

CMP - CCNet Conservation Case Study Template

Case Study Title: Demonstrating Integrated Conservation Planning and Implementation for Habitat Management and Wildlife Protection in Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape

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Location: Southern Palawan, Philippines

Summary: Various man-made factors threaten the biodiversity-rich Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape and its forested buffer areas in southern Palawan in the Philippines. Integrated management plans to improve the governance of both the protected area and the adjoining forestlands are useful in mobilizing all stakeholders to protect and conserve the whole forest landscape of southern Palawan. Empowering the local governments of five municipalities that straddle these forests and mountain range is a long-term and proven approach in addressing the threats to this conservation landscape.

Public Overview (Web Post) of Case Study:

<https://medium.com/@bridgebiointegration/protecting-ecosystem-goods-and-services-42ac6bf149ca>

Setting the Scene:

Seventy percent of forest cover remains intact in the 120,457-hectare Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape that straddles five municipalities in southern Palawan in the Philippines. The mountain range is the headwater of 33 watersheds, and is home to a variety of wildlife that can only be found in the Palawan faunal region, as well as newly discovered plant species. Adjoining it are 153,836 hectares of biologically diverse forestlands that serve as a buffer zone for the protected area. The whole conservation landscape provides various ecosystem goods and services—including water supply, food and medicine, fertile soils, wildlife habitats, and ecotourism opportunities—with a combined estimated value of US\$5.5 billion.

However, the landscape faces a range of man-made threats that are driven by poorly defined property rights, inconsistent regulatory policies on resource uses, and weak enforcement systems. In the absence of clear rules and enforcement actions, wildlife poachers and illegal loggers, as well as local residents facing economic pressures brought by high poverty incidence in Palawan, enjoyed relatively unfettered access to the protected area and forestlands. As a result, illegal mining, uncontrolled forest resource extraction, agricultural expansion, and wildlife poaching have proliferated, threatening Palawan's unique biodiversity and posing a challenge to effective governance.

In 2016, USAID/Philippines' Protect Wildlife project began work in Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape, positing that an integrated approach to landscape management that enjoins local governments, law enforcement, industries, and communities to (1) establish clear tenure rights and land use zoning, (2) build capacity for improved governance of protected areas and buffer zones for both conservation and enforcement, and (3) incentivize compliance through behavior change campaigns and sustainable livelihood opportunities would secure the conservation of the protected area, its forested buffer zone, and the essential ecosystem goods and services they afford the residents of southern Palawan. This case study describes how Protect Wildlife in Palawan executed this approach, the lessons the project learned, and its applications outside of Palawan.

Why is this project important?

Through Protect Wildlife, USAID/Philippines addresses the drivers of biodiversity loss—including habitat disturbance and fragmentation, illegal harvesting of natural resources, poor governance, uncoordinated programs and activities, undefined zones, and inappropriate or illegal land uses, among other factors—in one of the key conservation hotspots in Palawan. These threats to Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape, if left unabated, will lead to a catastrophic loss of one of Palawan’s significant contribution to the known pool of unique biodiversity not just in the Philippines but in the whole world.

With its assistance, USAID/Philippines demonstrates how complex challenges in conservation require integrated strategies that address institutional, policy, enforcement, economic, and social reforms in an inclusive approach that engages stakeholders from government, industries, and communities. Environmental managers, local government leaders, and stakeholders in the Philippines and beyond can learn much from this multifaceted, landscape-based approach, particularly in increasing local commitment to coordinate efforts to enforce wildlife and environmental laws, integrating conservation land uses with local development strategies, and aligning investment support for livelihoods and other economic activities for rural communities.

Results and Lessons Learned:

Through USAID/Philippines’ approach to establish the conditions for a self-sustaining system—clear governance, active enforcement, and economic opportunity—the Protect Wildlife project achieved the results and lessons featured here:

“It will be easier for us to implement our rules in using forest lands because now we have a basis for our policies. We can implement our activities with confidence because our forest land use plans are legitimate.”

Maryjane Celedonio
Planning Officer, Municipal Planning and
Development Office, Rizal Municipality, Palawan

Inclusively-developed and evidence-based protected area and forest land use management plans. In 2016, local governments of the five municipalities, civil society organizations, and the Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape management board committed to update the protected area management plan and formulate forest land use plans for its buffer areas. Interdisciplinary technical working groups led the planning activities, with Protect Wildlife providing technical guidance. The technical working groups and stakeholder communities exercised a comprehensive planning process, including visioning and strategy setting, community training on integrated conservation and development, spatial analysis, data collection and field validation, zoning and land use projection, and development of zone-specific management prescriptions. The plans served as the basis for the local governments’ allocation of funding to help the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) govern and manage the whole landscape. Approval of the protected area management plan and the updated forest land use plans for the five municipalities that comprise its buffer areas provides the clarity that the government needs to manage the landscape, that communities need to understand the rules and restrictions, and that enterprises need to plan their investments.

More pro-active enforcement actions. The Protect Wildlife project focuses on transforming the local governments’ and the DENR’s approach to wildlife law enforcement from reactive policing to a more proactive and intelligence-driven process. Local governments and the DENR completed comprehensive trainings on wildlife and environmental law enforcement. Protocols are under development to guide enforcement

operations planning and coordination among local governments and other enforcement units. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff deputizes local government-based wildlife enforcement officers as part of their Palawan-wide network to address wildlife crimes in protected areas and forestlands. These newly empowered enforcement officials, who are active in the landscape, markets, and transport hubs, now stand as a deterrent to would-be poachers and encroachers.

Conservation-friendly livelihoods for communities. Together with communities in southern Palawan, Protect Wildlife partnered with Lutheran World Relief and microfinance institution ECLOF to provide training and access to finance for small-scale sustainable livelihood opportunities, such as upland agriculture and seaweed production; and with Sunlight Foods Corporation to provide capacity building on conservation agriculture and purple yam production and to offer exclusive marketing agreements to people's organizations in production zones around Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape. These partnerships are now benefiting approximately 200 farmers and 130 fisherfolk.

To further incentivize tenured communities to anchor their production activities in multiple-use zones, Protect Wildlife sponsored agroforestry support for households in and near buffer zones. The project supplied 44,430 durian seedlings provided training on agroforestry to approximately 600 households that manage farms inside the multiple-use zones. Collectively, these agroforestry investments could generate an economic return of up to US\$133,290 after five years. More tropical fruit tree seedlings will be distributed later in 2020 to diversify their agroforestry farms.

"If I were to choose between US\$200 and ten high-value fruit tree seedlings, I will choose the seedlings, because the cash will be immediately spent, but with the seedlings, I am ensured of long-term income as long as I take care of them properly."

Panglima Beto Calman
Indigenous Community Chieftain, Brooke's
Point Municipality, Palawan

Internally-generated conservation financing through PES. Protect Wildlife supported four municipalities in establishing payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes related to their waterworks systems. Working first with Brooke's Point municipality, the project helped establish a foundation for PES management through cost-revenue analysis and cost-based resource valuation, development of financial management guidelines, and ring-fencing of PES revenues. To date, Brooke's Point has collected nearly US\$40,000, while Rizal, which also followed this approach, has collected approximately US\$10,000. These PES schemes and their reinvestment plans provide an important funding stream that enables local governments to execute their protected area and forestland use management plans.

Palawan-wide commitment to protect flagship species. Protect Wildlife continues to assess the evolving species policy and enforcement needs in Palawan. A provincial ordinance enjoining municipalities to identify flagship species and provide protection mechanisms was rolled out to the municipalities, which have identified their flagship species and are working on their respective ordinances and action plans. Identifying flagship species is an effective platform for communicating biodiversity conservation messages to various types of audiences and reinforcing the importance of wildlife and habitat protection in line with management plans.

Relevant campaigns for conservation. Protect Wildlife has been supporting the Mount

Mantalingahan Protected Landscape with campaigns for conservation, such as the *Kagubatan ay Kinabukasan* (The Forest is Our Future) campaign, to enhance local understanding of the value and role of biodiversity to health, survival, environment, and economy. The campaign also directs local leaders to raise awareness in their communities about the importance of following zoning laws.

Overall, USAID/Philippines' technical assistance has resulted in the zoning of 206,567 hectares of Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape (120,457 hectares) and forestlands outside the protected area (153,836 hectares) into broad categories of protection and conservation areas and production areas. Further, it mobilized local leaders and communities to help in implementing the plans, developed funding schemes to finance conservation and management activities, deterred would-be poachers and illegal loggers through more active enforcement, and incentivized compliance with clarity on tenure and livelihood support.

Project interventions have resulted in an active protected area management board that has updated their management plan and forest land use plans. Local communities are now more engaged in site-based wildlife law enforcement. Capacity building on forestry, wildlife, and environmental law enforcement for community and government officials that operate in Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape has resulted in 124 reported confiscations, seizures, and arrests related to illegal logging and wildlife trafficking, contributing to reduced environmental and wildlife crimes. Sustainable landscapes activities have resulted in 610,603 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent reduced, sequestered, or avoided. The project anticipates an increased reduction in the future as a result of improved management of mangroves and planned forest restoration activities.

Application Beyond Case:

USAID/Philippines' Protect Wildlife project is replicable in other situations or cases as it is about integrated and science-based landscape planning, integrated plan implementation, empowering local leadership, valuing and monetizing ecosystem goods and services, and improving natural resources governance. There are certain conditions that should be in place if these project strategies will be applied in situations similar to the case of southern Palawan, such as the following:

- There should be collective approval by governance bodies and their constituencies of the offer of project assistance.
- The proponent and team members have the trust and respect of national and local clients.
- The proponent is a technical partner and not the "owner" or "driver" of the activities.
- The proponent should be dynamic and flexible, and is able to adjust as needed.

Moving forward, the Mount Mantalingahan Protected Landscape management plan and forest land use plans will serve as bases for national, regional, and local government agencies to make informed decisions for strengthening tenure rights, targeting enforcement actions, and directing investments on restoration through assisted natural regeneration, agroforestry development, and sustainable agricultural practices. Building on the strong partnerships and gains from the past four years in southern Palawan, USAID/Philippines will continue to combine the multi-pronged approaches presented above toward supporting biodiversity conservation, enhancing ecosystem goods and services, and improving human well-being.

Further Information:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DpkTGnezi1ij11jGemw8z_VkquvTrjBn?usp=sharing

Key Words: Copy the following table and tick the themes that apply to your case study. This is not meant to be a restrictive list - case studies that range beyond these themes are most welcome! This table does not count against your 3-4 page limit.

Table of Key Words for Tagging Case Studies

These tags will be used to help other people find your case study on the web.

Key Words (select all that are relevant)	Put x if Relevant
Stages in Conservation Standards Cycle	
- Assess	
- Plan	
- Implement	
- Analyze & Adapt	
- Share	
- Full cycle adaptive management	X
- Other _____	
Case Study Scale	
- Project-level	X
- Program-level	
- Organizational-level	
- Other _____	
Specific Topics Addressed:	
- Human wellbeing	
- Climate change	
- Community-based conservation	
- Indigenous populations	
- Marine conservation	
- Freshwater conservation	
- Terrestrial conservation	X
- Other: Wildlife conservation, Habitat management	X