



Protected Areas Management Planning

Principles of Planning Protected Areas in Azerbaijan and Corresponding Legal framework

Prepared by Sadagat Mammadova, National Expert for Azerbaijan

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Overview of Azerbaijan's protected areas	4
1.2	Purpose of the review of protected area management planning.....	5
2	Current legal and institutional framework.....	6
2.1	Legal Framework	6
2.2	Responsible Organizations.....	7
3	Current approach to protected area management	7
3.1	Vision	7
3.2	Tasks and Objectives	7
3.3	Zoning	7
3.4	Management programme.....	8
3.4.1	Administrative Programme	8
3.4.2	Protection programme	8
3.4.3	Tourist Programme.....	8
3.4.4	Monitoring and Research Programme.....	8
3.4.5	Public Awareness Programme	9
3.5	Community support programme	9
4	RECOMMENDATIONS	10
4.1	General recommendations.....	10
4.2	Specific recommendations for changes to legislation.....	10
4.3	Specific recommendations concerning the establishment of Samur-Yalama national park.....	11

ACRONYMS

WB	World Bank
IBH	Important Habitats for Birds
WCU	World Conservation Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
SNR	State Natural Reserve
MENR	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NP	National Park
SPNT	Specially Protected Natural Territory
APBP	Action Plan for Biodiversity Preservation
PTDP	Protected Territories Development Project
SAP	Strategic Action Plan
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German National Reconstruction Bank)

1 Introduction

Azerbaijan is located found within the eastern part of Eurasia where it lies close to the geographical line separating the European and Asian continents. The Republic's area totals 86.6 thousand square kilometres. To its north Azerbaijan borders with Dagestan Republic of the Russian Federation (border length totals about 340 km.), to its north-west with Georgia (about 340 km.), to the south with Iran (over 600 km.), to the south-west with Armenia (about 780 km.) and the length of Azerbaijani-Turkish border totals (11 km.).

The geographic position of the Republic accounts for its biodiversity and specific conditions of preservation with specific relief as well as climatic, hydrological and landscape patchwork.

Azerbaijan is characterized by widely diverse mountainous ecosystems that are determined by various altitudes. Such mountainous ecosystems are known for their richest biological and landscape diversity, endemism and paramount economic value. The Republic's territory consists of the South-western part of the Greater Caucasus Range, the Lesser Caucasus Range, Nakhichevan, Talish and Kura-Araz areas, each characterized by various natural peculiarities.

4500 species of spore-bearing and flowering plants are registered in Azerbaijan accounting for over 64% of the Caucasus flora composition. At present, 140 rear and perishing types of vegetation have been included in the Red Book of Azerbaijan.

The Republic's fauna is known for its great variety and is currently represented by over 18 thousand species. The number of the country's rare and endangered vertebrate species is known to represent 98, according to the Red Book of Azerbaijan. This includes 14 mammalian species (97), 36 species of birds (356), 13 species and subspecies of reptiles and amphibians (67), 5 species of fish (100), 40 insect species of the overall 15 thousand ones that have been listed in the Red Book of Azerbaijan.

There are 800 species of herbs in Azerbaijan of which 100 possess industrial value. The planet Earth of early XX1 century contains only a few regions that have survived the mighty development of detrimental anthropogenic impact upon the environment. Therefore, various protected natural reserve areas increasingly play an important role in protecting and studying wild nature as well as provide necessary framework to preserve biological and landscape diversity. As international efforts are developed toward preservation of biological diversity it is clear that Specially Protected Natural Territories (SPNTs) will provide the basis of any national, regional and global policy of environmental conservation.

Preservation of biological and landscape diversity is impossible without the availability of a quite broad protected network of natural reserves. Azerbaijan's current biological and landscape diversity is largely preserved thanks to the current SPNT system.

According to Article 8 of the Convention on Biodiversity the MEPNR has in the past 5 years – with a view to preserving sustainable development of biodiversity – expanded 5 existing natural reserves, established 7 national parks, 3 new parks (of which one is located within a mud volcano site) and 3 new reserves. The expansion of existing SPNTs and the establishment of new ones are conducted on the basis of the **General Plan of SPNTs Development by 2010**.

The 1st phase of the plan was aimed at establishing the Shahdag National Park which was completed with grants allocated by the Japanese government and GEF. The Shahdag National Park was established in late 2006 with an overall area totalling 115,895 hectares. The project's 2nd phase is currently under development. The project is funded by a GEF grant, WB credit and the government's own contribution. A project to establish Samur-Yalama National Park has been jointly developed with KFW.

Currently, Azerbaijan has 7 national parks, 11 state natural reserves and 21 state natural preserves, including major ecosystems, with their overall area totalling 699,329 hectares or 8.1% of the Republic's total area.

It is worth pointing out that establishment of special reserve areas targets conservation of the entire ecosystem complex, habitats for species and their genetic diversity, landscapes of national and regional significance as well as ensuring the habitats possess sufficient room for conservation of species, restoration of key harmed constituents of ecosystems and their protection from being impacted by potential threat factors.

The SPNT system ensures protection of significant part of the country's biodiversity.

1.1 Overview of Azerbaijan's protected areas

The table below lists Azerbaijan's SPNTs.

Table 1 – Locations of Azerbaijan's SPNTs:

Major Caucasus	Minor Caucasus	Kura-Araz Depression	Talish	Absheron peninsula
Shahdag NP – 115895 hectares	Ordubad NP named after Academician G.Aliyev – 12131 hectares	Shirvan PA - 54373,5 hectares	Girkan PA -21435 hectares	Absheron NP-783 hectares
Altiagaj NP – 11035 hectares		Aggel NP – 17924 hectares		
Total: 2 NP -126930 hectares	1 NP – 12131 hectares	2 NP - 72297,5 hectares	1 NP - 21435 hectares	1 NP -783 hectares
Zagatal SNP -23844 hectares	Karagel Preserve – 240 hectares	Karayaz SNP -9658 hectares		
Ilisu SNP 17381,6 hectares	Basutchai SNP -107 hectares	Turianchai SNP -22488 hectares		
Eldar Pine SNP -1686 hectares	Shahbuz SNP -3139 hectares	Shirvan SNP -6232 hectares		
	Gek-Gel SNP -6739 hectares	Kizilagaj SNP - 88360 hectares		
Total:3 SNP -42911,6 hectares	4 SNP – 10225 hectares	4 SNP - 126738 hectares		
Gusar Preserve - 15000 hectares	Gubadli Preserve 20000 hectares	Karayaz Preserve – 10000 hectares	Zuvan Preserve 15000 hectares	Peiladasi NP - 400 Hectares

Ismailli Preserve – 23438 Hectares	Lachin Preserve – 20000 hectares	Kizilagaj Preserve – 10700 hectares	Girkan Preserve – 2252 hectares	
Gabala Preserve – 39700 hectares	Dashalti Preserve – 450 hectares	Barda Preserve – 7500 hectares		
Kakh Preserve – 36836 hectares	Kizilagaj Preserve – 5135 hectares	Bandovan Preserve – 4930 hectares		
Sheki Preserve – 10350 hectares	Фкфяищнг Зкуыукму - 2200 hectares			
Shemkir Preserve – 10000 hectares	Ordubad Preserve – 27869 hectares			
Korchai Preserve – 15000 hectares	Arazboi Preserve of Nakhchivan AR - 9118 hectares			
Total: 7 Preserves – 150324 hectares	7 Preserves – 84772 hectares	4 Preserves – 33130 hectares	2 Preserves – 17252 hectares	1 Preserves – 400 hectares

TOTAL: 7 NP – 233,576.5 hectares; 11 SNR – 179,874.5 hectares;
21 Preserves 285,878 hectares = 699,329 hectares = 8,1%.

It must be noted that 7 reserves (Turianchai, Prikuli, Basutchai, Garayazi, Ismailli, Eldar Pine, Ilisu) and 2 National Parks (Girkan and Altiagaj) by virtue of their significance represent botanic SPNTs while Shirvan and Ordubad National Parks as well as 6 preserves (Bandovan, Korchai, Gubadli, Ordubad, Ismailli, Lachin) represent theriologically conserved areas, whereas the reserve of Gizilagaj and Ag-gol, the Absheron National Park and 8 preserves (Sheki, Gusar, Barda, Glinaniy Island) stand for ornithological ones. Only the Small Kizil Agaj and Arazboy parks are considered to be ornitho-ichthiological by nature. The remaining SPNTs are of equal significance for all components of biota.

1.2 Purpose of the review of protected areas management planning

This review is aimed at the effective management of a protected areas network which will conserve biological and landscape diversity, in particular to:

- ensure natural conservation of entire natural ecosystem complex;
- preserve landscapes that are typical or unique for a particular area;
- preserve rare and valuable species of animals, plant types, etc.;
- preserve biotas populated by species and their genetical diversity;
- ensure restoration of key ecosystems harmed constituents;
- protect systems from potentially threatening factors;
- identify buffer zones;
- establish buffer zones for SPNTs and their strategic corridors;
- ensure sustainable utilization of biological and landscape diversity;

- ensure improvement of the life standard of local population residing nearby SPNTs;
- conduct monitoring and scientific research activity in SPNT areas;
- ensure regulation of recreational pressure rendered upon the ecosystem;
- introduce environmental education pertaining to biodiversity protection within buffer and support zones of residential settlements;
- SPNTs must be assigned national and regional significance targeting preservation of biological diversity.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan Republic has made a whole number of major decisions concerning selection, siting and sequencing of SPNT network establishment process as well as that of recreational, historical and cultural areas and assets of the Republic.

2 Current legal and institutional framework

2.1 Legal Framework

Major laws are as follows:

- The "Law on Environmental Protection" (1999)
- The "Law on Specially Protected Territories and Objects" (2000)
- The "Law on Fauna" (1999)
- The "Law on Protection of Vegetation" (1996)
- The "Law on Hunting Activity" (2004)
- General Provision "On State Natural and Biospheric Reserves and National Parks of Azerbaijan Republic" (2001)
- The Forest Code of Azerbaijan (1997)

In years past a number of legislative provisions have been adopted to ensure proper regulation of environmental protection process. In addition a number of memoranda have been signed with international organizations.

The Law on Environmental Protection provides the legal framework for protection of Azerbaijan's environment and natural resources while outlining major objectives of environmental protection as well as principles, methods and mechanisms of reaching their accomplishment.

The Law on Specially Protected Territories and Objects provides the legal framework for protection of biological and landscape diversity, establishment and expansion of SPNTs according to their categories and types of significance, stipulates funding and international cooperation. According to the law the funding of SPNTs must be allocated from the state budget, the environmental protection fund and other funds as envisaged by the legislation. Also, a set of Rules "On Creation and Usage of Special Funds and Means to Appropriately Manage and Protect SPNTs" has been endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Azerbaijan Republic with a view to developing the network of SPNTs, providing for their protection, conservation, restoration, development and ensuring other SPNT related activities.

Legal aspects of protection and utilization of forests are regulated by the Forest Code of Azerbaijan Republic (1989). Due to their economic and environmental value the country's forests fall under category one whereby their felling is prohibited.

As a rule SPNTs are established in compliance with national plans which, in turn, are endorsed by state bodies. New SPNTs are launched by appropriate decrees of the President of Azerbaijan Republic. The locations of national parks are also provided for by presidential decrees. The expansion of existing SPNTs is stipulated by corresponding decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan Republic.

Establishment of national parks results in conservation of entire spectrum of ecosystems, habitats for species and their genetic diversity, landscapes of national and regional significance, helps to ensure the habitats enjoy sufficient room and conditions to allow for

conservation of species, restoration of harmed constituents of major ecosystems, their protection from potentially threatening factors, contributes to development of environmental tourism and environmental education of the population.

A number of legal provisions still need to be made. These are set out in the section "Recommendations" below.

2.2 Responsible Organizations

Protected territories are subject to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, and are specifically subordinated to the Department of Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Territories.

Protected Territories are managed by the Department of Biodiversity Protection and Development of Specially Protected Territories as well as regional departments of the Ministry.

3 Current approach to protected area management

3.1 Vision

The Republic of Azerbaijan's vision is: *National parks are intended as a part of the wild nature of Azerbaijan where successful protection of ecosystems is conducted by their management in cooperation with local communities. The parks will improve economic environment of the region contributing to positive raise of life standard through development of environmental tourism and programs targeting establishment of new jobs by means of successful use of land and agricultural production.*

3.2 Tasks and Objectives

The parks' major task is to conserve and restore ecosystems, provide for tourism development and propagate the ideas of environmental protection.

Parks' objectives are:

1. Sustainable protection of the park's biodiversity and integrity of ecosystems,
2. Restoration of relic forests uniquely spread throughout entire Caucasus,
3. Preservation of rear and perishing species and types of biota and their genetic legacy,
4. Facilitation of the region's economic development through promulgation of tourism and establishment of new jobs,
5. Transformation of parks and their buffer zones into environmental tourist centres of the country,
6. Ensuring financial sustainability of the parks.

3.3 Zoning

Zoning is a means of management whereby the park is divided into sections characterized by various types and scales of development as well as levels of nature management and corresponding protective measures. Zoning is determined by landscape and ecosystem related factors, purposes for the park's existence, socio-economic and other factors. According to the criteria of WCU the territory of a given park must not be available for mining industry operations.

According to Azerbaijan's legislation the park area could be divided into 5 sections:

1. a section with special legal protection status
2. a section with regulated economic activity status
3. a section for tourism and recreation
4. a section for tourist service
5. a section for economic and industrial activity

3.4 Management programme

The parks' management programme consists of the following sub-programmes:

- Administrative programme
- Protection programme
- Tourist programme
- Monitoring and research programme
- Public awareness programme
- Community support programme

3.4.1 Administrative Programme

The administrative programme includes establishing the organizational structure of the park, providing necessary equipment and training staff.

3.4.2 Protection programme

Ensuring Security of the Park

The area of each Azerbaijani national park includes 2 to 6 districts of the country.

The area under protection is divided into sections categorized by different relief characteristics, number of rangers and the nature and degree of anthropogenic pressure. Maps are used to assign to every ranger a section to guard.

Demarcation

Delineation of national parks' is an indispensable measure to prevent the possibility of conflicts and to establish appropriate control. Demarcation involves assigning strategically placed observation posts and signboards along the parks' borders.

Environmental Protection Infrastructure Development

An infrastructure for environmental protection needs to be established to provide for efficient protective activity. Such infrastructure consists of ranger control structures and shelters located at the park's strategic points, erection of control points on the roads, cleaning out the roads for rapid response actions during fires, etc.

3.4.3 Tourist Programme

Elaboration and implementation of basic measures aimed at building environmental tourist capacity in the National Park must be preceded by the building of methodological capacity, conducting of field reconnaissance operations targeting registration and description of natural, cultural and historic assets of great interest as well as the laying of preliminary paths from the centre for subsequent determination of routes for horse riding and walking.

Tourist Foot-paths

Delineation of routes for horse riding, walking and bicycle riding.

Tourist Infrastructure

Determination of short-term stop-over places transit stops.

- tourist shelters
- camping sites
- information booths
- establishment of information and education framework

3.4.4 Monitoring and Research Programme

To establish the number of mammalian species and birds populating this zone a monitoring is jointly conducted twice a year with stakeholders according to methodological guidelines.

The results of scientific research activities conducted by scientists in the territory of the National Park are then highlighted in the annual report entitled "The Chronicles of Nature." Also, an ongoing collaboration with academic institutions is envisaged accordingly.

3.4.5 Public Awareness Programme

SPNTs provide specific opportunities to set up a unique educational environment. Such an educational environment is determined by the wildlife of the given territory and the presence of qualified specialists.

The environmental and educational potential of SPNTs includes the legacy contained in the territory (natural landscapes, objects of biota, historical and cultural memorials, etc.) and that of the specialists employed to study and protect natural and cultural legacy and appropriate logistical resources (museums, expositions, reserved and archived materials, educational facilities, environmental walking routes, photo and video library, book libraries, etc.).

Environmental and educational activity implies the raising of population's awareness as to the role of SPNT in preserving biological and landscape diversity by equally representing fundamental biospheric constituents and establishing an environmental culture contributing to the region's socio-economic development.

A wide range of various forms and methods of environmental and educational activity is used in SPNTs. The following ones could be regarded as the most efficient:

- Work with mass media
- Advertising and publishing activity
- Museums and visitor centres
- Educational excursions

Public Awareness Methods

- bulletins,
- illustrated materials (posters, booklets, etc.),
- TV programs,
- meeting local population, pupils, etc.

One approach to environmental education could be to conduct regional seminars entailing the following set of activities:

- systematic and purposeful interaction with population of each specific region;
- close cooperation with educational institutions, state authorities and local government bodies, the mass media, public organizations, etc.;
- setting up of necessary organizational and logistical framework called upon to provide for educational activity in the realm of environmental protection (establishment of special structural units, visitation centres, creation or remodelling of corresponding nature museum expositions, elaboration and equipping of environmental walking routes, promulgation of booklets and other advertising and reference materials, etc.).

The issue of conducting seminars in SPNTs necessitates establishment of environmental pathways and routes as well as their equipping with information stands and bulletin boards, introduction of special rules of visitor conduct in SPNT and restrictions to enter specific sections.

3.5 Community support programme

Our vision concerning solution of population employment issue implies local people's possible involvement in construction of the administrative office to be situated within the national park area as well as that of cottages for tourists and personnel members.

Residents of precincts surrounding any given national park can be provided with jobs in the following areas:

- Construction of:

- Public objects
- Communication and utilities infrastructure (roads, supply of power and natural gas, telephone lines, water supply, etc.)
- Laying of tourist routes.

- Service Sector
- Athletic and recreational services:
 - equipping and operating sports grounds and tennis-courts,
 - shooting galleries, excursions on foot and horse, building stables, etc.

Consequently, it would be necessary to form special expert groups to be in charge of the national park's biota protection. Also, biota museums and exposition displays must be created, etc.

Establishment of national parks contributes to the improvement of local population's life standard by creating new jobs.

Interaction with the local population must be one of broad spectrum and involve all areas of national parks' activities including various forms of cooperation. The region possesses substantial labour resources which are sufficient to provide most various areas of national park's activity with staff including the following baseline and ancillary structures:

- Forest nurseries;
- Forest administrations;
- Museum;
- Tourist services;
- Athletic and recreational services;
- Medical service;
- Economic and manufacturing structures of the national park;
- Transportation services;
- Supplier structures and others.

Each of these possibilities to provide local residents with employment requires individual consideration and detailed estimations. Isolated areas of employment, primarily relating to the provision of recreational services, require undertaking of preliminary environmental assessment which is to include the following:

- Identification of entire range of recreational services;
- Assessment of the utmost possible pressure each particular type of recreational service shall render on the natural environment;
- Identification of each recreational service's scale and mode;
- Identification of the need in workers and technicians as well as food, transportation and other resources.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 General recommendations

1. To review and propose amendments to national legislation pertaining to protected territories in compliance with international standards.
2. To work out recommendations concerning revision of national legislation on specially protected natural territories and objects.

4.2 Specific recommendations for changes to legislation

The following regulatory and legal instruments must be worked out:

1. The documents on annexations and amendments to the Law on Specially Protected Territories and Objects and General Provision On State Natural and Biospheric Reserves and National Parks of Azerbaijan Republic.
(biospheric reservations must be included into the law as the type of specially protected territories along with isolated articles devoted to such territories; subclause 1 of Article 11 of the Law, to add subpoints reading as "preservation of

genetic diversity," "enactment of environmental services," "preservation of wild nature" to the Provision of subclause 3.1 of the Law's Article 3 after the word "tourism"; the following points must be inserted in Article 18:

"To ensure restoration of rear and perishing types of vegetation and animal species that are unique to the region,"

"To conduct biotechnical activities, registration of foresting reserves and fauna in keeping with appropriate requirements of the reserve,"

"To inhibit excessive breeding of various vegetative types and animal species with the view of their subsequent acclimatization in keeping with scientific principles"; to insert the wording reading as "residential settlements" after phrase "land lots" in the Provision of subclause 1.4 of Article 21 of the Law;

To add wording reading as "genetic pools, biological diversity, systems of environmental protection" prior to phrase "natural complexes" in subclause one of Article 22; The phrase reading "to allow hunting activities allowing for appropriately limited reproduction of hunting objects" is to be included in paragraph 7 of Article 23 and the provision of Article 4.2.

2. To work out the "General Provision on Biospheric Reservations,"
3. the Rules to Determine Active Zones of national parks,
4. the Rules to calculate recreational pressure in tourist zones and national parks,
5. the Rules of using tourism zones in national parks,
6. the Rules of implementing biotechnical measures in the area of state natural reservations and parks.

4.3 Specific recommendations concerning the establishment of Samur-Yalama national park

1. To conduct intensive study of each section of the National Park.
2. To collect entire information (environmental and socio-environmental data on land tenure and coastal line of the Caspian Sea).
3. To prepare a map of the National Park on the basis of GIS with full scope of information.
4. To recommend alternative sources of power supply for population residing in the vicinity of the national parks.
5. To identify the need in the region's environmental education by the end of current year.
6. To set up a working group with the view of elaborating addendums on environmental tourism, in particular on coastal environmental tourism, analysing current state and studying the maximum possible recreational capacity of the National Park's environmental tourist section.
7. To work out a structure of the National Park and identify financial mechanisms of its operation.
8. To appropriately train specialists with the view of efficiently conducting educational and environmental activity on the modern level.
9. To comprise materials on natural, historic and cultural legacy of memorials situated within the National Park area.