

## **RESOLUTIONS OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> NATIONAL PARK CONFERENCE**

**1<sup>ST</sup>-3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2015, LAMPERI BOTANICAL PARK**

Since the development of first Vision, Mission and Strategic Operational Principles for nature conservation in 2003, several things have changed both in scale and directions. While the vision and mission have still remained relevant to a large extent, the strategic operational principles, the role of protected areas including biological corridors, people's perceptions towards protected areas, emerging issues relating to conservation, and decline in external funding have prompted the Department to relook at the existing protected area management system. The conference amongst others, dealt in greater details on the following topics:

1. Human-wildlife conflicts – an assessment of past investments and to explore different options – appropriate technology and financial sustainability.
2. Reconciling conservation and development – an assessment of past efforts and looking forward – is the concept of integrating conservation and development programmes (ICDP) still relevant and sustainable?
3. Is the present protected areas/biological corridors management approaches effective – is there a need for reassessment as protected areas and biological corridors as these areas are becoming increasingly contested for other land uses through the need to provide access to development to the park residents.
4. Assessing threats to endangered species and the need to evolve more effective mechanisms to combat them. With improving consumptive power, demand for wildlife parts and their derivatives are ever increasing, even becoming intractable for some endangered species.
5. The need to link investment in protected areas and biological corridors management with reliable scientific data – after years of investment in conservation programmes, little or no reliable scientific data exists – a way forward for management of wildlife and floral data.
6. Long-term sustainable conservation financing – with the decrease in external conservation financing the need to explore ways and means to establish long-term sustainable funding mechanisms for conservation programmes.
7. The need for major amendment of Forest and Nature Conservation Act 1995 and Rules 2006 to incorporate the changing scenario of wildlife conservation.

### **Special Presentation on Sustainable Development Goals**

Recognizing the importance of International Developmental goals towards country's development planning and adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as post MDGs by United Nations General Assembly 2015 and noting the relevance of various SDGs to departmental output of Department of Forests and Park Services in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, the conference adopted the following resolutions;

1. The conference recommended all functional divisions, research institutes, protected areas and territorial divisions to take note of the SDGs while preparing the annual work plans and project proposals in line with the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly.

### ***I. Assessment of effectiveness of protected areas.***

2. Wildlife Conservation Division in coordination with the parks offices shall continue to implement the Bhutan METT plus tool for the rest of the parks and biological corridors and complete the exercise by June 2016.

*Action: Wildlife Conservation Division*

### ***II Assessing Conservation versus Development.***

3. The conference suggested all park management to implement the conservation incentives with adequate exit plan and also with assurance of community ownership after the termination of support from the parks.

*Action: All Park offices.*

4. The conference urges the Department to propose reviewing of farm road guidelines through RNR-GNH as this has brought a lot of wildlife habitat fragmentation and other negative impacts to environment.

*Action: Department of Forests and Park Services to write to Ministry of Agriculture and Forests*

### ***III. Habitat Management in Protected Areas.***

5. The conference directed all park management to focus on habitat restoration using local species, while undertaking restoration like grassland management and also while undertaking pasture land management.
6. Considering the need to strengthen zonation procedures for putting in effective conservation interventions, the conference adopted the revised zonation guidelines for implementation by all parks.
7. The conference felt the need for a uniform framework for management plan writing for the conservation management plans and adopted the proposed framework for management planning of parks and biological corridors.

*Action: All Park Offices.*

### ***IV Assessment of effectiveness of existing CBNRMs inside PA: A Casestudy of Park Festivals.***

8. The conference recognised the need to review the broader objective of all park festivals and directed the concerned park management to undertake studies to review the objectives and plans for these festivals by the end of June 2016.

*Action: UWICE to lead in consultation with Nature Recreation and Ecotourism Division and Wildlife Conservation Division.*

### ***V. Research gaps, issues and challenges.***

9. While it was agreed that any individual have the right to take up research on any species/fields, the conference directed Wildlife Conservation Division and UWICE to strictly coordinate conservation researches as per the agreed mandates of each institution, which are as follows:

### **Mandate of Wildlife Conservation Division**

- i. Assess policy relevance of the proposed research and identify research priorities.
- ii. Assess and secure fund for prioritized research.
- iii. In consultation with field offices and research institutions, develop guidelines for biodiversity inventories and surveys to generate baseline data.
- iv. Conduct periodic review and monitoring of research.
- v. Ensure translation of research findings and recommendation into relevant policy briefs.

### **Mandate of Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment**

- i. Provide scientific leadership for research activities;
  - ii. Ensure proper coordination of research works between the institute, Wildlife Conservation Division and the field divisions.
  - iii. Adequately consult with Chief Forestry Officers of field offices for engagement of field staff during research activities when the PIs are from outside of the field offices.
  - iv. Establish research and data collection protocols/methodologies in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee of the Department through Wildlife Conservation Division.
  - v. House and nurture subject-matter specialists.
  - vi. Provide authority and support analysis and publications of research results and studies.
10. The conference directed the UWICE and Wildlife Conservation Division to conduct Research Coordination Meeting prior to Annual Park conference/Forestry Conference for reporting during these conferences.
11. Any individual aspiring to do research other than the topics identified and prioritized in the Research Coordination Meeting, the conference resolved that these researches will need special approval through the Department of Forests and Park Services.
12. The conference decided that a central repository of all research data including data/information from other agencies of the department will be created and hosted by the UWICE. A mirror of this database will be available at the Wildlife Conservation Division, field offices and other agencies of the department for cross referencing and data access.

**Action: Wildlife Conservation Division and UWICE**

## **VI. ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF HWC INTERVENTIONS AND WAY FORWARD**

13. The conference decided to have a more effective coordination and a clearer role of the HWC Coordination Unit of the Ministry and requested the Department to take it up as a proposal during the RNR-GNHC Meeting.
14. For increasing the HWC Endowment Fund, the conference directed Wildlife Conservation Division to look into possibilities of seeking approval of the Finance Ministry to plough back funds from the various entry fees within the Department.

**Action: Wildlife Conservation Division**

## **VII. CONSERVING MEGA FAUNA AGAINST LESSER KNOWN SPECIES.**

### ***a. Review of status of present mega faunal species vis-à-vis the lesser known species and investments made.***

15. The conference recommended Wildlife Conservation Division to submit a proposal to BTFEC to carry out survey on Bhutan Takin, one of the mega faunal species in the country in the December cycle of BTFEC funding.
16. The conference recognized the need to have conservation road maps of some important lesser known species, and directed Wildlife Conservation Division to start developing conservation plans for those species prioritized in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan.

***Action: Wildlife Conservation Division***

### ***b. Wildlife crime prevention mobile application for Bhutan.***

17. The conference directed the Forest Protection and Surveillance Unit of the Department to review the pros and cons of the proposed Species Identification Guide mobile app and initiate the development of Memorandum of Understanding with the Wildlife Trust of India (*the developer of the app*) on its use and data storage.
18. In view of the applicability and based on the positive experience from its implementation in Royal Manas National Park, conference resolved for the implementation of SMART patrolling in all protected areas and territorial divisions on need basis.

***Action: Wildlife Conservation Division and Forest Protection and Surveillance Unit***

### ***c. Assessing the floral research in Bhutan.***

19. The field offices are encouraged to submit any floral data collected during their daily field works to the Department and further directed Wildlife Conservation Division to establish direct linkages with these field enthusiasts for gathering information for updating plant lists.
20. The conference recommended the proposal for establishment of Arboretum and Herbarium centre at different vegetation zones to create awareness and educate the public at large.

***Action: Wildlife Conservation Division***

## **VII. CONSERVATION AT LANDSCAPE LEVEL: PARADIGM SHIFT IN PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT.**

### ***a. Assessment of the existing Biological Corridors.***

21. Considering several issues that surfaced due to confusion over biological corridor boundary on the ground, the conference directed Wildlife Conservation Division to immediately start boundary demarcation on the ground for all biological corridors.
22. Biological Corridor management plan will be prepared by Territorial Divisions in consultation with Wildlife Conservation Division and for those corridors which pass

through two territorial divisions it will be prepared jointly and activities implemented by the concerned division in which the area falls.

**Action: Wildlife Conservation Division**

#### **IX RATIONALIZING RULES, FINES AND PENALTIES IN PROTECTED AREAS.**

**a. Review of existing enforcement protocols and activities:**

23. For the animals which are not found in Bhutan or included in the FNCA or FNCR but found smuggled dead or alive in the country, the conference recommended for inclusion of fining system in the ongoing amendment.

24. The conference recommended the expedition of revision of FNCA, 1995 and FNCR, 2006.

**Action: Wildlife Conservation Division**

#### **X. SUSTAINABILITY OF Non Wood Forest Products (NWFPs).**

25. Aware of the issue of sustainability of NWFP the conference directed Social Forestry and Extension Division to update the scheduled list of NWFP for providing legal protection to highly valuable NWFPs that goes into illegal market due to its value.

26. Further the conference directed all Park management to pursue the formation of NWFP groups to curb down the illegal activities related to NWFP collection.

**Action: Social Forestry and Extension Division and all Park Management**