

## A Global Review of National Guidance for High Conservation Value

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The concept of High Conservation Value (HCV) areas, or areas of outstanding significance or critical importance, has gained considerable currency in the context of certification for sustainable forest management and agriculture. It has also been applied in the context of conservation planning, land use planning, purchasing and investing. Global guidance for identifying, delineating, and managing HCV areas has been developed and nineteen countries have developed national interpretations. To date, there has not been a systematic review of national HCV guidance.

We reviewed existing toolkits and other guidance material, looking for shared themes and examples that could represent best practice with the potential for developing consistent national guidelines. HCV guidance from all or nearly all of the countries reviewed

adhered to best practices related to incorporating stakeholder consultation, referring to international standards such as the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and including management recommenda-

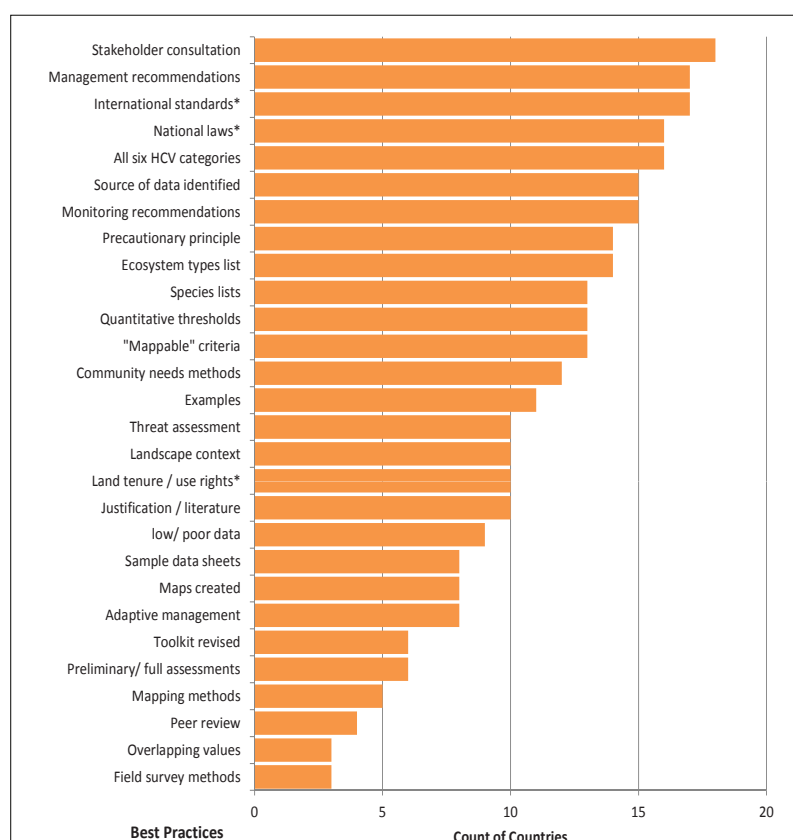


Figure 1. Count of countries with HCV guidance that adhered to each best practice. Note: Asterisk (\*) indicates best practices that are already included in certification standards such as FSC; these are less important to include in HCV guidance unless it is applied outside the context of certification.

tions (Figure 1). Guidance from relatively few countries adhered to other best practices such as describing detailed methods

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for mapping HCV, identifying multiple overlapping values, conducting both preliminary and full assessments, including sample survey instruments, or recommending peer review of HCV assessments. Guidance from different countries was inconsistent

rently missing HCV values, particularly HCV 5 and 6. Areas of inconsistency should be revisited to ensure that different standards are appropriate given the local context rather than simply a byproduct of diverse processes. We recommend requiring peer review of HCV



Photo: CI/ William Crosse.

assessments and conducting independent, regular monitoring of identified HCV areas to build up a repository of documentation to support adaptive management and ensure that outstanding values continue to support ecosystem health and human well-being.

in its definition of threatened species, definitions of protected areas, and treatment of primary, secondary, and plantation forests. There were also inconsistencies related to minimum qualifying areas for HCV 2 (large intact ecosystems); different quantitative thresholds for erosion prone areas, buffer zones, and basic needs of local communities; and different management recommendations for maintaining or enhancing HCV values.

We recommend aligning national and global guidance with identified best practices to improve consistency across national HCV interpretations. Guidelines should be developed for any cur-

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