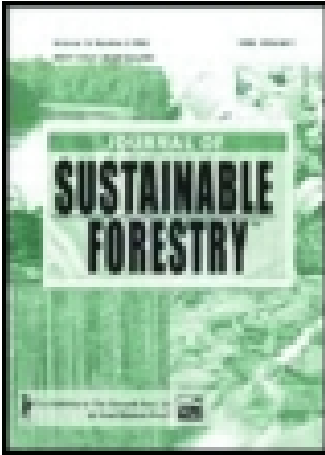


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Publisher: Taylor & Francis

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Journal of Sustainable Forestry

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wjsf20>

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Published online: 08 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: David N. Cherney, Susan G. Clark & Mark S. Ashton (2009) Management Policy for Podocarpus National Park, Ecuador: A Synthesis, *Journal of Sustainable Forestry*, 28:6-7, 888-893, DOI: [10.1080/10549810902936656](https://doi.org/10.1080/10549810902936656)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10549810902936656>

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Management Policy for Podocarpus National Park, Ecuador: A Synthesis

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INTRODUCTION

National Parks have been created around the world to safeguard biodiversity, ecosystem services, recreational opportunities, cultural heritage, and many other worthy objectives. While we strive to achieve these resource-oriented goals, long-term success will not be realized without finding common ground between the people who live, work, visit, or otherwise have an interest in these regions. Securing the public good necessitates management policy that ensures effective social and decision-making processes. This requires all participants, not just those involved in government, to actively develop and integrate new ideas, innovations, and practices into their daily lives in an adaptive way.

Improving the management policy of Podocarpus National Park (PNP), Ecuador, ultimately rests with the people involved in the region. This volume offers fresh perspectives to jumpstart the diffusion of innovative ideas into the PNP arena. Our efforts to appraise the management policy of PNP should be seen as the beginning of a new process to improve regional management, and not as a complete or definitive set of answers. Our broad recommendations do not tell the people of PNP how they should be managing the park, but rather suggest a number of ways to enhance the process of conservation in the common interest.

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THE PODOCARPUS NATIONAL PARK FIELD TRIP

Our rapid assessment of Podocarpus National Park differs significantly from traditional rapid assessments. Most rapid assessments focus on the biological and technical aspects of management (del Campo and Clark, this volume). In our case, The Nature Conservancy Ecuador and Fundación ArcoIris invited us to conduct a rapid assessment of management policy in PNP. While we investigated some of the biological and technical aspects of the park, our assessment primarily focuses on the processes by which people interact and make decisions. Our goal was to develop broad recommendations that would be useful for all participants in their search for common ground, which is consistent with goals of our host organizations. To do this, we used an inter-disciplinary method of management policy appraisal that requires the analyst to be contextual, multimethod, and problem oriented. This method is described in further detail in the articles on problem orientation (Clark et al., this volume), social process (Clark et al., this volume), and understanding patterns of human interaction (Cherney et al., this volume). This framework has been used on rapid assessments of the AMISCONDE at La Amstad Biosphere Reserve in Costa Rica, the Condor BioReserve in Ecuador, the Bocas del Toro in Panama (Clark, Ashton, Dixon, & Petit, 2006, Tuxill, & Ashton, 2003; Clark, Ziegelmayr, Ashton, & Newcomer, 2004), and in other areas and problems worldwide.

THE CASE STUDIES

Assessing management policy is rarely a straightforward task. It involves understanding the social context in which decisions are made to secure the interests of participants. Often these participants have multiple and concealed motives that are difficult to understand, and make informal decisions that are not readily apparent to an observer. The series of case studies in this volume are an attempt to identify some of the broad patterns of management policy in the region. The topic of each article was chosen by individual students based on their area of expertise, interest, and perceived relevance after visiting Ecuador. In what may appear to be an ad hoc collection of papers, several broad themes emerge. From our standpoint of encouraging conservation and development in the common interest, the most critical policy challenges faced in the PNP region are issues of authority and control, instability of institutions, and arenas.

Authority and Control

There is no greater policy challenge in PNP than the disconnect between authority and control. Authority is a figure in the policy process recognized

by the broad community as having the right to make a decision. For example, much of the world views the director of a national park as having the right to make decisions that affects resources within the park's boundaries. A director of a national park is often also assumed be able to physically control the resource. That is, the director has the ability to affect the outcome on the ground. For authoritative and controlling decision making to occur in the common interest, these features need to be linked in actual management (see Introduction, Clark et al., this volume).

Our investigation in Podocarpus National Park suggests that authority and control are often disconnected. Perhaps the clearest example in this volume is Laurie B. Cuoco and James B. Cronan's investigation into the status of orchids in the Park. Cronan and Cuoco demonstrate that while orchids in the Park are protected by law, several threats exist. The largest threat they identify is the illegal collection of orchids for commercial use. Illicit collectors trespass on private land, including the Park, to harvest orchids for sale in regional and international markets. These illicit harvesters are exercising their control over the resource. However, these harvesters are not viewed by the government as having the right to manage the resource. Hence, they lack authority as illicit harvesters. In contrast, the illegal orchid collectors do not view the government as having the right to dictate where and when they can collect forest products. In other words, many orchid harvesters do not view the government as being the authority figure for the collection of orchids. Since the broad community does not have a common conception of who has the right to manage the resource, management in the public interest is nearly impossible to achieve.

Unclear authority is not an issue limited to orchids. Cesar Moran-Cahusac's article on ecotourism in the PNP region explores the ambiguous authority of regional ecotourism. Moran-Cahusac highlights this in his descriptions of the relationship between the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of the Environment. These government agencies are expected by the general public to fulfill two separate mandates. The Ministry of Tourism is expected to promote and sell tourism to improve regional economies, while the Ministry of the Environment is expected to protect natural resources. These two legitimate authority figures attempt to exert control over how tourism should be shaped in the region. Their divergent mandates lead to inconsistent directives, which hinder the operations of local tourism operators.

Alvaro Redondo-Brenes's article on the Pro-Cuencas Podocarpus Fund looks at the historically contentious issue of water in the PNP region. He highlights that traditionally it has been unclear who is responsible for maintaining a clean and available regional water supply. Redondo-Brenes shows how the Pro-Cuencas Podocarpus Fund may help establish an authoritative body to help link authority and control in the regional use of water. He describes how such an authority figure cannot be forced upon the people

of the region. Rather, the legitimization of the Pro-Cuencas Podocarpus Fund must occur in a manner that allows the people of the region to make the determination for themselves.

Instability of Institutions

Institutions are the established practices, customs, and patterns of behavior ingrained in everyday life. These may be formalized in organizations, such as academic programs, government, or private ventures. However, many practices are informally institutionalized in daily life. These include common customs that are enforced through social norms. Institutions help us create a common form or structure of governance by establishing the formal and informal rules regulating how we interact. Countless institutions exist in the PNP region. Some of these institutions have been ingrained in the community for decades and are commonly accepted by most people in the region. However, some institutions are tenuous in nature. Many of these have been developed in the recent past, and have not gained broad acceptance. Numerous organizations exist or have come into existence in recent years to influence these institutions. This is especially true for the institutions of natural resource management in the PNP region. Securing natural resource management in the common interest requires stable institutions with broad public support. However, there are a number of factors that prevent effective institutions from being developed in the PNP region.

While there are many values shaped and shared in the policy process, economic or wealth factors often figure into policy failures. In PNP, the distribution of wealth plays an important role in the instability of institutions. Andrea E. Johnson investigates the patterns of financial flows and priority setting around PNP, finding that priority setting regarding funds does not occur through inclusive processes that promote common objectives. This fosters an unstable arena that rewards competition over coordination. The lack of needed coordination and common objectives undermine the institution of natural resource management in the common interest by creating a situation where special interests are more likely to dominate.

Institutional structures, such as regional infrastructure, exacerbate this challenge. Rafael Bernardi de León conducts an assessment of the threats and opportunities of road development in the PNP region. He looks how the process of road construction is shaped by the interactions of people and organizations with divergent goals and values. He explains the tension that currently exists between economic development and environmental preservation, and the need to secure a process that meets the expectations of this diverse group of participants. Bernardi de León also points out that paradoxically, this challenge has intensified the problem people wish to resolve. The current road infrastructure in the PNP region is a barrier in the free movement of people. It retards people wishing to engage in

collaboration and coordination. However, developing such infrastructure would be an unsatisfactory outcome in the eyes of some participants.

Arenas

Arenas are situations in which people interact to clarify and secure their interests. These interactions take place through many forms in the PNP region. For example, people interact in arenas to distribute power through civil government, wealth through markets, and enlightenment through educational systems. People use arenas as the means to shape (produce) or share (enjoy) the values in which they are interested. Cherney et al.'s article in this volume on "Understanding Patterns of Human Interactions" outlines in detail the conditions for a successful arena. Ideally, an arena allows broad participation, meets the valid expectations of all participants, and is responsive and adaptable to changes in the common interest. In PNP, many arenas do not meet these standards. This is most evident in the regional practices of agroforestry.

Alice C. Bond conducts a contextual analysis of agroforestry practices in the buffer zone of PNP. She focuses on the potential for agroforestry systems to alleviate pressure on forested areas. In her analysis, Bond demonstrates that the current arena of land settlement legislation, markets, and individual decision making does not allow for broad participation to occur. The current arena is structured to encourage participants to focus on their preferred alternative, without effectively engaging in civil discourse with other participants. As a result, common ground remains elusive.

In addition to arenas failing to engage a broad range of participants, the current agroforestry arenas do not meet the expectations of participants. Maura Leahy investigates the extensification of cattle pastures in the region. She highlights that the people involved in the arenas addressing pastoral land use have different outlooks on how decisions should be made. For example, regional academics have an expectation of expert-driven technocratic decision making—that is, if we develop the right technical methods, cattle ranching will improve. In contrast, many local people hold an expectation of individual decision making. In many areas, ranching is a prestigious and proud tradition. They expect that traditional and cultural methods should govern management. This conflict over different and conflicting expectations leads to an arena where common ground is unlikely to be found and secured.

Kim M. Wilkinson's article on the current status and recommendation for future work on agroforestry systems focuses on creating a responsive and adaptable, open arena. She suggests using a broad range of traditional, indigenous, and modern agroforestry practices to serve as a foundation to increase the range of available options. This base of knowledge can be used to help build relationships and improve practices on the ground given the specific ecological, social, and decision-making context for each site.

CONCLUSION

While it appears that we categorize the articles in this volume into three challenges, all cases face issues of authority and control, the instability of institutions, and inadequate arenas. For example, in addition to the challenge of unstable institutions, Andrea E. Johnson's article on the patterns of financial flows and priority setting around PNP directly addresses both the challenges of arenas and of authority and control. She shows how the current system for conservation-related funding distribution (arenas of financial flows) does not allow for broad participation to occur in priority setting. In addition, inequitable financial flows cause certain participants to gain control over resources for which they have no authority.

These articles collectively suggest a range of possible alternatives to help improve management policy for Podocarpus National Park, Ecuador. Again, these recommendations should not be seen as a definitive set of answers; they are a strategy for action. The social and decision-making context of the region is highly complex. It is unlikely, and naïve to assume, that a single prescriptive recommendation will solve the challenges faced in the region. The purpose of suggested alternatives in this volume is to expand the freedom of choice for those parties who are committed to the region, so that they can better meet the needs of all participants.

We want to praise the efforts of The Nature Conservancy–Ecuador, ArcoIris, and all others who are trying to enhance the conservation of Podocarpus National Park, Ecuador, in the common interest. While no single organization or individual is able to clarify and secure the broad public interest for the region, these organizations have begun to focus on bringing about effective social and decision-making processes to ensure that the broad public interest is realized. We hope that the collective work, ideas, and recommendations in this volume will contribute to their efforts, and look forward to seeing even more successful management policy in the future.

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