



Helping Islands Adapt: Info.doc.9

Summary of key points from: *Natural Solutions; Protected areas helping people cope with natural solutions*. IUCN-WCPA, TNC, UNDP, WCS, World Bank and WWF, 2010

Introduction

Protected areas are an essential part of the global response to climate change. They are helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They are also helping society cope with climate change by maintaining essential services upon which people depend. Although many natural and managed ecosystems can help to mitigate or adapt to climate change, protected areas offer several advantages: recognition (often legal); long-term commitment to protection; agreed management and governance approaches; and management planning and capacity. They are often the most cost-effective option. In many situations, they contain the only natural or semi-natural habitats remaining in large areas.

Mitigation

Protected areas both store and capture carbon from the atmosphere. Forests play a major role in this function, creating an argument for restoration and afforestation within protected areas. Inland wetlands and peat also significant; careful and precautionary management needs to be put in place because there is still some uncertainty about the carbon balance in these ecosystems. Marine and coastal ecosystems, including mangroves, salt marshes and seagrass beds all also store large amounts of carbon, however they also need to be carefully managed; otherwise they could change from being carbon sinks to carbon sources. The same applies to grasslands.

Adaptation

Protected areas protect against the impacts and risks of climate change and maintain ecosystem integrity, while continuing to provide essential ecosystem services. The integrity of ecosystems, communities and species, and of the processes that confer resilience in ecosystems, is an essential factor in protecting against increasingly variable climatic extremes. Healthy forests in particular will be particularly important in protecting people against the

impacts that climate change may have on clean water supply, while marine protected areas will help guard against the rapid decline of fish stocks, for example.

Many species are threatened by a mixture of climate change and existing pressures. Protected areas can play a vital role in managing existing threats, thus reducing overall pressures, and also in providing active management measures to reduce climate hazards that threaten biodiversity. More fundamentally, protected areas also provide key instruments for maintaining wider ecosystem resilience at a landscape/seascape level to secure a range of the ecosystem services needed to address climate change.

Policy recommendations

- More and larger protected areas
- Connecting protected areas within landscapes/seascapes
- Improving management within protected areas
- Focusing some management specifically on mitigation and adaptation needs