Amazonian Resilience Through Transboundary Cooperation

Herding for Health in Mozambique

Indigenous Leadership in Transboundary Conservation

Transboundary Conservation

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Editorial

The 1st issue of the TB eNews of the IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group (TBCSG) appeared in April 2010 and the last one was published in October 2017.

After a long break, we are enthusiastic to finally welcome back this inspiring publication that presents stories of transboundary cooperation worldwide, combining nature conservation with sustainable development, local communities' rights and peace building across international boundaries.

During these years many things have changed and today our planet is facing old and new challenges. The three major interconnected challenges to biodiversity are: climate change, pollution, and habitat loss/degradation, often framed by the UN as the "Triple Planetary Crisis" alongside the need to meet human needs of food and resources sustainably. These crises impact nature and human societies and require integrated solutions.

To deal with these challenges and implement effective solutions, it is essential to collaborate widely, despite any political and administrative barriers. It is often said that nature does not recognise political borders; but climate change, pollution, and habitat degradation do not know borders either. This is why at the last IUCN World Congress, of October 2025, the need for transboundary collaboration was mentioned in many discussions and thematic sessions.

We witness with great frustration the growing scepticism and denial of environmental problems among many global political forces. Added to this is the dismay of seeing conflicts and wars increase, and walls rise between countries and communities.

These times demand our commitment, our ideals, and our promise to defend the right to existence for all species, natural elements, and people. They call for our desire to live in peace with our neighbors and our willingness to protect the richness and beauty of our planet. We can and must achieve this together. For this reason, I would like to sincerely thank the founders and former chairs of the IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group, as well as all past and present members. Through your daily work as managers, rangers, researchers, experts, and decision-makers, you are building hope for all.

Very warm thanks to Piet Theron from Conservation International and Global Affairs Canada who have sponsored the publication of the 12th edition of TB eNews in the framework of the Restoring African Rangelands Project, as well as the colleagues of the Executive Committee and of the transboundary areas that collaborate in this edition. Thanks to Imre Sebestyen, the previous editor of the eNews who very kindly supported the new process. All of them have made possible the return of the TBCSG publication.

Stefania Petrosillo

Chair IUCN WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group-TBCSG
on behalf of the TBCSG Executive Committee (Kevan Zunckel, Steve Collins, Doris Imhasly, Francisco Asturias, Yuan Li, Valentina Fontana)

At Conservation International, we believe that protecting nature means investing in people. When we support transboundary conservation work, we are not just protecting ecosystems that span borders, we are supporting the communities who depend on these landscapes and the dedicated professionals working to ensure their future.

The Restoring African Rangelands Project exemplifies this integrated approach. Across three African countries in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA), we are demonstrating that rangeland restoration is not merely an environmental intervention but a pathway to climate resilience, improved livelihoods, and sustainable food systems. As you read in this edition's feature on the Herding for Health program in Mozambique's Limpopo National Park, professional herding and landscape management can simultaneously restore degraded ecosystems, reduce human-wildlife conflict, and generate economic opportunities for rural communities.

This work cannot succeed within political boundaries alone. Wildlife migrations, watershed systems, climate patterns, and cultural landscapes transcend the lines we draw on maps. Effective conservation requires the kind of collaboration showcased throughout this newsletter: governments working across borders, indigenous communities sharing traditional knowledge, researchers coordinating monitoring efforts, and local organizations building sustainable tourism enterprises.

Global Affairs Canada's partnership in this work reflects a shared recognition that transboundary conservation contributes to multiple global priorities simultaneously. Protected landscapes provide climate mitigation through carbon sequestration, climate adaptation through ecosystem resilience, biodiversity conservation through habitat connectivity, and sustainable development through nature-based livelihoods. These outcomes align directly with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement.

The stories in this edition demonstrate the diversity of transboundary conservation approaches: from the Amazon's integration of indigenous leadership and territorial planning, to Central Asia's One Health framework preventing zoonotic disease, to Europe's public-private partnerships building sustainable tourism. Each represents communities, governments, and conservation practitioners refusing to let borders become barriers to effective action.

Supporting the return of TB eNews is our way of amplifying these voices and strengthening this global community of practice. Information sharing, peer learning, and sustained networks are essential infrastructure for transboundary work. When a community conservation area in South Africa grants researchers long-term access for climate monitoring, when Sámi communities in Finland and Norway coordinate Arctic fox recovery, when Colombia integrates protected areas into national territorial planning, these innovations deserve to be documented, celebrated, and replicated.

As we face unprecedented environmental challenges, transboundary conservation offers tangible pathways forward. We are honoured to support this publication and the dedicated professionals whose daily work builds the hope our planet desperately needs.

Piet Theron
Conservation International and Conservation South Africa

This publication has been made possible by the support of Global Affairs Canada

Contents

Innovative Financing for Transboundary Conservation: The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area's Blueprint for Private Capital Mobilization

Project Partners: Conservation South Africa/Conservation International, Peace Parks Foundation, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Kruger 2 Canyons Biosphere Reserve, SANParks, Endangered Wildlife Trust, GreenMatter, EcoAdvisors
Contact: Conservation South Africa, Piet Theron/ ptheron@conservation.org
Name: GLTFCA Restoring African Rangelands Project
Countries: Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe
Surface Area: 10,000,000 hectares (approximately 100,000 km²)
Year of formal TB agreement: (International Treaty signed in 2002)
International designations: Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA)

Members of the Upper Blyde Clearing Team monitor a controlled burn in the Upper Blyde, restoring ecological balance to the grasslands high in the catchment region

Across the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA), spanning Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, an ambitious initiative is demonstrating how innovative financing mechanisms can transform transboundary conservation. The Global Affairs Canada funded Restoring African Rangelands Project is pioneering approaches to attract private capital while strengthening cross-border cooperation and empowering local communities, particularly women.

A Coordinated Transboundary Approach

The project operates through coordinated partnerships across all three countries. In Mozambique, Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) collaborates with the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC). Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) works alongside Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZIMparks). In South Africa, the Kruger 2 Canyons (K2C) Biosphere Reserve, SANParks, and Conservation South Africa (CSA) lead implementation. This cross-border collaboration operates through official GLTFCA structures, ensuring landscape-level coordination that transcends political boundaries.

Diverse Financing Solutions

Five distinct financing mechanisms demonstrate the diversity of approaches addressing conservation funding gaps:

- Limpopo Conservation Bond Programme supports park management, species restoration, human-wildlife coexistence, and rewilding in Limpopo National Park, Mozambique.
- Kruger to Canyons Catchment Investment Programme is a payment for ecosystem services mechanism that finances nature-based solutions to restore catchment health, secure water supply, and create green jobs across the South African component.
- Kruger to Canyons Rangeland Restoration Carbon Project implements the Herding for Health model, reversing environmental degradation while enhancing ecosystem function, and strengthening community resilience through results-based carbon finance.

- Tourism Investment Facility increases investment and tourism revenues across the GLTFCA landscape, supporting wildlife protection and community development.
- In addition to the above, the project also supported the implementation of a Climate Vulnerability Assessment in Kruger National Park to identify infrastructure vulnerabilities, ensuring conservation operations withstand extreme weather events, and facilitated the development on an investment strategy for the Sengwe-Tshipise Corridor in Zimbabwe, which links northern Kruger National Park (South Africa) with Gonarezhou National Park (Zimbabwe).

Gender-Responsive Conservation Finance

Central to the project's design is gender equality. Women constitute the majority of beneficiaries dependent on natural resources for livelihoods and face heightened climate vulnerability. The initiative strengthens local management and decision-making, pursuing gender-responsive, locally led protected area management. Through inclusive green economic investments, the project creates restoration jobs and livelihood opportunities specifically targeting women, youth, and vulnerable groups.

Mobilizing Private Capital

The project targets $40 million in long-term private capital investment, demonstrating how diverse financing mechanisms can address conservation funding gaps beyond traditional donor sources. By strengthening the technical, financial, and institutional capacity of decision-makers, land users, and investors, the initiative enhances biodiversity protection while creating sustainable livelihoods. Mechanisms such as high-integrity carbon credits, conservation bonds, and payment for ecosystem services catchment finance structures provide measurable climate, biodiversity, economic, and social benefits attractive to private investors.

A Replicable Model

Success across the GLTFCA's three countries increases commitment to coordinated, gender-sensitive investment in large landscapes. The project contributes directly to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets, particularly community-based ecosystem restoration (Target 2), ecological connectivity (Target 3), gender-responsive climate resilience (Target 8), and increased resource mobilization (Target 19). Each success provides a blueprint for attracting private sector investment into transboundary conservation that directly mitigates threats to biodiversity and community livelihoods while demonstrating that conservation finance can be inclusive, innovative, and scalable across borders.

In field clearing team members monitor a controlled burn in the Upper Blyde, restoring ecological balance and protecting vital water resources

Clearing alien invasive vegetation along riverbanks improves water flow, reduces fire risk and supports healthier ecosystems downstream

Field visit by park management staff, community members and other key stakeholders to the Makuleke Wetlands Ramsar site located within the Makuleke Contractual National Park, Kruger National Park

Elephants are a keystone species in the Greater Kruger Area due to their significant impact on the environment, their ability to shape the environment, and influence biodiversity

Breaking Barriers for Human-Wildlife Co-Existence: Rangeland Restoration Through Professional Herding in Limpopo National Park

Project Partners: Conservation International (CI), Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), Meat Naturally Pty
Contact: Conservation South Africa
Name: Herding for Health Program
Country: Mozambique (expanding across seven African countries)
Surface Area: Over 1 million hectares restored
Year of formal agreement: 2019
International designations: Limpopo National Park (part of Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area)


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Driving through Limpopo National Park (LNP) in Mozambique reveals a remarkable landscape where indigenous woodlands, wildlife, homesteads, communities, and livestock coexist. Here, an innovative approach which is being piloted across the Greater Limpopo TFCA is demonstrating how responsible rangeland and livestock management within protected areas can benefit both conservation and livelihoods.

The Herding for Health Model

Launched in 2019 across six villages in Massingir District, the Herding for Health (H4H) program emerged from partnership between Conservation International, Peace Parks Foundation, and Meat Naturally. The model rests on four strategic pillars: Healthy Rangelands, Healthy Animals, Thriving Livelihoods, and Good Governance.

The program creates opportunities for skilled professional herders to reduce human-wildlife conflict while managing livestock and rangelands sustainably. These efforts promote landscape and water catchment regeneration essential for climate resilience while improving food security and reducing poverty.

Practical Solutions in Action

H4H developed several innovative interventions. Twenty-two mobile canvas bomas (kraals) protect cattle from predators at night. During the day, professional herders guide cattle away from buffalo and predators toward quality grazing areas. At dusk, cattle return to bomas built near water points. This combination significantly reduced human-wildlife conflict.

Climate-smart and wildlife-friendly farming techniques ensure bomas move frequently, allowing degraded rangelands to regenerate through natural fertilization and native grass germination. Cattle now walk shorter distances to good grazing, with supplementary feeding provided during droughts and winter. Veterinary assistance covers wound treatment, vaccination, and tick control, while brand-marking verifies ownership for record-keeping.

A grazing association was formed to support program governance within the park and communal areas. The program's effectiveness in reducing conflict encouraged numerous farmers to participate, while market access improvements maximize livestock and rangeland value.

Critical Success Factors

Four elements drive the program's success:

- Community Engagement: The initiative strengthened communities' capacity through conservation awareness, animal health improvements, and market readiness facilitation, developing integrated grazing plans that align with commodity trade standards.
- Training and Capacity Building: A dedicated H4H Training and Development Hub creates highly skilled professional herders while facilitating knowledge sharing, essential for the program's effectiveness.
- Market Development: Close collaboration with Meat Naturally supports new market access channels and livestock traceability systems benefiting rural communities through sustainable meat production expertise.
- Policy Alignment: The program team works with government and industry to ensure national agricultural laws and corporate policies support sustainable practices, identifying incentives including job creation, animal health services, and climate adaptation programs.

Measurable Impact

The program has achieved significant results across seven countries: restoration of over one million hectares of rangelands, registration of 44,790 livestock (cattle, sheep, and goats), and generation of USD 6.2 million in economic benefits.

In LNP specifically, the program demonstrates transformative outcomes in landscape restoration, community resilience, and human-wildlife coexistence.

Sustainable Financing Through Carbon Credits

Currently dependent on donor funding, the program's long-term sustainability requires innovative financing mechanisms. Carbon credits offer strategic opportunities to scale this nature-based solution. Soil Organic Carbon storage through rangeland restoration presents promising potential, though Mozambique's policy framework, limiting one carbon license per district, could constrain expansion.

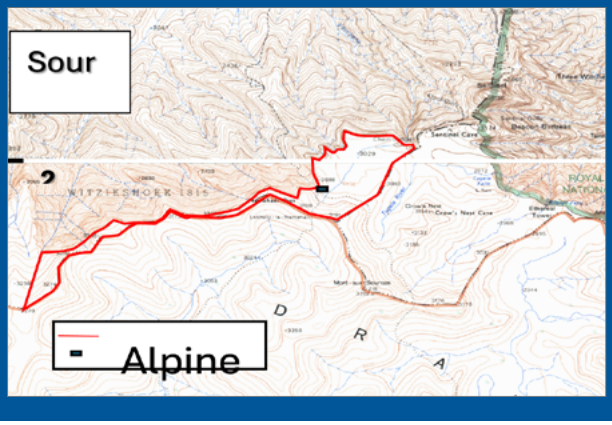
Voluntary carbon markets enable expansion through measurable climate, biodiversity, and livelihood benefits. Established grazing and livestock management practices restore degraded rangelands, increasing grass production, improving water infiltration, and enhancing carbon sequestration through adaptive management developed with communities who steward the land.

A Replicable Model

This initiative demonstrates how innovative local conservation can deliver biodiversity outcomes while supporting community prosperity. The H4H program provides practical examples of how conservation financing contributes to resource mobilization targets outlined in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, offering a replicable model for rangeland restoration across Africa's savanna ecosystems.

Alpine Research in Action: Community-Led Climate Science in South Africa's Maloti-Drakensberg

Project Partners: University of the Free State Afromontane Research Unit, Batlokoa Community, Transfrontier Parks Destinations
Contact: Eleanor Muller, eleanor@tfpd.co.za I www.tfpd.co.za
Name: Witsieshoek Community Conservation Area (WCCA)
Countries: South Africa (with ecological linkages to Lesotho)
Surface Area: 256 hectares (Alpine Research Lease)
Year of formal TB agreement: 2001
International designations: Adjacent to UNESCO uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site: within Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Conservation Area



High on the escarpment where South Africa's Free State meets the Maloti-Drakensberg mountain system, the Batlokoa community has enabled groundbreaking climate research by granting the University of the Free State's Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) a long-term lease over 256 hectares of summit terrain within the Witsieshoek Community Conservation Area (WCCA).

This agreement, negotiated by Transfrontier Parks Destinations, Witsieshoek's management company, provides scientists with predictable, multi-year access to high-altitude grasslands that are both ecologically fragile and globally relevant for climate modeling. The stability of tenure positions Witsieshoek as a meaningful contributor to transfrontier conservation.

A High-Elevation Climate Research Facility

The area functions as a sophisticated climate research facility. A network of weather stations placed across steep altitudinal gradients generates one of the region's most detailed climate datasets. Combined with ongoing bioblitzes, soil assessments, and postgraduate wildlife research, these observations track how alpine ecosystems respond to shifts in temperature, frost cycles, and rainfall. The remote Alpine Base enables year-round monitoring in terrain often inaccessible during winter.

Transfrontier Significance

Witsieshoek lies at the northern anchor of a mountain corridor linking South Africa and Lesotho. Climate and ecological data feed into regional conversations about rangeland stability, montane water security, and species resilience—including mountain reedbuck and eland. These high-lying ecosystems provide early warning signals: alpine meadows are among the first to show stress under warming conditions.

Community-Centered Governance

In 2025, the ARU's South African Mountain Conference and Royal Indaba brought researchers, traditional leadership, and regional conservation bodies into closer dialogue. These gatherings reinforced that research occurs on community land under clear governance arrangements. This alignment creates a credible foundation for future rangeland restoration, eco-ranger training, and potential rewilding efforts drawing from longitudinal datasets.

Installation of an NRF-SAEON automatic weather station at 3 100 m above sea level on the Drakensberg Amphitheatre, undertaken with the University of the Free State's Afromontane Research Unit.The installation team from left to right: Toka Mosikidi, Sachin Doarsamy, Moratoe Mofokeng, and Loyiso Giqwa.

Inclusive Research Leadership

The initiative demonstrates strong gender and youth inclusion. Of 15 current ARU Research Champions, four are women (26%) leading major projects including overseas grant-funded initiatives and cutting-edge discoveries. Female postgraduate students comprise approximately 50% of the ARU student body, with key female Research Fellows and Post-Doctoral Fellows in leadership roles.

Youth engagement is substantial, with approximately 40 postgraduate students annually, at least half involved in Witsieshoek projects. An upcoming Norway-funded project will directly engage young herders as research participants.

Witsieshoek offers a grounded model for transfrontier conservation areas: a community-owned mountain landscape hosting stable, long-horizon climate research that can guide regional conservation choices before ecological thresholds are crossed, demonstrating how traditional land tenure and sustained scientific commitment can reinforce one another.

Prof. Ralph Clark (left), Director of the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU), University of the Free State, with ARU Research Fellow Dr Stephanie Payne (right), in the ARU Alpine Lease Area, at Witsieshoek. The open top chambers are part of the Swiss-led EU Biodiversa project "RangeX" (2021-2024) that is continuing with Norwegian-South African bilateral funds (2025-2028) at 3,050 m on top of the Maloti-Drakensberg; it is the only long-term global change experiment of this kind on an African mountain.

Connecting Landscapes, Protecting Health: Transboundary Conservation to Prevent Zoonotic Disease in Central Asia

Project Partners: IUCN, Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP WCMC), Michael Succow Foundation for the Protection of Nature (MSF), Academy of Science of the Republic Uzbekistan, Institute of Zoology of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Camp Alatoo Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Nature Foundation
Contact: Tatiana Ivanova, Conservation Action Project Officer, IUCN ECARO
More information: IUCN Project Page
Name: One Health in Nature Conservation in Central
Asia: Enhancing landscape resilience to zoonotic disease emergence by consolidating nature conservation systems
Countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
Surface Area: 500,000 hectares
Year of formal TB agreement: 2024
International designations: Protected areas, World Heritage, OECMs, CMS, Cold Winter Deserts of Turan World Heritage site

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how environmental degradation can trigger global health crises. In Central Asia, where border fences, railways, and pipelines increasingly fragment habitats, wildlife face shrinking spaces and closer contact with livestock—creating conditions ripe for disease transmission. The One Health in Nature Conservation in Central Asia project addresses this challenge by recognizing that human, animal, and environmental health are inseparable.

The One Health Framework

One Health is an integrated approach balancing the wellbeing of people, animals, and ecosystems. Effective implementation requires collaboration among governments, communities, conservation experts, veterinarians, and public health institutions. This cooperation strengthens disease prevention, early detection, and response while building public health resilience.

Migration Corridors as Disease Prevention

Healthy landscapes and ecological corridors serve dual purposes: supporting biodiversity and reducing disease risk. In Central Asia, infrastructure fragments habitats for iconic species including Saiga Antelope, Asiatic Wild Ass, and Bukhara Deer. When forced into shrinking spaces, wild animals compete with livestock for pasture and water, increasing disease spillover risks among wildlife, livestock, and people.

Preserving habitat connectivity is both a conservation priority and a central pillar of preventing future zoonotic outbreaks.

Transboundary Cooperation in Action

Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan jointly participate in this six-year initiative, coordinated by IUCN and funded through €11 million from Germany's International Climate Initiative (IKI).

Since 2024, the project has expanded cooperation through new expert working groups, harmonized disease-monitoring protocols, and technical exchanges among protected area authorities. Countries have begun aligning surveillance efforts and sharing data on priority species and ecosystem health indicators, a milestone for coordinated One Health action in the region.

The five countries have initiated joint field assessments, launched coordinated species-monitoring efforts, and begun designing a regional network of protected and conserved areas integrating One Health considerations. These actions strengthen wildlife management, support innovative zoonosis research, and ensure communities benefit from healthier, more resilient landscapes.

Looking Forward

This transboundary initiative demonstrates how regional cooperation can address both conservation and public health challenges. By maintaining ecological connectivity and coordinating disease surveillance across borders, Central Asia is building stronger foundations for nature conservation and for the health and wellbeing of the people who depend on these landscapes.

The project exemplifies a critical truth: protecting nature is protecting human health. When ecosystems thrive and wildlife can move freely, disease risks decrease and communities become more resilient.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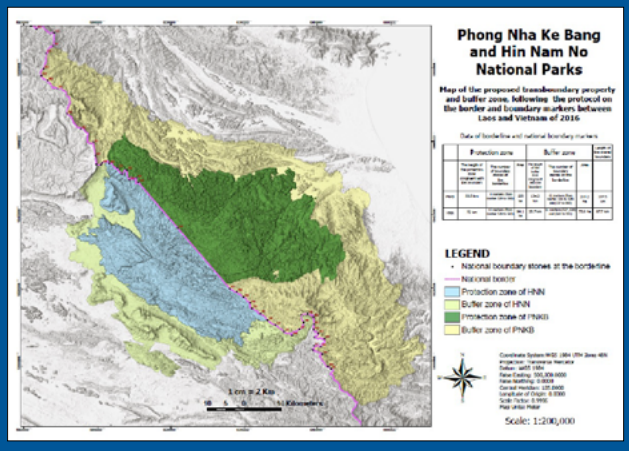
Cross-Border Conservation in Action: Collaborative Management of the World's Oldest Karst Landscape in Laos and Vietnam

Authors: Kevan Zunckel and Peter Shadie
Name: Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park and Hin Nam No National Park World Heritage Property
Countries: Peoples Democratic Republic of Laos and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Surface Area: Total area 513,336 ha comprising 217,447 ha inscribed as WHP and a combined WH buffer zone of 295,889 ha
Year of formal TB agreement: Transboundary Action Plan development ongoing (2025)
International designations: UNESCO World Heritage Properties



Spanning the border between Laos and Vietnam, two national parks protect the world's most exceptional limestone karst landscapes. Vietnam's Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park gained World Heritage Property designation in 2003, while Laos' adjoining Hin Nam No National Park received the same recognition as an extension to Phong Nha-Ke Bang at UNESCO's 47th session in 2025. This recent designation has generated renewed momentum toward enhanced cross-border collaborative management between the two countries.

A Landscape of Global Significance

This extended WHP shares the oldest, large-scale tropical limestone karst area in Asia and forms one of the most intact and ancient karst landscapes on Earth. The WHP is located at the confluence of the Annamite Mountain Range and Central Indochina Limestone Belt. The landscape encompasses diverse ecosystems including high-altitude dry karst forest, moist low-elevation forests, and extensive subterranean cave environments, all hosting assemblages of endemic species.

The area includes over 220 kilometers of documented caves and underground river systems, many spectacular and globally significant. UNESCO designated the transboundary property based on three criteria: the largest intact humid tropical karst systems globally (viii), globally significant ecosystems (ix), and rich terrestrial, freshwater and subterranean biodiversity including many globally threatened and endemic species (x).

Building a Collaborative Framework

While long-standing cooperation already exists between the countries, the 2025 designation catalyzed development of a formal Transboundary Action Plan (TAP). The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH supported the process through their ProFEB project (Protection and Sustainable Use of Forest Ecosystems and Biodiversity) in Laos.

The TAP development utilized the Diagnostic Tool for Transboundary Conservation Planners[1] to facilitate stakeholder engagement and develop situational and stakeholder analyses. On the basis of the shared

understanding and consensus generated through this process, the steps outlined in the 2008[2] and 2015[3] IUCN WCPA guidelines were followed. Two intensive week-long stakeholder workshops were held in Thakhek, Laos, and Dong Hoi, Vietnam, where participants generated, discussed, and agreed upon management objective hierarchies.

Vision for the Future

The long-term vision for this Transboundary WHP states: "By 2050, the ecological and cultural integrity of the transboundary karst landscape and Outstanding Universal Value of the natural World Heritage property are secured through effective joint protection and management, generating local community benefits and contributing to sustainable economic development whilst showcasing a model for conservation diplomacy and the enduring friendship between Lao PDR and Vietnam."

The TAP translates this ambitious vision into eight more specific Collaborative Management Objectives, each supported by shorter-term strategies and actions. If sustainably financed and well governed, TAP implementation will work toward achieving this vision, demonstrating how neighboring countries can unite to protect shared natural heritage while building regional cooperation and community prosperity.

Figure 1: Tourist boat launch site on a tributary of the Con River in the Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park from where the Phong Nha Caves may be accessed, also showing the typical topography and vegetation of the area (© Kevan Zunckel).

References

[1] Erg, B., M. Vasilijevic and M. McKinney (eds.), Initiating Effective Transboundary Conservation—a practitioner's guidelines based on the experience of the Dinaric Arc, IUCN, Gland (Switzerland) and Belgrade, 2012.
[2] IUCN. (2008). Management Planning for Natural World Heritage Properties. A Resource Manual for Practitioners. Produced by the IUCN Programme on Protected Areas, Gland, Switzerland.
[3] Vasilijević, M., Zunckel, K., McKinney, M., Erg, B., Schoon, M., Rosen Michel, T. (2015). Transboundary Conservation: A systematic and integrated approach. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 23, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. xii + 107 pp.

Parks and People: Building Sustainable Tourism Through Transboundary Partnerships in Europe's Julian Alps

Project Partners: EUROPARC Federation, Julian Alps Association, Rural Women's Associations, Triglav National Park, Julian Prealps Nature Park
Contacts: Mojca Smolej, Transboundary Focal Point, Triglav National Park, Slovenia: mojca.smolej@tnp.gov.si
Name: Julian Alps Transboundary Ecoregion
Countries: Slovenia and Italy
Surface Area: 244,714 hectares
Year of formal TB agreement: 2009
International designations: ECST (2016), EUROPARC Transboundary Parks Programme (2009), Transboundary UNESCO MAB (2024)

Across the Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve spanning Italy and Slovenia, protected area managers and local communities are demonstrating how public-private partnerships can generate revenue streams that support both conservation and livelihoods. Their approach, framed by EUROPARC's European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST)[1], offers a replicable model for engaging businesses as conservation partners.

A Framework for Collaboration

The ECST programme facilitates structured dialogue between protected areas, local authorities, and businesses to develop common visions, strategies, and coordinated action plans for sustainable tourism. EUROPARC recognizes parks, businesses, and tour operators successfully operating within this framework, creating quality standards benefiting both conservation and economic development.

Transboundary Implementation

In the Julian Alps, engaging the tourism sector requires constant attention, patience, and community presence. The Julian Alps Association in Slovenia exemplifies this approach, a genuine community network linking local organizations with park management toward harmonized sustainable tourism development. Through the project, successful Slovenian practices are crossing into Italy's Julian Alps, working toward unified transboundary implementation.

Community at the Center

Local NGOs, particularly Rural Women's Associations, hold special significance as guardians of traditional knowledge. These partnerships manifest tangibly: associations use park information centers while preparing traditional dishes for events and leading workshops on culinary and craft heritage. Park spaces become meeting points where heritage and modernity converge, infusing tourism with authenticity.

The ECST framework engages diverse tourism operators through training, public meetings, and thematic working groups that raise awareness about sustainable tourism principles.

Economic Integration

Within Julian Prealps Nature Park, strategic agricultural

References

1 https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/

initiatives link to “Park Brand” and “Park Basket” projects, establishing relationships with farmers committed to protecting local products. One women’s association promoted recovery of brovedâr (fermented turnips), now recognized as a Slow Food Presidium, demonstrating how protected area partnerships revitalize traditional food systems.

Measurable Benefits

For transboundary parks, ECST provides frameworks encouraging cross-border cooperation. Shared visions foster mutual understanding and enable best practice exchanges. Triglav National Park, recognized as a green destination based on ECST work, received Slovenia’s GREEN PARKS national quality mark, valuable when applying for EU funds.

Business involvement financially supports biodiversity conservation: investments operators make to improve environmental performance reduce negative impacts and increase positive contributions tourism makes to nature.

The approach demonstrates that when protected areas maintain continuous community presence—offering guidance, supporting projects, and building relationships, conservation and economic development reinforce rather than contradict each other.

ECST Award 2025

Another crossborder story: “A Sustainable Journey” invites visitors to a crossborder trip between Mercantour National Parks – FR, and Alpi Marittime Regional Park – IT, to listen local men and women, tourism entrepreneurs that love and care their protected territories. Watch this 9-minute movie in English, German, Italian, French or Spanish. In 2019, the film won the “TERRES DE L´EBRE- Best Movie Promoting Sustainability” Award, the Best Documentary at the Amorgos Film Festival, and the first place in the category ‘Environment and Ecology’ and second place in ‘Short Docs’ at the ART&TUR Festival.

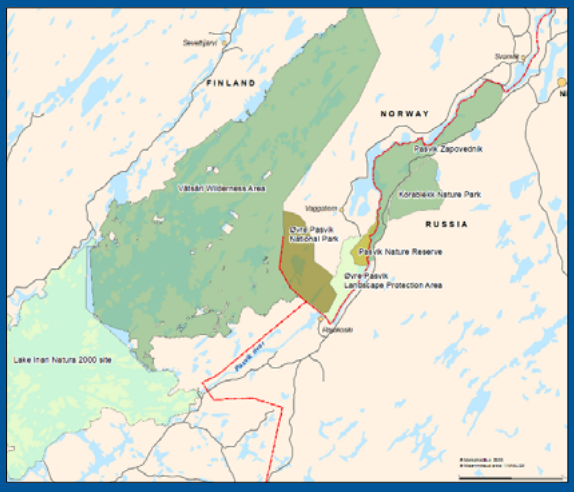
Watch here.

Indigenous Leadership in Transboundary Conservation: Sámi Culture and Nature Cooperation in Sámi

Contacts: Kirsi Ukkonen, Senior Specialist, Recreational Amenities, Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland,
Rune Benonisen, National Park Manager, Reisa National Park, Norway

- Respect sacred sites: https://www.luontoon.fi/en/articles/seidat-saamelaisten-pyhat-paikat
- Arctic Fox protection: https://www.fellesfjellrev.se/en/
- Háldi area: https://reisanasjonalpark.no/en/haldi-transboundary-area/

Name: Háldi Transboundary Area and Pasvik-Inari Transboundary Area
Countries: Finland and Norway
Surface Area: Pasvik-Inari Transboundary Area 2666 km ². Haldi 3099 km ².
Year of formal TB agreement: 2008 Pasvik-Inari and 2021 Háldi.
International designations: EUROPARC Transboundary Parks Programme, Natura 2000



Between Finland and Norway, two cooperation areas within the EUROPARC Federation's Transboundary Park Program, Háldi Transboundary Area and Pasvik-Inari Transboundary Area, demonstrate how Indigenous leadership strengthens conservation.

Háldi Transboundary Area links Finland's Käsivarsi Wilderness Reserve with Norway's Reisa National Park and Ráisduottarháldi Protected Landscape. Pasvik-Inari Transboundary Area covers Finland's Vätsäri Wilderness Reserve and Lake Inari Natura 2000 area, alongside Norway's Øvre Pasvik National Park, Øvre Pasvik Landscape Protection Area, and Pasvik Nature Reserve. Russia participated until 2022.

Indigenous Governance

The Sámi are Europe's only Indigenous people. Nature forms the foundation of Sámi identity, spiritual tradition, and traditional livelihoods across Sápmi, spanning northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Both transboundary areas lie within Sápmi, requiring special consideration for Sámi culture in conservation efforts. Sámi communities participate in planning management through steering groups and Akwé Kon guidelines. In Norway, Sámi Parliament representatives serve as permanent members of local National Parks Boards, ensuring Indigenous governance is embedded, not consultative.

Historical Context

Háldi is divided by one of Europe's oldest borders, established in 1751 when Sweden and Denmark-Norway agreed boundaries, dividing Sápmi between states for the first time. Annual reindeer herder migrations continued until

1852, when Russia closed the border, ending centuries-old Sámi migrations from Finland's winter pastures to Norway's Arctic coast summer pastures.

Today, the Finland-Norway border is fenced to prevent reindeer crossings. The Sámi reindeer herding community has adapted: 175 years after border closure, vital reindeer husbandry thrives on both sides. Sámi culture and society remain strongly connected to reindeer husbandry throughout these areas.

Conservation Success: Arctic Fox Recovery

By the late 20th century, Arctic Fox populations neared extinction. Norway, Sweden, and Finland launched joint Nordic conservation including supplementary feeding, red fox population control, captive breeding, and pup releases. In summer 2022, Arctic foxes bred in Finland for the first time in nearly 25 years, with successful breeding continuing annually. This cooperation continues within Háldi Transboundary Area.

Living Cultural Heritage

Three Sámi groups, Skolt Sámi, Inari Sámi, and North Sámi, inhabit the Pasvik-Inari area. Sámi rights to manage cultural heritage are safeguarded by law, including language protection.
Pine trees from which Sámi collected phloem (inner bark) have been registered across Norwegian protected areas. Dried and ground phloem provided nutrition. Hundreds of trees bearing harvesting marks from 1700-1900 survive because Sámi harvested sustainably, allowing continued growth, typical of practices leaving minimal traces.

Sacred sites remain integral to Sámi identity. These distinctive natural formations, like Äijih ("Grandfather") island in Lake Inari, deserve respectful distance. Sámi languages are part of everyday transboundary work in encounters and materials, demonstrating that Sámi cultures live and thrive in these conservation areas.

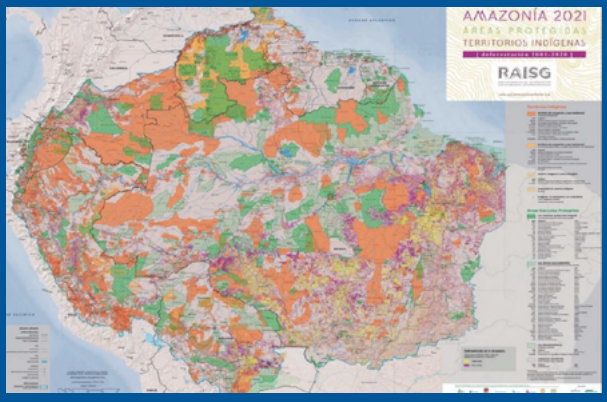
Äijih sacret sland of Inari Sámi_Photo KirsiUkkonen

Cub of Arctic fox_Photo Martti Rikkonen

Reisa National Park_Photo Jan R. Olsen

Amazonian Resilience Through Transboundary Cooperation: Integrating Indigenous Knowledge an Regional Governance

Contact: Gisela Paredes Leguizamón, Specialized Professional in Development and Land Use Planning, National Natural Parks of Colombia: Gisela.paredes@parquesnacionales.gov.
Name: Amazon Biome Transboundary Conservation
Countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela
International designations: Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO) member states
Surface Area: Amazon basin region



The Amazon basin, spanning eight countries and home to nearly 500 Indigenous Peoples, faces unprecedented threats from extractivist development models, land-use change, and climate impacts. While individual Amazonian nations have established protected area systems with varying success, preventing the region from crossing ecological tipping points requires coordinated transboundary action that transcends political boundaries.

Regional Cooperation Framework

The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO), uniting Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela, provides crucial infrastructure for harmonizing conservation approaches across the region. This cooperation mechanism addresses shared challenges including illegal economies, transnational crime, and asymmetries among member states, facilitating integrated management of watersheds, ecosystems, and cultural landscapes that extend beyond national borders.

Biocultural Management and Indigenous Leadership

Effective Amazonian conservation requires community-based approaches incorporating traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). Indigenous Peoples and local communities serve as essential biodiversity stewards, yet their contributions remain undervalued. With its nearly 500 Indigenous Peoples, 66 of whom are in voluntary isolation or

initial contact, underscoring the territory's inhabited character and the necessity of recognizing territorial autonomy and land access rights as foundational to cultural survival and ecosystem management.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches

Women and elders play critical but underestimated roles transmitting knowledge to younger generations within traditional communities. Adopting gender-sensitive frameworks acknowledges these contributions while promoting intergenerational and intercultural dialogue. Protecting this knowledge requires formal recognition, accreditation, and safeguarding through territorial planning processes that respect unique occupation patterns and economic models.

Path Forward

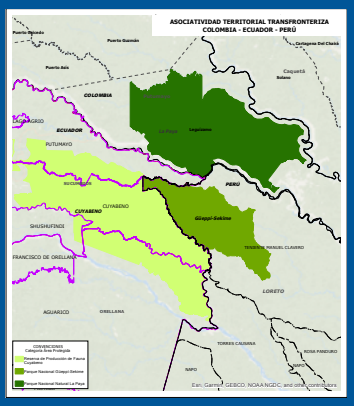
Sustainability pathways for the Amazon demand articulation among multilevel public policies, global economic instruments, and sectoral plans, requiring fundamental shifts in development paradigms. State-community-private sector collaboration must prioritize environmental sustainability, equity, and inclusion within frameworks protecting human rights, conserving biodiversity, ensuring social wellbeing, and advancing cooperative climate action. Only through such integrated, transboundary approaches can the Amazon's ecological resilience and cultural diversity be maintained for future generations.

Diversidad de régimen político y organización político-administrativa de los países que comparten el Bioma Amazónico

País	Régimen Político	División Político-Administrativa
Bolivia	Estado unitario descentralizado con autonomías	Bolivia está conformado por 9 Departamentos, 112 Provincias, 342 Municipios, 1 Territorio Originario Campesino
Brasil	Presidencialismo/República federal/República constitucional.	Brasil está conformado por 26 Estados y el Distrito Federal de Brasilia. Asimismo, Brasil posee 5.564 municipios.
Ecuador	Presidencialista/República unitaria descentralizada	Colombia está organizada en 32 departamentos, 11 Distritos Especiales, 18 áreas no municipalizadas y el Distrito capital.
Colombia	Presidencialista/República unitaria	Organizado en 24 provincias, 221 cantones y 1.228 parroquias urbanas (412) y rurales (816).
Guyana	República cooperativa, Gobierno parlamentario semi-presidencial.	Incluye 10 regiones subdivididas en consejos vecinales.
Perú	República, democrática, unitaria, representativa y descentralizada	Organizado en 24 departamentos o regiones y una provincia constitucional, 194 provincias y 1.828 distritos.
Surinam	República, Democracia Liberal	Está conformado por 10 distritos: Brokopondo, Commewijne, Coronie, Marowijne, Nickerie, Para, Paramaribo, Saramacca, Sipaliwini, Wanica.
Venezuela	República bolivariana federal	Organizada en 23 Estados, Dependencias federales, Territorios federales, Distrito capital, 335 municipios, 1.146 parroquias civiles.

Transboundary Conservation Influencing National Policy: Colombia's Cross-Border Territorial Planning Framework

Contact: Gisela Paredes Leguizamón, Specialized Professional in Development and Land Use Planning, National Natural Parks of Colombia: Gisela.paredes@parquesnacionales.gov.co
Name: La Paya-Güeppí-Cuyabeno Tri-border Initiative
Countries: Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador
Surface Area: Three protected areas corridor : La Paya NP (422,000 ha), Güeppi-Sekimo NP (200,000 ha), Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve (600,000 ha)
Year of formal TB agreement: Trinational Program established (date not specified); policy pilot since 2012
International designations: National protected areas in three countries
Reference: Paredes-Leguizamón, G. (2012). Integration of protected areas into territorial planning, a necessity for achieving human well-being. National Natural Parks of Colombia.



In Colombia, transboundary conservation is reshaping how national governments approach territorial planning at international borders. Since 2012, National Natural Parks of Colombia has implemented an inter-institutional, community-based, multi-scale strategy integrating protected areas into normative instruments, planning processes, and public policies for territorial organization.

From Research to Policy Action

Based on research titled "Integration of protected areas into territorial planning, a necessity for achieving human well-being" (Paredes-Leguizamón 2012), the initiative structured eight pilot cases across different territories. One exemplifies cross-border innovation: the "Associative scheme of border territorial planning based on transboundary conservation" in Leguízamo Municipality and La Paya National Natural Park.

This pilot advances transboundary management of three protected areas, La Paya National Natural Park (Colombia), Güeppi Sekime (Peru), and Cuyabeno Fauna Production Reserve (Ecuador), establishing an associative framework for border territorial planning. The scheme articulates and influences development planning and land-use decisions at local levels across three municipalities: Leguizamo/Putumayo/Colombia, Soplín Vargas/Putumayo/Peru, and Puerto del Carmen de Putumayo/Sucumbíos/Ecuador.

Achievements and Institutional Integration

The initiative achieved significant milestones:

1. Inter-ministerial coordination: Joint work between Colombia's Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Planning Department, and National Natural Parks.
2. Comparative analysis: Identification of diversity in conceptualization, methodological approaches, instruments, procedures, and regulations, plus competent entities for development planning and territorial organization across three countries.
3. Program strengthening: Demonstrated need to strengthen the Trinational Program for Conservation and Sustainable Development of the La Paya-Güeppí-Cuyabeno Protected Areas Corridor, promoting cooperative work between environmental ministries, territorial entities, and other ministries promoting infrastructure (public services, transportation, health, education), development, and territorial planning that guides land occupation models and regulates land use.

Workshop on the exchange of knowledge and experiences on development planning, land-use planning, and protected area management in Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, aimed at jointly building a tri-border land-use planning framework. Puerto Leguízamo, March 16-17, 2016

Policy Impact

This process successfully positioned protected areas and border territories within Colombia's General Territorial Planning Policy. Today, progress continues in regulating cross-border territorial associations, recognizing that ecosystems, species, marine environments, risk, climate change, and culture transcend political-administrative boundaries.

Adjacent protected areas in border territories contribute significantly to achieving inclusive, resilient, and sustainable territories through joint work among environmental authorities, territorial entities, and local communities.

The Colombian case demonstrates how transboundary conservation can catalyze policy reform at national scales, transforming borders from barriers into frameworks for integrated planning that respects both ecological connectivity and cultural landscapes.

Workshop: CROSS-BORDER TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATIVITY WITH A DIFFERENTIAL APPROACH WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE AROUND WATER AND PEOPLE Leguizamo Putumayo, October 15-17, 2025

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FOR THIS NUMBER:

Editors in Chief
Piet Theron
Stefania Petrosillo

Proofreading
Steve Collins

Design
Siyabonga Msomi (Full Circle DB)
Original design
Imre Sebestyén, jr (Unit Graphics)

Project Managers
Thuliswa Nazo
Deborah Weber

Contributors
Kevan Zunckel
Peter Shadie
Eleanor Muller
Stefania Petrosillo
Gisela Paredes Leguizamón
Mojca Smolej
Kirsi Ukkonen
Rune Benonisen
Tatiana Ivanova
Liyuan Qian
Doris Imhasly
Francisco Asturias
Sanet Geldenhuys
Eliot Zvarevashe
Dr Marisa Coetzee
Helena Atkinson
Zvikomborero Tangawamira
Delcio Juliao
Jill Hepp
Faryde Carlier
Carol Chao

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Contact
Stefania Petrosillo
Chair TBCSG
stefpetro@yahoo.com

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Thank you!

Stefania Petrosillo
Chair

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