



Regional HCV Event held in South Africa

The **High Conservation Value Resource Network** hosted its second regional event at the head office of the Provincial Government Conservation Authority, Ezemvelo KwaZulu Natal Wildlife (EKZN Wildlife), in Queen Elizabeth Park, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, from 12-16 November 2007. The occasion drew representatives from forestry businesses, consultancies associated with the certification industry and the South African FSC National Initiative, environmental NGOs, and government.



The one and a half day stakeholder meeting provided an opportunity for information exchange about the identification, management and monitoring of HCVs in forest landscapes and other ecosystems. While the event focused on South Africa, additional regional perspectives were provided by speakers from Ghana and Mozambique where there has been recent progress with national interpretations of the HCV framework. The agenda, participant list and all presentations made at the meeting are available for download at www.hcvnetwork.org.

Additional capacity building events during the week included: an introductory training course, a field trip (courtesy of Mondi), and a technical workshop to discuss extending the HCV concept to non-forest ecosystems and guidance for the forthcoming FSC National interpretation process in South Africa. Another report summarising the main outcomes from this discussion is also available from the Network' website.

Stakeholder Meeting

Introducing the HCV concept and the Resource Network

Peter Gardiner, of Mondi Business Paper and a member of the HCV Resource Network's Steering Group (SG), welcomed participants on behalf of the Network, drawing attention to the importance of this global effort in its provision of a potential opportunity to combine a variety of multiple of concepts involved in conservation planning efforts in Africa. Additionally, the generous hospitality of EKZN Wildlife in making their facilities available for the week was gratefully acknowledged.

The relevance of the HCV concept, and hence the impetus behind their subsequent involvement with the Resource Network (as current members of the SG), was shown from Tetra Pak's perspective. This international packaging organisation uses wood fibre to produce liquid



packaging board, and is committed to sourcing this from independently certified, sustainably managed forests.

Assorted representatives of the Network secretariat provided an introduction to the HCV concept, and the Resource Network by:

- Considering the history and development of the HCV formulation, and its expanding applications outside of the FSC forest certification system within it was originally developed.



- Highlighting a number of case studies showing the variety of contexts (including certification, conversion, and regional conservation planning) in which the HCV approach has been used across the globe (in this instance, ranging from Argentina, Canada, Ghana and Indonesia to Russia).
- Emphasizing the increasing need for a network of informed users to promote both collaboration and consistency in the use of the HCV approach.
- Describing the aims, structure, functions and activities of the HCV Resource Network, and inviting delegates to get involved in this initiative by registering as participants and practitioners, and sharing information on specific projects in different countries.

Presentations from South Africa and selected African regions

The regional focus was on South Africa, and individual presentations were made by representatives from: conservation organisations, the plantation industry, the certification sector, and experts working with the highly diverse and threatened grasslands and wetlands which are of particular national significance.

An opening address on behalf of EKZN Wildlife, whose mandate is conservation in the province, looked at their Biodiversity Spatial Framework and how this uses systematic conservation planning to identify important sites for protection in KwaZulu Natal.

The current extent of plantation forestry in South Africa, and historical approaches to environmental management in these, was provided in an overview given by Sappi Forests. This examined the contrasting ways the HCV concept has been interpreted by forestry companies, and how Sappi itself defines, manages and monitors HCV areas in its plantations. The presentation concluded by looking at how identification of HCV sites might feed into the national framework for Biodiversity Stewardship, and other related initiatives (eg: the National Forest Act to be published by the Department of Water and Forests at the end of 2007).

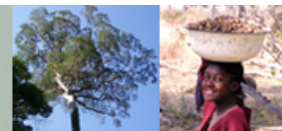
The audience also gained a detailed insight into the design and implementation of Mondi's Conservation Planning tool, which builds on a number of existing information sources to produce GIS coverage at national, provincial and farm levels. This is then used to identify, and assign priority rankings to different areas of conservation significance, and the corridors linking these, in Mondi's land holdings.

A presentation by SABS (South African Bureau of Standards), a global partner of the Soil Association, demonstrated the importance of HCV assessment especially as regards the FSC controlled wood standard which excludes wood from uncertified forests where HCVs are threatened by management activities.



The forestry coordinator of SANBI's (South African National Biodiversity Institute) Grasslands Programme provided a background to the extent and nature of this extremely prevalent, yet inadequately protected, species-rich biome (covering nearly 30% of the landscape). This initiative attempts to mainstream grasslands biodiversity into the forestry sector by mitigating (through improved management), protecting (through formal conservation), and promoting responsible expansion (through pioneering a certification scheme for small growers). The potential role of the HCV approach in achieving each of these functions was highlighted, and a number of recommendations made regarding its use in non-forest ecosystems, and beyond FSC certification

The Mondi Wetlands Project, an NGO collaboration between WWF, WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society South Africa), the Mazda Wildlife Fund and Mondi BP, considered the range of wetland types and the variety of



critical services they provide. The historical degradation of these ecosystems in South Africa has resulted in the development of a number of tools for the management of these potential HCV habitats.

The meeting was further enriched by the experience of two other African nations. From Ghana, there was the example of recent experience of producing a national HCV interpretation. This was coordinated by the Ghana FTN in response to current inadequacies in existing conservation strategies for the purposes of achieving certification, and the presentation summarised both the process this involved and the resulting definitions of local HCVs.

From WWF Mozambique and the National Directorate of Land, there was another example of using the HCV framework, and consideration of how this had developed as a result of a private sector initiative to develop SFM standards for the country. Some of the resulting outcomes, including the need for land zoning agreements with local stakeholders, and recent



attempts to identify and map HCV areas within the privately managed, protected “coutadas” (hunting blocks) were also described.

A list of the presentations made during the meeting is provided in Box 1, and they are available for download from the [Network Meetings and Briefings](#) section of the Resource Centre on the website (relevant reports and tools produced by some of these projects are also available from country and/or project pages).

Box 1: Meeting Presentations

DAY 1

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Peter Gardiner, *Mondi/HCV Network Steering Group*

KZN Wildlife and the KZN Biodiversity Spatial Framework: Peter Goodman, *Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife*

The High Conservation Value Concept - Background, Definitions and Key Aspects: Anders Lindhe, *ProForest*

The HCV Resource Network: Aims, Function, Structure, and Activities: Nilofer Ghaffar, *ProForest/HCV Network Co-ordinator*

Tetra Pak’s perspective on HCVs and the Resource Network : Mario Abreu, *Tetra Pak International/ HCV Network Steering Group co-chair*

Global Context: The use of the HCV Framework in Selected Countries, Tim Rayden, *ProForest*

DAY 2

Mondi Conservation Planning Tool: Identification of HCV Areas: Peter Gardiner, *Mondi*

HCV Use Within Africa: Updates From Ghana, Mustapha Seidu, *WWF-WARPO*

HCV Concept in Mozambique: Rito Mabunda, *WWF Mozambique*

HCV Areas – A Plantation Forestry Perspective: Peta Hardy, *Sappi Forests*

SABS and FSC Certification: Conrad Geldenhuys, *PROTOCOL*

Application of the HCV concept outside forests – some topics for discussion, Anders Lindhe, *ProForest*

Grassland Biodiversity And Plantation Certification: Extending The HCV Concept, Steve Germishuizen, *The Grasslands Programme (SANBI)*

Wetlands as HCV Resources: A Local Perspective, Vaughn Koopman, *Mondi Wetlands Project*

Wrap up and Closing Remarks, Anders Lindhe, *ProForest*

Breakout Sessions

1. Achieving consistency
2. Integrating existing approaches



The stakeholder meeting also included discussion groups which reported back on two main issues:

1. **Achieving consistency**, which explored the advantages and challenges associated with attempts at national interpretations of HCVs
2. **Integrating existing approaches**, which looked at attempts to define the extent and management of areas to be conserved.

Summary of main conclusions

As a result of the various presentations made, feedback from the two discussion groups, and much debate over the course of the stakeholder meeting, a number of major points emerged:

Benefits of using the HCV approach: The approach is most appropriately regarded as a market-related tool to be employed within voluntary, yet regulated and 'committed' contexts, such as FSC certification and a growing number of other initiatives for responsible production of commodities (eg: RSPO, RTRS standards).

A main benefit, in contrast with most other conservation measures, is the essentially holistic nature of the concept, which elevates social issues to the same level as ecological ones. There is also valuable potential in applying the HCV approach to help to identify gaps in existing initiatives and legislation.

Additionally it was recognised that regular use and/ or implication of the concept may provide additional leverage for voluntary conservation by giving green credit to producers that conserve HCVs. If established enough, it may in time even contribute outside regulated frameworks by exerting pressure on non-committed producers, left potentially vulnerable to negative publicity through accusations of the destruction of HCV areas.

Relationship with other conservation measures: The HCV framework provides an

assessment, policy and advocacy tool informed by existing initiatives and procedures, as opposed to being a new scientific means of conservation planning.

Whilst systematic conservation planning approaches may determine what measures are needed for certain levels of long-term biodiversity protection, applying the HCV concept can help define what proportion of these may be realistically demanded, and achieved by responsible producers.

Existing Challenges and Future Needs: In the context of smallholders, fewer "payback" opportunities are likely to mean that additional incentives may be needed (eg: tax reductions as in EKZN Wildlife's Stewardship approach).

More refined generic guidance is required to link current HCV definitions (and associated toolkit interpretations and examples) to operational, national interpretations, and the application of the Controlled Wood standard is in need of additional guidance. A number of participants also called for greater clarity in the relationship between the FSC's Principles 9 and Principle 6.

The issue of scope, distinguishing "high" conservation values from "ordinary" conservation values, is important operationally and for the future of the concept, especially in the context of conversion scenarios. Using the concept outside established frameworks continues to pose challenges, and more progress is required as regards 'safeguards' for such situations.

Field trip to Gilboa Estate





Following the stakeholder meeting, Mondi generously sponsored and organised a field trip for all interested participants to a 5,000 ha farm in the Natal Midlands, originally planted with soft wood pine in the 1940s, and now owned by Mondi Shanduka Newsprint. Nearly half of the estate is currently managed as an open area, and participants learnt of how Mondi's Conservation Planning Tool has been used in practice to identify the location of HCV grasslands and wetlands in this.

Students from Stellenbosch University described recent research aimed at examining the biodiversity value of the remaining network of remnant grasslands. From EKZN Wildlife, there was additional discussion of their Stewardship Programme, which provides a number of financial incentives to assist land owners to manage areas for biodiversity conservation. There was also a visit to a "Wetlands for Life" restoration project.



As a result of all of these collaborative efforts, a genuine attempt to secure the long-term conservation of these valuable areas is being made.

Technical Discussion Group

The week's activities ended with a smaller technical discussion, dedicated to exploring the implications of extending the HCV concept to other non-forested ecosystems, and considering guidance for the forthcoming FSC national interpretation process in South Africa.



The main conclusion of this discussion was that there is an increasing case to extend the HCV concept, and associated definitions, to incorporate other ecosystems, particularly from a global perspective. This was seen as especially significant in the context of future regulation of plantation expansion.

Workshop participants agreed on a number of recommendations to be made to the FSC, and the Network proposed that these would be discussed further at the next meeting of its Steering Group. A separate summary of this report is available from the Network's website.

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