



HCV Assessment Report Template

Instructions

This report template must be used by all licensed assessors. However, in exceptional circumstances, with prior permission from the High Conservation Value Resource Network (HCVRN), a non-standard report format may be used with an appropriate cover sheet¹. This report template should be used along with the **HCV Assessment Manual** and is aligned with the checklists that the ALS Quality Panel use for the evaluation of HCV assessment reports.

Use of the template is important for improving the consistency and assuring the quality of HCV assessment reports, a central objective of the ALS. Though there may be multiple valid ways of presenting information in an HCV assessment report, in order to encourage concise reports that address all required topics and to facilitate their evaluation, licensed assessors are required to use this template. The assessor must include sufficient details for identification of HCVs and recommendations on management and monitoring, but should aim to present information as concisely as reasonably possible. **The body of the HCV assessment report must not exceed 45 pages excluding cover page, table of contents, maps, figures and tables, reference list and annexes.** The guidelines given for page numbers per section are only a recommendation and the assessor may reallocate page numbers from one section to another at their discretion, so long as all the important aspects are covered in the order specified. **Font size of 10 point or greater must be used.** All other supplementary information is to be presented in annexes. **The final report must be submitted in PDF format and must not exceed 20 MB in size.** If the assessor cannot include all of the necessary maps and other information within the document size limit, then links must be inserted to direct the Quality Panel to file sharing platforms (e.g. Dropbox). If links are used, the Quality Panel will download and save a copy of the report in the HCVRN database. This will be considered the official version used for evaluation by the Quality Panel.

Licensed assessors may use branded templates from their companies or organisation in terms of logos, font type and design. However, **the report must strictly follow the order (e.g. of subheadings) and content presented below:**

- **Cover page**
- **Table of contents**
- **List of acronyms and abbreviations**
- **List of figures, tables and maps**
- **Introduction and background**
 - Purpose of HCV assessment
 - HCV overview and references used
- **Description of the assessment area**
 - Site description
 - Landscape context
 - National and/or regional context

¹ Contact qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org for more information

- **HCV assessment team**
- **Methods**
- **Assessment findings / HCV identification**
 - HCV outcomes (e.g. presence, absence) and justification
 - Stakeholder consultation
- **HCV management and monitoring**
 - Threat assessment
 - Management and monitoring recommendations
- **Synthesis**
 - Summary of findings and recommendations
 - Full HCV and HCV management area maps and overarching observations related to integrated management across HCVs
- **References**
- **Annexes**

If you have any questions regarding this template please contact qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org

Contents

Cover page

- Date of report
- Name of lead assessor
- Contact information of lead assessor (organisation, address)
- ALS licence type: (provisional or full)
- Organisation commissioning HCV assessment (name & contact details)
- Location of assessment i.e. country, region/province, district/municipality, nearest town or city² (if applicable)
- Dates of assessment (month/year)
- Size of assessment area (ha)
- Current or planned land use(s) for assessment area (e.g. forestry, oil palm plantation, soy, sugar)
- Certification scheme (specify certification scheme or N/A if taking place outside of a widely recognised scheme, if outside scheme, what is motivation for assessment?)

² If there are multiple towns around a MU, the UTM coordinate for centroid may be more appropriate

1. Introduction and background (< 4 Pages)

The introduction needs to give a general overview on the purpose of the assessment, and background to include:

- The general purpose of the HCV assessment, e.g.:
 - to identify HCVs in the assessment area
 - to provide management and monitoring recommendations to ensure that production activities do not negatively impact HCVs
 - to comply with certification scheme requirements;
- Summary introduction to the six HCV³ definitions and to national and global references used to interpret HCV definitions (national toolkits, HCVRN guidance).

HCV 1: Concentrations of biological diversity including endemic species, and rare, threatened or endangered (RTE) species that are significant at global, regional or national levels.

HCV 2: Large landscape-level ecosystems, ecosystem mosaics and Intact Forest Landscapes that are significant at global, regional or national levels, and that contain viable populations of the great majority of the naturally occurring species in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.

HCV 3: Rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems, habitats or refugia.

HCV 4: Basic ecosystem services in critical situations including protection of water catchments and control of erosion of vulnerable soils and slopes.

HCV 5: Sites and resources fundamental for satisfying the basic necessities of local communities or indigenous peoples (for example for livelihoods, health, nutrition, water), identified through engagement with these communities or indigenous peoples.

HCV 6: Sites, resources, habitats and landscapes of global or national cultural, archaeological or historical significance, and/or of critical cultural, ecological, economic or religious/sacred importance for the traditional cultures of local communities or indigenous peoples, identified through engagement with these local communities or indigenous peoples.

Box 1 HCV definitions, FSC P&C v 5 2012 and HCV Resource Network 2017

- Status of project or development (e.g. forestry, agriculture – specify if greenfield – new expansion, brownfield – expansion or rehabilitation of agricultural land, operational farm, concession or plantation), start date of production activities, extent and dates of clearing (if applicable).
- Relevant background information on the Organisation commissioning the assessment including:
 - Whether the Organisation already has similar projects in the country or region.
 - Relevant policies or membership in certification schemes.
 - The financial sponsor of the project/development and the HCV assessment.

³ Include summary table of current HCV definitions (see annex 1 of this template)

2. Description of the assessment area (< 6 pages)

Site description

- Description of the assessment area (name, location, size/area, nature of the development (e.g. forestry concession, oil palm plantation)), scale and intensity of operations;
- Map showing location of the HCV assessment area (management unit, plantation, concession, etc.) in the country.

Note on Maps

Maps are a key outcome of the HCV assessment and it is vital that they are clearly presented. Maps must be appropriately scaled, clear and legible. It must be clearly stated whether maps are final versions (i.e. ready for active HCV management to begin) or draft versions (e.g. maps of areas where more studies are required before deciding on HCV area boundaries or community use areas which may change after negotiation processes with local people). It must also be clear which maps were used during consultations. In cases where map scales would need to cover very large areas (e.g. > 1 million ha), assessors may insert hyperlinks in their reports to more user-friendly maps available online.

Wider landscape context

The key social and biological features of the wider landscape⁴ must be clearly described, including, but not limited to, information on:

- Boundaries of assessment landscape
- Land use surrounding the assessment area (e.g. settlements, forestry, agriculture, infrastructure)
- Demographic and socioeconomic context
- Presence and condition of protected areas in the landscape (does the assessment area provide a vital supporting function to a protected area?)
- Key Biodiversity Areas⁵ in the landscape
- Relevant national or regional land use plan
- Major landforms, watersheds and rivers
- History of land use and development trends, including future plans⁶ (e.g. spatial planning maps of the MU and surrounding landscape, development initiatives and existing/proposed commercial exploitation and production licences)
- Physical features (e.g. geology, climate (rainfall, temperature), soil types, topography)
- Biodiversity characteristics (e.g., biogeographic zone, known features of biodiversity concern, major ecosystems, land cover, biophysical data, etc.)
- Occurrence of known populations of species of global concern and migration corridors in the landscape
- Ecosystem services (e.g. hydrology, erosion risk, etc.)

⁴ The wider landscape refers to the area surrounding the immediate assessment area (e.g. management unit or plantation), it is not of a specified size, but the assessor must determine what is relevant to consider. For more explanation on the importance of the landscape context see Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values http://www.hcvnetwork.org/resources/folder.2006-09-29.6584228415/2013_commonguidancev5

⁵ https://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/iucnmed/iucn_med_programme/species/key_biodiversity_areas/

⁶ Summary information to come from reports or interviews, however detailed information on land titles and transfers (in the legal sense) is not required.

- Social and cultural values (names and locations of settlements, population and ethnicity, socio-economic context infrastructure, migration trends, etc.)

National and/or regional context

It is useful to provide an overview of the national or other relevant regional context in which the HCV assessment was conducted. Region may refer to subnational or international areas. For instance, it may be useful to consider the subnational level for very large countries, or it may be useful to refer to larger regions which cover multiple countries (e.g. the Congo Basin) depending on what scale is most relevant for understanding the significance of the HCVs identified.

3. HCV Assessment Team (<1 page)

The assessment team needs to be presented in brief, including the contact information for HCV assessment team leader (name, institution, email address). For each assessment team member include:

Name, relevant qualifications (e.g. specify if holder of ALS licence), current institution (if relevant), role (e.g. Team Leader, socioeconomic expert, field survey expert) and expertise (e.g. plant taxonomy, hydrology, etc.). For expertise, team members can include a brief personal bio (4-5 lines) in this section. Include CVs (not to exceed 2 pages each) in an annex.

Name	ALS Licence	Institution	Role	Expertise
Margaret Smith	Provisional (license number)	EcoConsulting Ltd.	Team Leader	Tropical plant taxonomist, HCV general
Bob Jones	N/A	EcoConsulting Ltd.	Social Expert	Social science, community mapping

Table 1 Example of how to present HCV team members

4. Timeline and methods (< 6 pages)

An overview of the assessment timeline (calendar) and methods must be presented. The timeline needs to include the different steps of the pre-assessment and assessment phases as guided by Figure 1 in the HCV Assessment Manual. It is recommended that detailed methods are annexed rather than including them in the main report. It is important that detailed methods remain accessible, for quality assurance and in order to verify or replicate findings. This section needs to include the following (as relevant):

- Dates of major events in assessment chronology (from pre-assessment through assessment phase – refer to Figure 1 of the HCV Assessment Manual for key steps, e.g. scoping, field work, analysis, stakeholder consultation, peer review if applicable, reporting)
- Methods used to assess environmental and social context
- Field survey and sampling designs
- Key references and sources of information (overview of data source types with full list in bibliography)

5. Findings/results (< 20 pages)

This section must clearly present the results of the HCV assessment, adequately justified and supported by evidence. Where evidence is weak, assessors must demonstrate appropriate use of the precautionary approach (see HCV Assessor Manual). For all HCV decisions, the assessor should comment on the limitations of current knowledge and any areas of uncertainty concerning the findings. Results can be usefully presented in summary format at the beginning of this section before proceeding to detailed explanations and justifications for each HCV in the text below.

HCV	Definition	Brief description and justification		
		Present	Potential	Absent
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Table 2 Summary of HCV assessment findings

HCV outcomes and justification

For each HCV, the report must include:

- **A clear description of the six HCV categories** that includes a decision on presence, potential presence or absence of the HCV
- **Justification of the decision why an HCV is present, potentially present or absent.** This must include reference to supporting primary and secondary data, stakeholder consultation, etc. It is insufficient simply to declare “potential presence” of an HCV without providing an evaluation of the likelihood of presence and the limitations of current knowledge. If a value is deemed potentially present, precautionary management should be imposed upfront, otherwise a detailed outline of what needs to be done to identify the HCV for certain is required
- **Map(s) of HCV locations.** Maps can be placed in the results section or in the management recommendation section. It depends, as some maps may show both HCV locations and management areas – therefore they could be appropriate in either section. It is also useful to place hyperlinks to maps in the document for enhanced navigation. It is important that maps show the extent of each HCV both inside and outside the assessment area, where the HCV extends into the surrounding area

Stakeholder consultation

The assessment report must describe the approach (methods) used for stakeholder consultation, when consultation was undertaken during the course of the assessment and provide summary outcomes of consultations, including how (where applicable) inputs were incorporated into the final report. Detailed documentation of all consultations must be available for the Organisation commissioning the assessment, the HCVRN ALS Quality Panel and the Peer Reviewer (as an annex).

From this detailed documentation, a summary table of stakeholder consultation outcomes must be presented in this section of the report and include the following:

- **Stakeholder details**
 - Title or role
 - Organisation or social group (e.g. farmers, elders, companies, government, village administration, etc...)
- **Summary of key concerns/recommendations**
- **Assessment team response**

Before including stakeholder names and their concerns or recommendations in the final report, it is necessary to confirm that you have understood their concerns and recommendations and that you have their permission to list their names; this can be done for example by asking people to approve your written notes via email. However, in cases where people wish to remain anonymous, this must be respected. Assessors can include stakeholder opinions, concerns and recommendations whilst respecting their anonymity. It is also useful to include a brief description of the assessment team response or how stakeholder concerns were addressed and/or incorporated into the final HCV results and recommendations.

Name	Title/role	Organisation/ social group	Key concerns & recommendations / assessment team response
Jane Smith	Biologist	University ABC	How will the project manager ensure that the habitat of the endangered bird will not be fragmented by their operations? Ensure that important nesting sites are included in the conservation areas during spatial planning. This was included in the management recommendations.

Table 3 Example of how to present summary table of stakeholders consulted and their key concerns and recommendations.

6. HCV management and monitoring (< 6 pages)

Threat assessment

The report must include a description of the methodology used for threat assessment. The HCVRN does not prescribe a specific method, but recommends adapting useful tools such as those listed in the HCV Assessment Manual. Threats to each HCV must be identified, described and addressed through management recommendations.

HCV	Brief description of value present in assessment area	Main threats
1		

Table 4 Example of how threats may be presented in summary format.

Management and monitoring recommendations

For each HCV, management recommendations need to be presented, aimed at maintaining or enhancing the value. Management recommendations must be linked to maps and descriptions of HCV Management Areas. Maps should be presented following HCVRN guidance. The overarching purpose of HCV monitoring is to determine whether HCVs are being maintained over time. At the point of the assessment, monitoring options, even if fairly general, need to be presented for each HCV.

HCV	Threats	Management recommendations	Monitoring recommendations

Table 5 Example of how to present HCV management and monitoring recommendations in a summary table

7. Synthesis (<2 pages)

The synthesis should be brief, pulling together into one map all the HCV management areas, and drawing attention to integrated and cross-cutting management recommendations.

8. References

List of references (published and un-published). References must include proper citation of all information sources used for the HCV assessment report. Include web links to references whenever possible.

9. Annexes

The annexes must include all the materials which the Quality Panel and/or a peer reviewer needs to verify the credibility and robustness of decisions taken in the main report, but which would detract from the readability of the report if included in the main body.

Required annexes:

- CVs (<2 pages) of assessment team members (include relevant details on specialities (e.g. bird, mammal, plant taxonomy where applicable) and past experience in the general area assessed)
- Stakeholder consultation evidence: List of meetings, evidence of participation in meetings, list of people interviewed. Other relevant documents (e.g. correspondence from community, statements from stakeholders etc.)

Examples of other annexes which may be relevant:

- GIS maps, satellite imagery, aerial photography etc.
- A4-sized detailed maps
- Detailed methodologies
- Long lists of species, soil analyses, hydrology data or other technical information
- Detailed assessment timeline (clearly showing time in the field including dates, duration and location)
- List, and map, of site(s) visited
- Photos (low resolution or links to shared folder)