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This document outlines the classification scheme used for classifying protected areas and conservation areas into types and sub-types in the Protected Areas and Conservation Areas (PACA) Database. Definitions of the various types of protected areas and conservation areas are also provided

Classification
and definition
of protected
areas and
conservation
areas

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the classification scheme used for classifying protected areas and conservation areas in the Protected Areas and Conservation Areas Database. Definitions of the various types of protected areas and conservation areas are also provided.

The Department of Environmental Affairs maintains a spatial database on Protected Areas and Conservation Areas. The database is referred to as the PACA database. The database contains information related to protected areas – areas set aside primarily for nature and biodiversity, as well as conservation areas – areas of conservation importance where other land uses may also be permitted.

The definition of protected areas used in this document follows the definition of a protected area as defined in the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, (Act 57 of 2003). Chapter 2 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 sets out the “System of Protected Areas”, which consists of the following kinds of protected areas -

1. Special nature reserves,
2. National parks,
3. Nature reserves and
4. Protected environments (1-4 declared in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003);
5. World heritage sites declared in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act;
6. Marine protected areas declared in terms of the Marine Living Resources Act;
7. Specially protected forest areas, forest nature reserves, and forest wilderness areas declared in terms of the National Forests Act, 1998 (Act No. 84 of 1998); and
8. Mountain catchment areas declared in terms of the Mountain Catchment Areas Act, 1970 (Act No. 63 of 1970).

The types of conservation areas that are currently included in the database are the following:

1. Biosphere reserves
2. Ramsar sites
3. Stewardship agreements (other than nature reserves and protected environments)
4. Botanical gardens
5. Transfrontier conservation areas
6. Transfrontier parks
7. Military conservation areas
8. Conservancies

Taken together, protected areas and conservation areas make up the conservation estate.

CLASSIFICATION OF PROTECTED AREAS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

For purposes of the database on protected areas, land that forms part of the conservation estate are assigned a category, designation type and designation sub-type using the classification scheme outlined in the table below¹.

Protected areas: Type and Sub-type

CATEGORY		DESIGNATION TYPE		DESIGNATION SUB-TYPE
Protected Area	1	National Park	1.1	National Park
			1.2	NP Wilderness Area
			1.3	Not assigned
			1.4	Contractual Park
	2	Nature Reserve	2.1	Provincial Nature Reserve/Nature Reserve
			2.2	Private Nature Reserve
			2.3	Nature Reserve (Stewardship programme)
			2.4	NR Wilderness Area
			2.5	Bird Sanctuary
			2.6	Development Area Reserve
			2.7	Not assigned
	3	Special Nature Reserve	3.1	Special Nature Reserve
			3.2	Not assigned
	4	Mountain Catchment Area	4.1	Mountain Catchment Area
			4.2	Not assigned
	5	World Heritage Site	5.1	Core
			5.2	Buffer
			5.3	Not assigned
	6	Protected Environment	6.1	Protected Environment
			6.2	Protected Environment (Stewardship programme)
6.3			Protected Environment (Other)	
7	Forest Nature Reserve	7.1	Forest Nature Reserve	
8	Forest Wilderness Area	8.1	Forest Wilderness Area	
9	Specially Protected Forest Area	9.1	Specially Protected Forest Area	
10	Marine Protected Area	10.1	Marine Protected Area	
		10.2	Not assigned	

¹ The classification scheme presented here was introduced at the 2012 Biodiversity Planning Forum, held from 22-25 May 2012 at Skukuza, Kruger National Park. The scheme was subsequently refined based on inputs received at the forum meeting.

Conservation areas: Type and Sub-type

CATEGORY		DESIGNATION TYPE		DESIGNATION SUB-TYPE
Conservation area	1	Biosphere Reserve	1.1	Core area
			1.2	Buffer zone
			1.3	Transition area
			1.4	Not assigned
	2	Ramsar Site	2.1	Marine/Coastal Wetlands
			2.2	Inland Wetlands
			2.3	Human-made Wetlands
			2.4	Not assigned
	3	Stewardship Agreements other than Nature Reserves and Protected Environments	3.1	Biodiversity Agreement
			3.2	Voluntary Conservation Area
	4	Botanical Garden	4.1	Botanical Garden
			4.2	Wild Flower Reserve
	5	Transfrontier Conservation Area [Currently Outside database]	5.1	Transfrontier Conservation Area
	6	Transfrontier Park [Currently Outside database]	6.1	Transfrontier Park
7	Military Conservation Area (Multi-use conservation areas)	7.1	Military Conservation Area	
8	Conservancy	8.1	Conservancy	

No area which is or forms part of a special nature reserve or national park may be declared as a nature reserve or as part of an existing nature reserve.

DEFINITIONS FOR PROTECTED AREA AND CONSERVATION AREA TYPES AND SUB-TYPES

Biosphere reserves are sites established by countries and recognized under UNESCO's [Man and the Biosphere \(MAB\) Programme](#) to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. Biosphere reserves are organized into 3 interrelated zones that are regarded as sub-types in the classification scheme:

- a) Core area
- b) Buffer zone
- c) Transition area

Only the core area requires legal protection and hence can correspond to an existing protected area such as a nature reserve or a national park. This zonation scheme is applied in many different ways in the real world to accommodate geographical conditions, socio-cultural settings, available legal

protection measures and local constraints. This flexibility can be used creatively and is one of the strongest points of the biosphere reserve concept, facilitating the integration of protected areas into the wider landscape.

Bird sanctuary means a type of Nature reserve set aside for the conservation of birds, in particular water birds.

Botanical garden means land declared or regarded as having been declared as a national botanical garden in terms of section 33 of the National Environmental management: Biodiversity Act, 2004, and includes any land declared in terms of section 33 as part of an existing botanical garden. Sites described in Schedule 1 to the Forest Act, 1984 (Act No. 122 of 1984), are also regarded as botanical gardens. Two sub-types are recognised:

- a) Botanical garden – an institution holding documented collections of living plants for the purpose of scientific research, conservation, display and education.
- b) Wild flower reserve – the purpose of which is to protect and propagate the unique indigenous flora of a region.

Conservancy means land managed in a sustainable manner through a voluntary agreement between landowners.

Contractual park means a type of national park established on land owned by either the state or a group of private individuals, but managed by South African National Parks (SANParks) according to the terms of a joint management agreement drawn up by a joint management committee consisting of representatives from SANParks and the land owners. In the classification scheme a Contractual park is a sub-type of a National Park.

Development area reserve means a nature reserve established during the apartheid era in the so called homeland territories.

Forest nature reserve means a State forest or a part of it, or land outside a State forest declared as such under the National Forests Act, 84 of 1998.

Forest wilderness area means a State forest or a part of it, or land outside a State forest declared as such under the National Forests Act, 84 of 1998.

Marine protected area means an area declared as a marine protected area in terms of section 43 of the Marine Living Resources Act, 1998 (Act No. 18 of 1998).

Military conservation area means a military area managed as multiple-use conservation areas. These areas are included in the National register of Protected Areas.

Mountain catchment area means any area declared under section 2 of the Mountain Catchment Areas Act (Act 63 of 1970) for the conservation, use, management and control of land situated in mountain catchment areas.

National park means -

- (a) an area which was a park in terms of the National Parks Act, 1976 (Act No. 57 of 1976), immediately before the repeal of that Act by section 90(1) of the National

Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, and includes a park established in terms of an agreement between a local community and the Minister which has been ratified by Parliament; or

- (b) an area declared or regarded as having been declared in terms of section 20 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, as a national park,

National protected area means-

- a) a special nature reserve;
- b) a national park; or
- c) a nature reserve or protected environment-
 - (i) managed by a national organ of state; or
 - (ii) which falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister for any other reason.

Nature reserve means-

- (a) an area declared, or regarded as having been declared, in terms of section 23 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, as a nature reserve; or
- (b) an area which before or after the commencement of this Act was or is declared or designated in terms of provincial legislation for a purpose for which that area could in terms of section 23(2) of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, be declared as a nature reserve.

Private nature reserve means privately owned land declared as a nature reserve under section 23 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003.

Protected area means any kind of protected area defined in the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003.

Protected environment means -

- (a) an area declared, or regarded as having been declared, in terms of section 28 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, as a protected environment;
- (b) an area which before or after the commencement of this Act was or is declared or designated in terms of provincial legislation for a purpose for which that area could in terms of section 28(2) of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, be declared as a protected environment; or
- (c) an area which was a lake area in terms of the Lake Areas Development Act, 1975 (Act No. 39 of 1975), immediately before the repeal of that Act by section 90(1) of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003,

and includes an area declared in terms of section 28(1) of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, as part of an area referred to in paragraph (a), (b) or (c) above.

Provincial nature reserve means a nature reserve or protected environment-

- (a) managed by a provincial organ of state; or
- (b) which falls under the jurisdiction of a province for any other reason.

Ramsar site means a wetland listed in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Three main types of wetland are identified following the Ramsar Classification for Wetland Type. These types are treated as sub-types in the above classification and are:

- a) Marine/coastal wetlands,
- b) Inland wetlands and
- c) Human-made wetlands.

Specially protected forest area means a State forest or a part of it, or land outside a State forest declared as such under the National Forests Act, 84 of 1998.

Special nature reserve means-

- (a) an area which was a special nature reserve in terms of the Environment Conservation Act, 1989 (Act No. 73 of 1989), immediately before the repeal of section 18 of that Act by section 90 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, or
- (b) an area declared, or regarded as having been declared, in terms of section 18 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, as a special nature reserve.

Stewardship sites are areas of conservation value outside of state owned protected areas, where the private landowner enters into an agreement with the relevant provincial authority to conserve the area. Under a voluntary agreement the site can become a conservation area (a decision that is not legally binding and of no specific duration). The landowner can also enter into a binding biodiversity management agreement or a declared protected environment with a legal binding contract. The property can also be declared as a nature reserve with a legally binding long-term contract, and with a title deed restriction.

There are different categories of stewardship which afford different levels of conservation protection. The categories are shown below. The first two categories result in the declaration of a protected area. The other categories are regarded as conservation areas.

	LEVELS OF CONSERVATION PROTECTION			
	Protected Areas	Statutory conservation	Contractual conservation	Better biodiversity practice
STEWARDSHIP CATEGORIES	1. Nature reserve			
	2. Protected environment			
		3. Biodiversity management agreement		
			4. Biodiversity agreement	
				5. Voluntary conservation area

Transfrontier conservation area means relatively large areas straddling frontiers between two or more countries and cover large-scale natural systems encompassing one or more protected areas.

Transfrontier park means a large wildlife preserve and conservation area which straddles two or more countries, joining two or more national parks.

Wilderness area means an area designated in terms of section 22 or 26 of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003, for the purpose of retaining an intrinsically wild appearance and character or capable of being restored to such and which is undeveloped and roadless, without permanent improvements or human habitation. In the classification scheme wilderness areas are sub-types of National parks and Nature reserves.

World heritage site means a world heritage site in terms of the World Heritage Convention Act, 1999 (Act No. 49 of 1999). World Heritage Sites are places of outstanding universal value to all humanity and are of great importance for the conservation of mankind's cultural and natural heritage. They need to be preserved for future generations, as part of a common universal heritage. The convention distinguishes between cultural and natural heritage. In the PACA database a two sub-types are identified namely Core and Buffer.

- a) **Core:** Includes all those properties/ areas and attributes which are direct tangible expressions of the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage Site. The boundaries of the World Heritage Site reflect the spatial requirements of habitats, species, processes or phenomena that provide the basis for their inscription on the World Heritage List. The boundaries include sufficient areas immediately adjacent to the area of outstanding universal value in order to protect the property's heritage values from direct effect of human encroachments and impacts or resource use outside the World Heritage Site.
- b) **Buffer:** For purposes of effective protection of the World Heritage Site, a buffer zone is an area surrounding the World Heritage Site which has complimentary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the World Heritage Site. Buffer zones are not part of the nominated property.

- i. **Legal and compliance** – Buffer zones often do not have any legal protection, although this varies with the objective for which they were established. The World Heritage Convention requires that any modification in the buffer zone area subsequent to inscription of a property on the World Heritage List should be approved by the World Heritage Committee.
 - ii. **Biodiversity** – Buffer zones are not sites of biodiversity conservation themselves, but their establishment provides an additional layer of protection to existing areas of biodiversity importance, and they are often fundamental to achieving conservation of those areas.
 - iii. **Socio-cultural** – Buffer zones are important areas for traditional practices, cultural values, rights and involvement of local/indigenous communities in protection, use and management around protected areas. For instance, among different approaches of buffer zone creation, the Social buffer zone uses the culture and sense of identity of indigenous or other population groups, and local organisations, to form a barrier, control and monitoring system between a conservation area and its surroundings.
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