

ABEC Tourism Master Plan

Supplementary Document VII

Discussion Paper on Natural Parks Organization

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1 – Introduction

The world’s first national park—Yellowstone—was created in 1872 through legislation that assigned control of the park to a governmental Ministry¹, who would be responsible for issuing regulations to provide for the “preservation, from injury or spoliation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders, within the park, and their retention in their natural condition.” Other park management functions were to include the development of visitor accommodations, the construction of roads and bridle trails, the removal of trespassers, and protection “against the wanton destruction of the fish and game found within the park”².

This idea of a national park had historic consequences, marking the beginning of a worldwide movement that has subsequently spread to more than 100 countries. This idea has evolved to the creation of other national parks in various locations of the US, which at a later stage required a coordinated management to a national park system embracing, nationwide, a wide variety of natural and cultural resources, through the consolidation of federal land management responsibilities.

2 – Best practices

According to the studies of the **World Conservation Union’s (IUCN)** in regard to internationally acknowledged national parks complying with its norms, **Five key aspects should be considered**, and for each aspect there are different examples of best practices³:

- i. **Zoning**: within larger protected areas it is possible to pursue various management objectives in different parts of the area and reconcile potential conflicts through the use of zones. It is crucial to ensure that the management of individual zones is compatible with the aims of the protected area as a whole.
- ii. **Monitoring**: establishing and maintaining monitoring systems of the key features of protected areas is an intrinsic part of management. Without monitoring it is difficult to know whether the aims.
- iii. **Collaborative management**: an important challenge for protected area management is to ensure that local communities and other local interests are fully engaged. As a result, there should be benefits to the protected area and to the social wellbeing and economic development of the communities.
- iv. **Visitor management**: protected areas are important visitor attractions. The challenge for management is to ensure that the natural and cultural qualities of the area are safeguarded and that the enjoyment of visitors is achieved.
- v. **Funding**: Protected areas require important recurring investments and the coverage of sizeable operating costs. The mix of funding sources and their stability overtime are crucial for the sustainability of the parks.

1 - At that time, the Secretary of the Interior.

2 - 16 United States Code 21-22.

3 - Source: Hugh Synge, IUCN, European Models of Good Practice in Protected Areas

3 – Common Challenges

The international community has recognized this **increasing gap between bearing the costs and enjoying the benefits of conservation** by signing the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. There are some relevant issues to take into consideration:

- The establishment of protected areas, especially national parks, is increasingly considered to contribute to the Convention’s aims by **enhancing sustainable regional development**;
- While the **main aim of protected areas** is the **conservation of biodiversity** and the natural dynamics of ecosystems, **policies** such as **informing and educating visitors**, and providing for **recreation and scientific research**, are also highly valued;
- **National parks** are embedded in a regional and local spatial context. **Municipalities and the wider region** adjacent to a park **benefit from regional development through tourism**, and by attracting both new residents and new businesses.
- The **management of protected areas** entails critical issues⁴:
 - The **‘brand’** for a national park is a **joint regional management** and development strategy drafted and implemented with the help and inclusion of **all stakeholders**;
 - **Regional developments** in and around protected areas such as national parks usually **depend on ecotourism and on the management of visitor flows**;
 - **The park management** has to **cope with two potentially conflicting aims**, the **conservation of biodiversity** – and therefore, restriction of access to sensitive areas of the park’s ecosystems – and **tourism development** by offering specific national park experiences for visitors. The trade-off requires **appropriate management frameworks**.
 - **Park management** needs to determine the **degree to which** the wide spectrum of ecosystem services inside and outside the park can effectively be used.
- **Governance** is essential to frame the **Management** of the National Parks:
 - Governance is the “interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say”.
 - Management addresses what is done about a given situation, governance addresses questions of who makes those decisions and how they should be implemented, including the responsibility and accountability of decision-makers

4 – Common Models

There are two diverging paradigms of resource management:

- National frameworks: rely on a standardized regime of aims and processes
- Self-governance, or locally controlled governance: emphasizes the local and regional self-organisation of resource users,

Those two paradigms may cope with the principle of co-management of resources, which is commonly defined as “the sharing of power and responsibility between government and local resource users” and could, therefore, be understood as another strategy to improve Protected Area (PA) management, based on efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, and legitimacy.

4 - Michael Getzner et al (Int. J. Sustainable Society, Vol. 6, Nos. 1/2, 2014), Governance and management strategies in national parks: implications for sustainable regional development

There is a range of are **nine dimensions of analysis regarding Governance** and Management of a national park management model or strategy:

1. **Objectives and mission of the protected area:** May lie in fields of nature conservation, visitor education and information, facilities and scientific research. Regional development will be included as a (regional) objective if management commits to generate value added by procuring locally linking the park and the surrounding communities.
2. **Decision making inside the park:** The national park can be considered a major public venture with decision-making structures that should have clear responsibilities and trustful processes regarding decision making. The Organizational structure and the level allowed for of influence of local stakeholders in the decision making process is a determinant for the long term sustainability of the PA;
3. **Integration into other policy fields:** The national park management needs to get involved as a stakeholder in regional economic policies, land use decisions outside the park, and infrastructure projects, as those affect the sustainability of the PA;
4. **Integration of ‘outside’ agendas into the management model:** The national park management needs to fulfill its objectives in terms of both nature conservation and other ‘outside’ agendas such as regional development and tourism. Such agendas, depending on the adopted management model, can either be structured around a department in the Organization at the local level or at national systemwide level.
5. **Uni-dimensional vs. multi-dimensional objectives of the protected area:** Uni-dimensional PA objectives are concentrated on a single aim (ex. nature conservation. Multi-dimensional objectives include other aims or agendas (ex visitor education and information, visitor management and facilities). **Most important, though, is the credibility and ecological integrity of the national park policies.**
6. **Inter- and trans-disciplinarity of the park:** The skill mix available within the employees and contracted specialists of the parks require a wide coverage: natural science (ecology, biology, landscape planning, geology, botanic) and other, such as architecture, environmental engineering, civil engineering, tourism, etc.
7. **Budget and funding:** The trade-off between how much of a park’s budget can/should be financed by public or private funds or revenue sources. Public funding often assures a certain management quality and objectivity for national park policies. Private funding and revenue sources derived by the exploitation of the available resources may influence national park policies and decisions contrary to effective ecological and sustainable management.
8. **Compensation and incentives for land owners and rights holders:** National park boundaries are only ‘administrative’ borders in the sense that ecosystems most often do not end at this administrative boundary; (animal) species do not obey such borders, and neither do tourists. Management has to implement, and Governments need to regulate, incentive-compatible frameworks for decision making by land owners and rights holders regarding the conservation of biodiversity on their land, or at least leave their rights untouched, including the land use framework for tourists passing through private properties;
9. **Participation of and communication to stakeholders:** The participation of, and communication with, stakeholders is most crucial for management effectiveness, and there are a wide range of benefits from stakeholder participation in regional development and policy analysis, and involvement of stakeholders in national park decision making is crucial for the effectiveness of ecological policies as well as for regional and community development.

5 – Centralization versus De-centralization Drivers

There drivers of centrality and drivers of locality that shall be taken into consideration when deciding on which model to adopt for the system of PA in a country, such as it is the case of Kazakhstan:

1. **Management, planning and operational Skills:** Relevant **economies of specialized knowledge**, scale and scope exist, common to most National Parks of a nationwide system, are drivers for centralization of the management.
2. **Governance and stakeholder management:** specificities of each national park, the **physical distance** between the parks, **operational issues and Governance are main drivers for locally centered management.**
3. **Cultural matrix:** cultural issues specific for each country, namely the predominant cultural matrix, are enablers/hinders to the type of organizational framework suitable to a country, such as a matricidal or hierarchic framework. Kazakhstan enjoys a hierarchical cultural matrix, requiring therefore that every individual in a Organization can only have a superior to whom to report. On the other end long distance to power by the individual entails de-responsibility by the individual from “far away decision makers”, thus requiring effective control and monitoring processes by centralized Organizations.
4. **Portfolio management:** different parks in a system enjoy different stages in their development life cycles. Development is a costly and long-term endeavor for PA, requiring in many cases the use of cross subsidies from some more developed and visited PA to the development of the other PA. Effective portfolio management of the system is a centralization driver, while its inexistence is a driver to de-centralization.

Striking an effective balance between the functions and attributions of the entity responsible for the management of the Natural Park system and those specific for each Natural park, combining the elements of an effective coherent Organization is the essence of the most effective institutional design of the National Parks’ management.

6 – Summary Overview of Different Models

Item	Centralization	De-centralization	Comments/ importance	Weight (1 very low; 5 very high)
Funding	+	–	Very high	5
Management, planning and operational skills	+	–	Very high	5
Governance and stakeholder participation	–	+	Very high	5
Cultural matrix	+	–	High	4
Portfolio management	+	–	Medium	3
Objectives, mission, integration with multi-dimensions	–	+	high	4
Zoning	–	+	high	4
Monitoring	+	–	High	4
Collaborative management	–	+	Very high	5
Visitor management	–	+	Very high	5
Marketing and promotion	+	–	High	4
Score⁵	25	23		

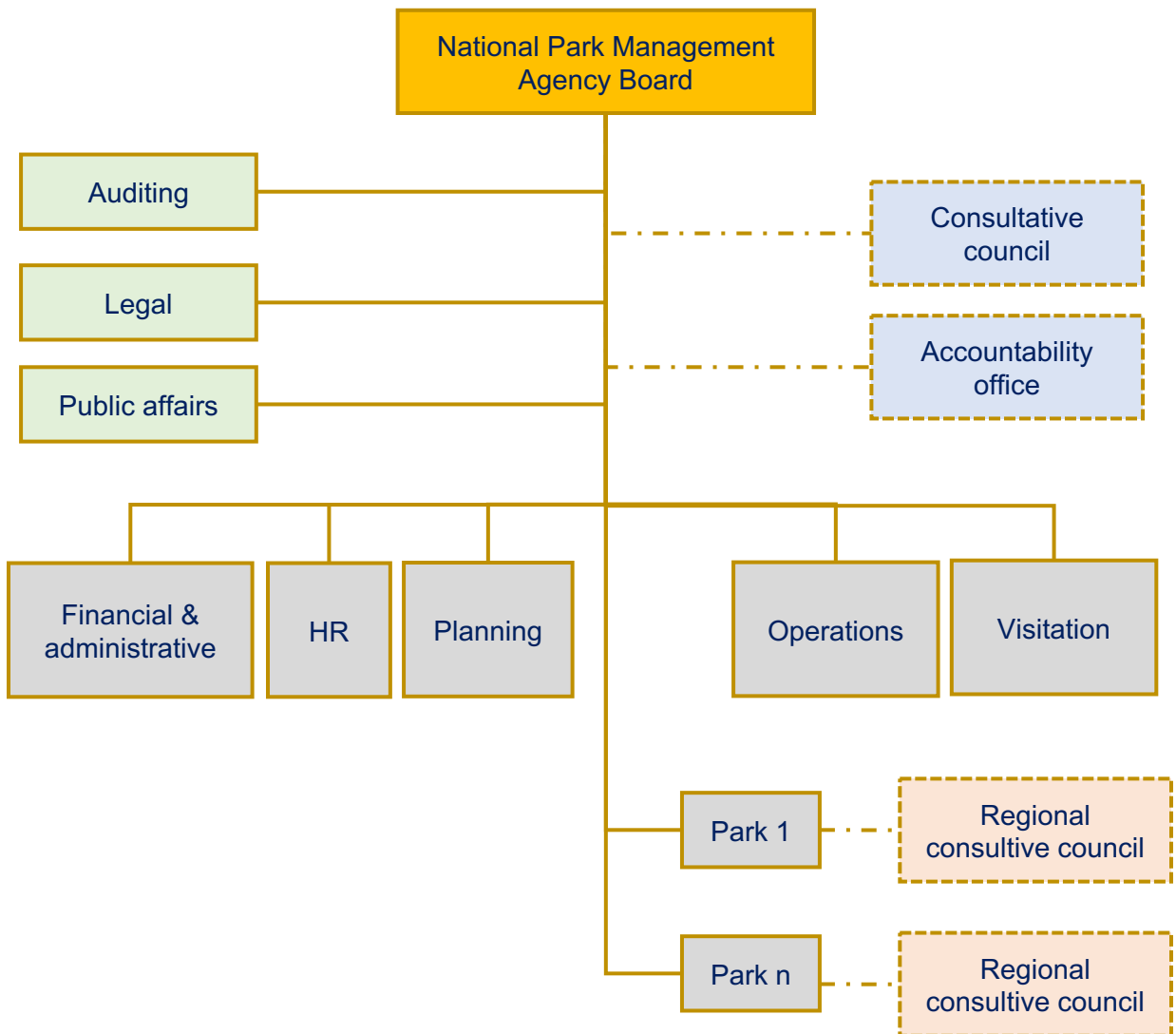
Evaluating the different items with their respective importance we have obtained a slight advantage towards centralization, leading to conclude that after all a centralized option would be more advisable than a full decentralized solution.

5 - Weight only added to value item with “+”

7 – Recommended Option

As shown in the chart below we recommend a centralized management for the parks through an agency comprising the main management functions, such as Financial & Administrative, HR, Planning & Development, Operations, Visitation (Tourism, study & research), and each of the parks.

Proposed Organizational Configuration



Each park should have a manager and a small local team reporting to the central organizational units.

Governance at the national level and at the park level are absolutely vital, and need an in-depth assessment in order to accommodate the stakeholders with national and local clout.

The reason for an agency rather than a department from a Governmental ministry resides in the sustainability of funding and its intertemporal consistency on one end, with higher salaries and conditions than provided to public servants, and finally with higher autonomy and quickness in the decision making process.

An in-depth study on the most adequate Organizational Structure with the corresponding headcount, workloads and professional profiles needs to be performed in order to obtain a much more accurate assessment than the herein provided, which only comprises an high-level identification of existing models, their pros and cons, and the identification of the least risky approach.