













The French model for protected areas – relevant experience to meet the new biodiversity targets The international community is about to officially set new targets for global biodiversity conservation for the 2020-2030 decade. Protected areas (PAs) have long been identified as an essential tool to prevent biodiversity loss, and ambitious targets will be set for protected area coverage in the wake of Aichi target 11. As most of the remaining wilderness has already been the focus of protection efforts, PA networks will have to be expanded into more densely populated

areas in order to meet the new targets. In such a context, the capacity of these new PAs to abandon the glass-case model and effectively achieve articulation with existing human societies will be a key success factor.

With its long history of integrated and local-level management of PAs, the French model has assets to enhance the connexion between PAs and their environment. The added value of the French model essentially stems from:

- Elaborate governance systems designed to strengthen the integration of PAs within their territories, promoting robustness and long-term appropriation of PAs. The approach is to avoid the logic of economic compensation for the prejudice caused by PA creation, and seek instead a collective organisation generating benefits (both monetary and non-monetary) directly linked to the protection goal of the PA.
- A set of complementary protection tools based on regulation, land tenure and contract, which can be combined according to the specific local issues in order to achieve tailored conservation outcomes.

The French approach for biodiversity conservation in territories also aims at reflecting the **democratic values** underpinning the republican model. We believe that these values are essential to achieve the transition from historical top-down, sometimes coercive, approaches towards more equitable and inclusive approaches of nature conservation.



French PA managers have developed high-level skills in direct relation with the geographical and human challenges they face. The following deserve to be mentioned:

• Marine and coastal issues. France is responsible for the second largest maritime territory in the world, with territorial waters in all oceans of the planet. A proactive national policy of creation and management of marine protected areas is implemented

since 2007. There are many specific aspects to the work of MPA managers (inventory methods, monitoring strategies...). French MPA managers form an active and structured community, maintaining and developing the set of skills needed to address these specific challenges.

- More generally, the diversity of physical and biogeographical contexts. Amongst European countries, mainland France harbours the highest diversity of bioclimatic zones. PA managers from the Mediterranean and Alpine biomes, in particular, have developed skills that can prove useful in similar contexts within hotspots such as the Mediterranean basin or the Mountains of Central Asia. From tidal mudflats to major riverine ecosystems, from forest habitats to mountains glaciers, French PAs cover a wide array of ecosystem types resulting in a diversified context-specific set of skills.
- Overseas territories. There are PAs in all overseas regions of the Caribbean, Guiana and Indian Ocean. These overseas regions are part of tropical, subtropical or subantarctic ecoregions and act as stepping-stones for international cooperation projects. The PA managers often share many challenges with their counterparts from neighbouring countries and usually have a rich history of cooperation. Ultramarine PAs have often developed specific skills on governance, cultural heritage and invasive alien species control.
- PA adaptation to climate change. French PAs are highly advanced on the topic of climate change adaptation. An active and structured community of scientists and PA managers of various types keeps developing a robust methodology to integrate climate change in the management plans. Thanks to this ongoing initiative, the majority of French Nature Reserves will have an adaptation plan within 10 years.
- Ecosystem restoration. In mainland France, the landscapes have been shaped by humans for thousands of years and early industrialisation has left very few ecoystems in a near-natural state. In such a context, the creation of new PAs very often comes with significant restoration needs. French PA managers have therefore developed valuable skills for restoring both the functionalities and species richness of ecosystems (e.g. restoration of semi-natural open habitats through controlled grazing, restoration of hydraulic functions of wetlands and peatlands, restoration of sand dunes and lake ecosystems). Shared by a wide community of PA managers, these skills can be instrumental in contributing to the current UN decade of ecosystem restoration.



Involving a French PA manager in an international cooperation project addressing PA issues means bringing in a peer-to-peer dynamic, fostering meaningful exchanges and guaranteeing operational outcomes on the field. In some cases, it can be the starting point to more long-term cooperation between PAs – French PA managers have been practising mentoring for a long time and are usually willing to engage in crossed on-site training.

More generally, the PA manager's perspective can be useful to design and steer public policies on natural heritage, beyond PA management issues. Our associate networks include many resource persons (elected representatives, experts) capable of contributing to **highly strategic reflexions**.

In order to facilitate the direct involvement of French PA managers, we offer a **service platform** as well as a **straightforward and responsive contracting device**. Thanks to this initiative, all types of organisations involved in international cooperation and biodiversity (including NGOs, scientists, consultants...) can indiscriminately, according to their needs, use the platform to complete their projects or offers with a PA manager workforce.

Nowadays, biodiversity issues are addressed beyond species conservation programmes and PA creation – mainstreaming in economic sectors and land use planning have become major challenges. Partner countries are therefore, more and more, looking for an array of solutions to design and implement consistent and integrated biodiversity policies. In order to meet this demand, the four major networks of PA mangers in France (French Nature Re-

serves, Federation of French Nature Conservancies, Federation of French Regional Nature Parks and the French National Parks) have developed a **global and structured service**, dedicating their specific skills to international cooperation projects. This service offers solutions on a case-by-case basis, setting up **tailored teams from the four networks** to contribute to projects. Thanks to a broader partnership with other types of PAs, the service can involve PA managers from French PA managers in general, beyond the four associate networks.

French Nature Reserves (RNF) currently hosts the inter-network coordination and serves as a focal point for incoming requests (emmanuelle.sarat@rnfrance.org). When contacted, we will seek relevant skills amongst our PA networks and partners to meet the specific needs: PA managers sharing comparable contexts, those facing similar challenges, or those having developed sharp expertise on one of the key issues expressed. Considering their availability and the correspondence with

their own strategic plans, the resource persons will confirm their interest in taking part in the cooperation. When needed, the inter-network coordination can handle part of the project engineering and contracting on the PA managers' behalf.

Areas of expertise



Protected areas in harmony with their socio-economic environment

- Concerted green development schemes in an around large-scale protected areas
- Promoting territories through sustainable tourism policies
- Mainstreaming biodiversity in rural economic sectors such as agriculture and forestry
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Nature-based solutions to address societal challenges
- Protected area endorsement by local stakeholders
- Sound governance and concertation
- Protected areas managed by cities for cities
- Man vs. wildlife conflicts



Ecosystem management and restoration

- Conservation-oriented ecosystem management practice
- Local contribution to national and global conservation strategies
- Ecosystem restoration
- Species reintroduction and translocation
- Invasive species management
- Natural and industrial hazard management
- Climate change adaptation of protected areas
- Restoring and enhancing ecological connectivity



Biodiversity knowledge and monitoring

- Ecological expertise & taxonomic groups inventories
- Species and ecosystems monitoring methods
- Data management and analysis, biostatistics
- Sharing results
- Management-oriented monitoring platforms



Organising the work of rangers and protected area managers

- Management planning and evaluation
- Good practice in law enforcement
- Joint management planning with other types of protected areas
- Building and strengthening networks at a relevant scale with a bottom-up approach
- International recognition schemes and labels



Making the most of public access to protected areas and managed sites

- Carrying capacity assessment
- Visitor and outdoor activities management
- Visitor infrastructure design and setup
- Art and culture in protected areas
- Participatory science
- Education and public awareness from classic school workshops to innovative hands-on educational areas



Ecological planning

- Knowledge and prioritisation of biodiversity issues at different spatial scales
- Green infrastructure
- Combining regulatory, land tenure and contractual instruments to achieve conservation outcomes
- Mainstreaming biodiversity in land use planning



Protected areas beyond biodiversity

- Knowing, protecting and sharing geological heritage in protected areas
- Landscape-based approaches
- Knowing, vitalising and sharing cultural and architectural heritage in protected areas