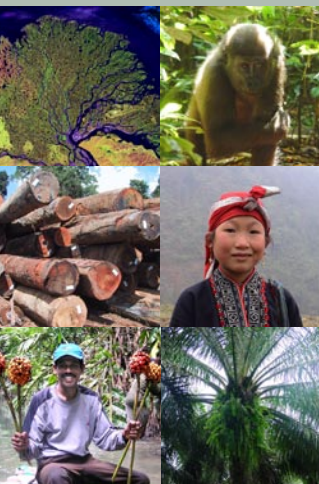


The High Conservation Value Framework

HCV HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE *resource network*



The High Conservation Value (HCV) framework is a valuable, flexible conservation tool with practical applications in natural resource management, land-use planning, the design of responsible purchasing and investment policies and conservation advocacy. The HCV approach was developed in the context of FSC forest certification but is relevant to all kinds of ecosystems and habitats.

The High Conservation Value Resource Network is a network of organisations and individuals using the HCV approach, including: forest owners and managers; suppliers, buyers and certifiers of sustainable timber, palm oil, soy, and non-timber forest products; international development agencies; and environmental and social NGOs. The Network promotes practical conservation by supporting collaboration, providing information on the evolving usage of HCVs, and ensuring that a consistent approach to HCVs is understood and applied throughout the world.



What are High Conservation Values?

All natural habitats possess some inherent conservation values, for example they may support rare or endemic species, or provide clean water or natural products harvested by local people. High Conservation Values (HCVs) are biological, ecological, social or cultural values which are considered **outstandingly significant** or **critically important**, at the national, regional or global level. The six High Conservation Values cover the range of conservation priorities shared by a wide range of stakeholder groups.

Whilst national parks and reserves protect many HCVs, far more exist in managed habitats (such as production forests) and mixed-use landscapes. In considering any land management plan, from natural forest management and selective logging, to plantation site selection and design, it is these values that need to be protected.

A High Conservation Value area is the area (e.g. a forest, a grassland, a watershed, or a landscape-level ecosystem) that needs to be appropriately managed in order to **maintain or enhance** the identified values. Identifying the critical values and the areas where they occur is therefore the essential first step in developing appropriate management for them.

Development of the concept

The HCV concept was introduced for forest management certification by the Forest Stewardship Council (1999), to define forest areas of outstanding importance - High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF).

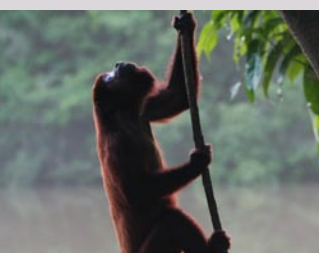
The 6 High Conservation Values

High Conservation Value areas are critical areas in a landscape which need to be appropriately managed in order to maintain or enhance High Conservation Values. There are 6 main types of HCV area:

- HCV 1 Areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g. endemism, endangered species, refugia).
- HCV 2 Globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape-level areas where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
- HCV 3 Areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.
- HCV 4 Areas that provide basic ecosystem services in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).
- HCV 5 Areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health).
- HCV 6 Areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

source: HCV Resource Network Charter, adapted from the Forest Stewardship Council.

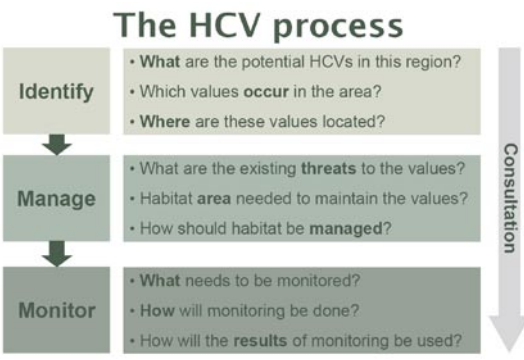
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The HCV process developed by FSC requires that managers *identify* any HCVs that occur within their forest management units, *manage* them in order to maintain or enhance the values identified, and *monitor* the success of this management. Stakeholder consultation is required not only in identifying values, but in devising management and monitoring. Decisions regarding HCV management must always be **precautionary**, i.e. lack of full scientific certainty should not prevent steps being taken to avoid or minimize potential threats to HCVs.



This process does not necessarily mean that HCV areas are always 'set aside' for conservation. Appropriate HCV management within natural forests may range from complete protection to extractive uses such as selective logging or harvesting of natural products, *so long as these are managed to an agreed standard*, and monitored for any negative effects on HCVs.

Key strengths of the HCV approach

- **Framework:** HCV toolkits provide widely accepted criteria and guidance for making decisions to conserve the important attributes of natural habitats.
- **Process:** the approach does not make management prescriptions, but requires that process and outcomes are acceptable to all the key stakeholders.
- **Flexibility:** the process can make use of existing initiatives and data and can be combined with various methodologies.
- **Participation:** the process requires wide

consultation and takes into account local peoples' needs.

- **Objectivity:** transparent and neutral data analysis for policy and planning decisions.

The HCV toolkits provide valuable *site level* management guidance, but for good decision-making, understanding the status and trends of HCVs in the *landscape context* is critical.



HCV mapping in West Kalimantan (Courtesy Daemeter Consulting)

Uses of the HCV approach

The potential for using the HCV framework to integrate forestry, agriculture, plantations and ecosystem carbon management with social and ecological conservation priorities has lead to its use in a wide range of processes:

- As a key part of sustainability standards for palm oil and soy production, and for biofuels more generally.
- In responsible purchasing and investment policies by major product buyers and financial institutions
- In landscape-level planning, for prioritising areas to manage for conservation
- As a conservation advocacy tool by major international NGOs.

Safeguards: *The HCV Resource Network Charter specifies Principles of Application for the use of the HCV approach. These require **legal compliance and respect for tenure, customary rights and consent procedures; prevent any conversion activities which could adversely affect HCVs, and require rigorous and balanced stakeholder consultation prior to any other conversion; and call for responsible management of other (non-HCV) biodiversity and environmental values.***

