and WD-OECM are interconnected and allow for simple assignment of a site to the ‘PA’ or ‘OECM’ category.

Further information:

Information on sites may be available from national databases and documents (e.g., the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan). Sites that have been reported to the WDPA and WD-OECM are displayed on the Protected Planet website: www.protectedplanet.net

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 2: There is a reasonable likelihood that the site supports important biodiversity values	<p>Does available information suggest that the site supports at least one of the following important biodiversity values?</p> <p>(a) Rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems</p> <p>(b) Natural ecosystems that are under-represented in protected area networks</p> <p>(c) High level of ecological integrity or intactness</p> <p>(d) Significant populations/extent of endemic or range-restricted species or ecosystems</p> <p>(e) Important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas</p> <p>(f) Importance for ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a larger area</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>NO</p>	<p>List the biodiversity values likely to be present, and briefly summarise the information that supports the response.</p>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 2:

- *At this screening stage, the assessor should select ‘yes’ if there is a reasonable likelihood that the site supports important biodiversity values. Further evidence is used to confirm the presence of important biodiversity values, if necessary, during the full assessment (step 3).*
- *‘Reasonable likelihood’ means, for example, (a) there are reports of important biodiversity values, including from indigenous and traditional knowledge holders, or (b) analysis suggests that important biodiversity values are likely to be present, for example if satellite imagery shows suitable intact habitat within the range of a threatened species or ecosystem.*
- *If a site is already recognised under an international biodiversity designation (for example, as a Key Biodiversity Area, or an Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Area), then it can be assumed to support important values and **may be a potential OECM.***

There is further guidance related to biodiversity values under step 3, criterion 4. Sources of biodiversity information are listed in the guidance for criterion 4.

1.4. NEXT STEPS

- **If the response to both criteria is ‘YES’, the site is a potential OECM.** The next step is to seek consent to carry out a full assessment (step 2), if this has not already been secured.
- **If the response to either of the criteria is ‘NO’, the site is NOT a potential OECM.** The assessment does not proceed further, but see the guidance on re-assessment in the Assessment Summary and Next Steps section at the end.

STEP 2: CONSENT FOR FULL ASSESSMENT

2.1. PURPOSE

In accordance with CBD decision 14/8, IUCN guidance and the operating procedures of the WD-OECM:

- If an OECM assessment is done by an entity other than the site’s governing authority, then the governing authority’s consent should be obtained for the assessment process, for the identification of the site as an OECM and for reporting the site as an OECM.
- Where a proposed OECM overlaps the self-identified territory of Indigenous peoples or a local community, their free, prior and informed consent should be obtained for the assessment and for reporting of the site as an OECM.

If necessary, consent may be in two stages: first consent for the assessment, and later consent for the site to be identified and reported as an OECM, if it qualifies.

In addition, the CBD guidance recommends consultation with other landowners, rights-holders, stakeholders, and the public.

2.2. INFORMATION NEEDED

Basic information on the stakeholders and governance of the site can be recorded using the following table:

INFORMATION REQUIRED	SITE DATA/RESPONSES
<p>Contact details for organisations/groups or individuals carrying out the full assessment</p>	
<p>Mandate or role of the organisation/group or individual carrying out the full assessment</p>	
<p>Governance or management of the site:</p>	
<p>Name and contact details of the governing authority (or authorities). Identify the representative of the governing authority for the site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The governing authority has a recognised mandate or right to make decisions on the overall management and use of the site ◆ The authority may be government, private entity, Indigenous peoples, local communities, or a combination of these. 	
<p>Name and contact details of any Indigenous peoples or local communities who claim ownership or rights in the site.</p>	
<p>Name and contact details of any other rights-holders or stakeholders who are involved in the process, for example government agencies, private sector or civil society organisations.</p>	

Governance type:

Identify the existing governance type for the site, using IUCN/WD-OECM categories:

- (a) Governance by government: *Federal or national ministry or agency, Sub-national ministry or agency, Government-delegated management* (e.g., to an NGO);
- (b) Shared governance: *Transboundary governance, Collaborative governance, Joint governance*;
- (c) Private governance: *Individual landowners, Non-profit organisations, For-profit organisations*;
- (d) Governance by *Indigenous peoples and Local communities*: Indigenous peoples conserved areas and territories, community conserved areas

[WD-OECM field = GOV_TYPE. Accepted values are italicised]

2.3. OBTAINING AND DOCUMENTING CONSENT

If the entity (organisation/group/individual) leading the assessment is not the governing authority, then the governing authority's written consent to the OECM assessment process should be obtained and documented.

If the site is used, owned or claimed by Indigenous peoples or local communities, then their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to the assessment process must be obtained and documented, with the involvement of legitimate representatives of the group(s).

Documentation of consent should include (a) dates and description of the consultation process, (b) information provided to the parties giving consent, (c) input received from parties giving consent, (d) name and position of representatives participating, and (e) proof of consent, such as a signed letter or agreement.

Documentation of consent should include any conditions agreed upon with the parties giving consent, such as specific requirements for participation or review before finalisation.

If other rights-holders and stakeholders are consulted, their input should be also documented.

Further resources on FPIC processes are available at <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/lands-forests-territories-law-policy-global-finance-trade/training-tool/2017/resources-free-prior> and at <https://www.fao.org/indigenous-peoples/our-pillars/fpic/en/>

2.4. NEXT STEPS

A potential OECM that has met the screening criteria (step 1) and for which the governing authority(ies) and other rights-holders have given their consent (if other rights-holders' consent is needed) for a full assessment to be carried out is referred to as a 'candidate OECM'. The candidate OECM should now be subject to a full assessment of the site against the OECM criteria (step 3).

STEP 3: THE FULL ASSESSMENT: IDENTIFYING AN OECM

The full assessment is made up of six criteria. A site that is assessed to meet all six (plus the two screening criteria in step 1) qualifies as an OECM. A site with a combination of ‘yes’ and ‘uncertain/partial’ responses, or with all ‘uncertain/partial’ responses, remains a *candidate OECM* until further information or other changes allow it to be confirmed as an OECM. A site that is assessed as not meeting one or more criteria is not an OECM, but may qualify in the future if changes mean that all criteria are met.

3.1. THE SITE AND ITS BIODIVERSITY VALUES

3.1.1. PURPOSE

The screening process (step 1, criterion 2) determined that the site is *likely* to have important biodiversity values. The full assessment requires confirmation of all the important biodiversity values, as far as possible based on available information. It also confirms that the site has defined boundaries that are agreed upon by the governing authority and Indigenous peoples or a local community, where relevant, as identified in step 2.

3.1.2. INFORMATION NEEDED

Basic information on the site’s boundaries and biodiversity can be recorded using the following table:

INFORMATION REQUIRED	SITE DATA
Boundary of the site:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the boundary of the site is defined (for example, with reference to natural, customary, surveyed, or administrative boundaries). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether the boundary is mapped and whether the map is publicly available, and whether it is in a digital (GIS) format. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether the boundary is physically demarcated in the field. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether there are any conflicts over the boundary that impact the site’s important biodiversity values. 	

Size and configuration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the size of the site, if known (e.g., land and sea area in square kilometres, or river length in kilometres). For reporting to the WD-OECM (REP_AREA field), this should be area in km². 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how the site’s size and configuration relate to the conservation of its important biodiversity values. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether the site is important because it connects other sites with important biodiversity values. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether the site is part of a network of sites that, together, support important biodiversity values. 	
<p>Confirmation of biodiversity values: Compile all available information that demonstrates that the site supports important biodiversity values (see criterion 4 for a list of values), such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credible reports from reliable sources, including relevant traditional knowledge Expert opinion from relevant experts 	

3.1.3. ASSESSMENT

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 3: The site is a geographically defined area	Does the site have clear boundaries?	<p>YES</p> <p>UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY</p> <p>NO</p>	Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given.
<p>GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 3:</p> <p><i>The boundaries of an OECM should be determined by the assessor in consultation with the governing authority, Indigenous peoples and local communities, where present, and other relevant stakeholders. Existing limits of land use and rights will often be the basis for determining boundaries.</i></p> <p><i>In defining boundaries, assessors and stakeholders may want to consider the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Clear’ boundaries means that the boundaries of the site can be mapped and have been agreed upon by the governing authority, Indigenous peoples and local communities, where present. A site can be defined by the limits of ecosystem types, geographic features, customary boundaries or administrative limits. A site can include land, freshwater and marine ecosystems in any combination. It is not necessary that the boundaries of the site have been physically marked, but they should be mapped, where possible in digital (GIS) format to allow submission of data to the WD-OECM. A site’s size and configuration should, as far as possible, be appropriate for managing and maintaining its important biodiversity values. This may mean selecting site boundaries that include larger populations of important species or larger areas of important ecosystems, since these are more likely to be viable in the long term. However, selecting extremely large sites may be counterproductive, as they may be difficult to manage and protect effectively. A site may be part of a mosaic of sites in a larger area, or may form a connection between sites, so that together they contribute to the conservation of important biodiversity values. In marine ecosystems, boundaries should include benthic and pelagic ecosystems and avoid vertical zoning wherever possible. 			

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 4: The site is confirmed to support important biodiversity values	Does information confirm that the site supports at least one of the following important biodiversity values? (a) Rare, threatened or endangered species and ecosystems (b) Natural ecosystems that are under-represented in protected area networks (c) High level of ecological integrity or intactness (d) Significant population/extent of endemic or range-restricted species or ecosystems (e) Important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas (f) Importance for ecological connectivity as part of a network of sites in a larger area	YES UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY NO	<i>List the biodiversity values confirmed to be present, and briefly summarise the information that supports the response.</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 4:

An OECM should be confirmed to support at least one of the important biodiversity values listed above.

- *Sub-criterion (a): Important biodiversity values include species and ecosystems that have been identified as rare, threatened or endangered at the global, regional, national or sub-national level. The basis for the definition of species status (for example, national red list) should be referenced as part of the justification.*
- *Confirmation of important biodiversity values may be from credible reports from reliable sources including indigenous and traditional knowledge holders, or the opinion of relevant experts documented as part of the assessment process.*
- *A site where significant progress has already been made with restoring or reintroducing important biodiversity values **may be an OECM.***
- *Ecosystem services and local economic values are not criteria for identifying an OECM. However, in many cases these values will be an important feature of the site. As far as possible, the conservation of biodiversity and management of ecosystem services and local economic values should be complementary and integrated.*
- *Important biodiversity values can be domesticated and cultivated species, where these are in their native habitats.*

Sources of information on biodiversity include the following (this is neither a mandatory nor an exhaustive list):

- *Further information on criteria for important diversity can be found in the IUCN-WCPA OECM Technical Report.*
- *Information on sites already listed as Key Biodiversity Areas is on the KBA data dashboard <https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/kba-data>*
- *Information on sites already listed as Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) is available at <https://www.cbd.int/ebsa/>*
- *Information on sites already listed as Important Plant Areas is available at <https://www.plantlifeipa.org/home>*
- *Information on Important Marine Mammal Areas is available at <https://www.marinemammalhabitat.org/imma-atlas/>*
- *Information on species whose conservation status has been assessed by IUCN is on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>*
- *Information on ecosystems classified as ‘threatened’ is on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Ecosystems at <https://www.iucn.org/theme/ecosystem-management/our-work/red-list-ecosystems>*
- *For sub-criteria (c, d and e), the criteria for Key Biodiversity Areas may be relevant: <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-033-En.pdf>*
- *A searchable typology of ecosystems is available on the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology website, <https://global-ecosystems.org/>*

3.2. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT RESULTS IN *IN SITU* CONSERVATION OF IMPORTANT BIODIVERSITY VALUES

3.2.1. PURPOSE

OECMs are sites that are **governed and managed** by one of, or a combination of, government, private entities, Indigenous peoples and local communities. Conservation of biodiversity does not have to be the *objective* of governance and management, but the *effect* of governance and management activities should be that pressures on the site’s important biodiversity values are controlled, so that these values are **conserved *in situ***. Finally, there should be a reasonable likelihood that the *in situ* conservation of biodiversity values will be permanent, and that the governance and management arrangements will be able to mitigate future threats, or will be able to do so with additional support that is expected to be provided.

3.2.2. INFORMATION NEEDED

Basic information on the site’s management can be recorded in the following table. The governing authority(ies), Indigenous peoples, local communities, other rights-holders and other stakeholders were identified at step 2.

Governance and management:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the long-term objectives for the site, as determined by the governing authority (for example: maintenance of water supply; sustainable production/ extraction of wild products; practice and preservation of spiritual values). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe whether/how the long-term objectives for the site are linked to the conservation of the site’s important biodiversity values. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the management activities (for example, protection, harvest controls, restoration), especially those that impact the biodiversity values and ecosystem services of the site. 	
Pressures and threats:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List any current pressures on the biodiversity values and ecosystem services of the site. These pressures may originate inside the site (e.g., illegal logging) or outside the site (e.g., pollution). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe how and to what extent the governance and management of the site can mitigate the pressures on the biodiversity and ecosystem values. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List any anticipated future threats that may affect the important biodiversity values and ecosystem services of the site. 	
Long-term basis for governance and management:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe any legal, official, customary, or other recognised basis for the institutions/organisations involved in the governance and management of the site that contributes to making the governance and management arrangements permanent. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe any legal, official, customary or other recognised status of the site (for example, forest reserve, military zone, customary land, Particularly Sensitive Sea Area, archaeological heritage site) that contributes to the site’s long-term status. 	

3.2.3. ASSESSMENT

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 5: Institutions or mechanisms exist to govern and manage the site	Is there one or more institution(s) or mechanism(s) that govern(s) and manage(s) the site?	YES UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY NO	<i>Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given.</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 5:

The following **may be an OECM**:

- *A site governed by government where one or more agencies have a mandate to govern and manage the site.*
- *A site where an Indigenous people or community has a mandate to govern and manage the site.*
- *A site where a private entity (individual, group or organisation) has a mandate to govern and manage the site.*
- *A site with mixed forms of governance and management where there is an appropriate institution, collective agreement or division of roles that results in necessary governance and management being carried out.*

The following are unlikely to be OECM:

A site with no governance or management mechanism.

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 6: Governance and management of the site achieve or are expected to achieve the <i>in situ</i> conservation of important biodiversity values	Do the governance and management of the site prevent and mitigate threats, and conserve the site’s important biodiversity values, or are they expected to do so?	YES UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY NO	<i>Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given.</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 6:

The following **may be an OECM**:

- *A site where governance and management are effectively mitigating pressures on the biodiversity values.*
- *A site where a mechanism exists (for example, a legal means, customary law or binding agreement with the landowner) to address pressures on biodiversity values, and there is a reasonable expectation that the mechanism will be used when required.*
- *A site where mitigation of pressures and conservation of biodiversity values are constrained by limited capacity or resources, **but there is a reasonable likelihood that these additional resources will be available within a time frame that will allow effective management.***
- *A site with no pressures identified but where capacity or a mechanism exists to identify and respond to possible future threats.*

- *A site where governance and management deliver effective biodiversity conservation even though conservation is not the primary objective (this may be ‘secondary’ or ‘ancillary’ conservation’ – see the IUCN-WCPA Technical Report on Recognising and Reporting OECMs). This may include:*
 - *Sustainable traditional or low-impact management of natural resources as long as this is consistent with the in situ conservation of important biodiversity values*
 - *Management for a specific ecosystem service (for example, for recreation, or to maintain a water supply), as long as this is consistent with maintaining important biodiversity values*
 - *Management primarily for cultural, spiritual, socio-economic or other locally recognised values and practices, as long as this is consistent with maintaining important biodiversity values*
 - *management that involves no intervention, but the site is being conserved in practice, due to limitations on human activities (for example, a military exclusion zone)*
- *A site within an industrial concession/plantation that is permanently set aside from all environmentally damaging industrial activities for the purpose of conservation.*
- *A site where restoring or reintroducing important biodiversity values has already resulted in some conservation outcomes, and these are expected to be sustained for the long term.*
- *A site where there is a reasonable expectation of a positive biodiversity outcome, even though empirical data is lacking. Such expectation could be based on projections and modelling of threats and management interventions, or on experience in other, similar sites.*
- *A site where management measures have both negative and positive impacts on biodiversity, but the overall net impact is judged to be positive.*

The following **are unlikely to be an OECM:**

- *A site where the level of conflict or insecurity is such that no effective governance or management can take place and there is no in situ conservation of biodiversity values.*
- *A site experiencing immediate pressures on its biodiversity values that cannot be addressed by management; assessors should note, however, that the presence of pressures that are entirely beyond the control of the governing and managing authority (such as climate change and sea level rise) does not exclude a site from being identified as an OECM.*
- *A site that is subject to environmentally damaging industrial-scale activities (such as industrial agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, oil and gas extraction, and major infrastructure), whether the environmentally damaging activities take place inside or outside the site (except areas set aside for long-term conservation within such sites; see above). Note that sites under industrial-scale ‘sustainable management’ should be reported under targets 5 and 10 of the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework (see the IUCN-WCPA OECM Technical Report) and not as OECMs.*
- *A site where management results in the conservation of only a single species or group of species, unless this involves in situ conservation that also protects the wider ecosystem.*
- *A site where restoration or reintroduction are planned or ongoing, but where conservation outcomes have not yet been delivered.*

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 7: <i>In situ</i> conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long term	Is there a reasonable likelihood that the important biodiversity values for which the site is identified will be conserved <i>in situ</i> in the long-term?	YES UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY NO	<i>Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given.</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 7:

Assessors in consultation with other stakeholders should make a judgement on the probability that positive in situ biodiversity conservation impacts will continue in the long term.

The following **may be an OECM:**

- *A site that has a secure legal or other form of recognition, that cannot easily be reversed or eliminated. Examples of such recognition are a regulation, some types of spatial plans or land-use plans, or indigenous or community rights that are formally recognised or long established and widely acknowledged.*
- *A site where the governance and management arrangements that result in biodiversity conservation are expected to be sustained, for example because they are guaranteed by formal agreement, covenant or policies.*
- *A site where governance and management arrangements can be expected to effectively respond to future threats.*

The following **are unlikely to be an OECM:**

- *A site where anticipated future threats are so severe that they will result in the loss of the important biodiversity values of the site, and there is no reasonable chance that these threats can be mitigated.*
- *A site where conservation of biodiversity values is dependent on a legal status, a funding mechanism or other form of recognition or support that is temporary or likely to be reversed.*

3.3. EQUITABLE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

3.3.1. PURPOSE

Annex II (I/B) of CBD decision 14/8 on ‘Voluntary guidance on effective and equitable governance models’ states that governance of an OECM should reflect the equity considerations adopted in the CBD, and defines equity in terms of three dimensions:

- Recognition: There is acknowledgement of and respect for the rights and the diversity of identities, values, knowledge systems, and institutions of rights-holders and stakeholders.
- Procedure: There is inclusive rule- and decision-making, transparency and accountability, and effective and fair law enforcement.
- Distribution: Costs and benefits resulting from the management of OECM are equitably shared among different rights-holders and stakeholders (as identified at step 2).

3.3.2. INFORMATION NEEDED

Basic information on how equity is addressed in the site’s governance and management can be recorded using the following table:

INFORMATION REQUIRED	SITE DATA/RESPONSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe how and to what extent governance and management of the site recognise and respect the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities and other stakeholder groups (where applicable). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe how and to what extent governance and management of the site enable the participation of indigenous peoples, local communities and other stakeholder groups (where applicable). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe how and to what extent governance and management of the site encourage the equitable sharing of costs and benefits of conservation of the site’s biodiversity values. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List any recent or ongoing cases of abuse of individual or collective human rights involving the governing authority or other stakeholders (as identified in step 2), where these cases are connected to use, governance or management of the site. 	

3.3.3. ASSESSMENT

TESTS	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	JUSTIFICATION
CRITERION 8: Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations	Do the governance and management arrangements include efforts to address the three aspects of equity (recognition, procedure, distribution), where applicable?	YES UNCERTAIN OR PARTIALLY NO	<i>Briefly summarise the information that supports the response given.</i>

GUIDANCE ON CRITERION 8:

Application of the criteria:

- *Consideration of equity is necessary at sites where there is more than one group of stakeholders (as identified in step 2). Therefore:*
 - *At sites with a **single governing authority and no other rights-holders** (as identified in step 2), the issue of equity may not apply. In this case, assessors should respond ‘yes’ to this criterion and note that there are no equity considerations applicable to the site.*
 - *At sites with more than one group of stakeholders, assessors should work with stakeholders to assess equity.*

Assessment of equity is based on an understanding that:

- *Equity is a dynamic and context-specific concept. Therefore, it is not possible to establish a detailed, universal standard for equity.*
- *At almost every site there will be opportunities for improvement in the equity of governance and management. Rather than being required to achieve a specific level of equity, a site should **demonstrate the potential for positive progress** to qualify as an OECM.*
- *Therefore, assessors should respond ‘yes’ to this criterion if stakeholder consultation shows that the site meets three conditions:*
 1. *Governance and management of the site include efforts to address equity (recognition, procedure and distribution – see above) for example through policies, mechanisms or actions.*
 2. *There is, in the judgement of stakeholders and the assessor, a reasonable likelihood of increasingly equitable outcomes in the future.*
 3. *There are no reports of ongoing or recent (and likely to recur) abuses of the individual or collective human rights of any stakeholders associated with the governance and management of the site.*

Additional guidance:

- *Where progress toward equity is constrained by existing legal frameworks (for example, if national laws prevent formal involvement of local community representatives in a management board), this should not be a barrier to recognition of an OECM, and the assessment should consider the potential for positive progress, taking into account the constraints imposed by the legal framework.*
- *Where there is a long-term dispute over rights (for example, between indigenous groups and the state over historic land rights), the dispute should not be a barrier to recognition of an OECM, and the assessment should consider the potential for positive progress, taking into account the constraints imposed by the dispute.*

The following are unlikely to be an OECM:

- *Sites where there is evidence of recent or ongoing abusive practices by the governing authority or other stakeholders, involving, for example, infringements of individual or collective human rights.*

Further Information:

- *A tool for assessing the governance of PAs or OECMs, the Site Assessment for Governance and Equity (SAGE), is available at <https://www.iied.org/site-level-assessment-governance-equity-sage>*

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

GENERATING A FINAL RESULT

Use the table below to summarise the results of the screening and full assessment.

Criteria	Response (tick one for each criteria)		
	YES	UNCERTAIN OR PARTIAL	NO
Screening assessment			
Criterion 1: The site is not a protected area (PA)		N/A	
Criterion 2: There is a reasonable likelihood that the site supports important biodiversity values		N/A	
Full assessment			
Criterion 3: The site is a geographically defined area			
Criterion 4: The site is <i>confirmed</i> to support important biodiversity values			
Criterion 5: Institutions or mechanisms exist to govern and manage the site			
Criterion 6: Governance and management of the site achieve or are expected to achieve the <i>in situ</i> conservation of important biodiversity values			
Criterion 7: In situ conservation of important biodiversity values is expected to be for the long term			
Criterion 8: Governance and management arrangements address equity considerations			

- ◆ A site with a **‘yes’ response to every criterion** is a *confirmed OECM*, subject to any stakeholder consent and approval by the governing authority.
- ◆ A site with a combination of **‘yes’ and ‘uncertain/partial’ responses, or all ‘uncertain/partial’ responses**, remains a *candidate OECM*, until further information or other changes allow it to be confirmed as an OECM.
- ◆ A site with **one or more ‘no’ responses** is *not currently an OECM*, but might be re-assessed in the future if a change at the site means that all criteria are now met.

The three sections below outline recommended next steps for each of the possible outcomes of the assessment.

NEXT STEPS FOR A CONFIRMED OECM

Where a site meets all the OECM criteria, the next steps are:

- The result of the assessment, with documentation, should be communicated to the governance and management authority(ies), Indigenous peoples, local communities and other rights-holders and stakeholders.
- Documentation of the assessment process and results, including supporting data, should be securely stored for future reference.
- Where initial consent (step 2) was only for the assessment to be carried out, consent should now be obtained for the identification of the site as an OECM and for its reporting to the WD-OECM.

Once consent for reporting is secured, the site should be reported to the WD-OECM. Reporting may be done by the government, the governing authority, or another stakeholder with the consent of the governing authority. Data may need to be verified before being added to the WD-OECM (see Table 1). Guidance on reporting sites to the WD-OECM is available on the Protected Planet website, <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/oecms?tab=About>, and in [this user manual](#), or can be obtained by contacting OECM@unep-wcmc.org. Further data will be required to complete all fields in the WD-OECM.

Table 1: **Data providers and verification requirements for the WD-OECM**

Entity reporting the OECM to WD-OECM (the ‘data provider’)	OECMs that can be reported to WD-OECM	Type of verification undertaken by WD-OECM
Government data provider	OECMs under all governance types (government, private, indigenous peoples and local communities, mixed)	Data is considered state verified, and is added directly to the WD-OECM after formatting and data quality checking.
Non-government data provider	OECMs where the data provider - is the governing authority of the OECM, or - has the consent of the governing authority	Data is verified either by state verifiers or expert verifiers, depending on the wishes of the data provider, before being added to the WD-OECM. Formatting and data quality checking are also carried out.

- The OECM should also be reported or listed, as appropriate, on any relevant national and local databases and documents. Where a national database of OECMs exists, it will often be appropriate to report data to this database in the first instance in order to support streamlined national reporting to the WD-OECM.
- If the site is already reported in the WDPA as a PA but the result of this assessment concludes that the site is in fact an OECM, then UNEP-WCMC should be informed and a request for change of designation made by the relevant authority.
- If appropriate, a follow-up plan for the governance and management of the OECM could be developed that defines the conservation objectives of the OECM, including its role in the wider landscape/seascape; the need for continuing support and capacity development; and mechanisms for engagement between the governing authority and other stakeholders. Management of the OECM is likely to include monitoring of the status of biodiversity, ecosystem services and threats over time, and will be essential to ensure that the OECM continues to support the important biodiversity values for which it is identified.

NEXT STEPS FOR SITES WITH ONE OR MORE 'UNCERTAIN/PARTIAL' RESPONSE

Where a site remains a candidate OECM, with a combination of 'yes' and 'uncertain/partial' responses, or all 'uncertain/partial' responses, the next steps are:

- The assessment should be reviewed to identify the reasons that the site has not fully met the criteria. In particular, 'uncertain/partial' responses should be examined to determine whether the criteria could be met with further information ('uncertain' responses) or whether changes to governance and management are needed ('partial' responses), such as through capacity building. Where appropriate, an action plan for addressing these points should be developed.
- The result of the assessment, including any action plan and plan for re-assessment, should be communicated to the governing authority (where they are not the assessor), Indigenous peoples, local communities and other rights-holders and stakeholders.
- Documentation of the assessment process and results, including supporting data, should be securely stored, as this will form the basis for any later re-assessment.
- The site may be re-assessed at any time by updating the existing data. The assessor should determine whether the screening (step 1) and consent (step 2) stages of the assessment remain valid or need to be repeated.
- Assessors and stakeholders may want to consider whether the site would be eligible for listing under other national instruments or under other global targets.

NEXT STEPS FOR SITES WITH ONE OR MORE 'NO' RESPONSE

Where a site has one or more 'no' responses, the next steps are:

- The assessment should be reviewed to identify the reasons that the site has not met the criteria. Assessors or other stakeholders may want to put in place a mechanism to monitor the status of the site so that it can be re-assessed if the situation changes in the future. Alternatively, where appropriate, an action plan could be put in place to address the points where the site did not meet the criteria.
- Documentation of the assessment process and results, including supporting data, should be securely stored, as this will form the basis for any future re-assessment.
- The site may be re-assessed at any time by updating the existing data. The assessor should determine whether the screening (step 1) and consent (step 2) stages of the assessment remain valid or need to be repeated.
- Assessors and stakeholders may want to consider whether the site would be eligible for listing under other national instruments, or under other global targets.



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