

Presentation: IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management

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Presentation of the commission

IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management

CEM Steering Committee and Thematic Group Leads
 Commission Chair: Piet Wit. Deputy Chair: Angela Andrade.
 Vice Chair Drylands & Capacity Building: Birguy Lamizana.
 Vice Chair: Said Damhoureyeh. Vice Chair Marine and Coastal Ecosystems: Kelvin Passfield
 Further contact information is available at:
http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cem/cem_about/cem_contacts/
 Correspondence to: edmund.barrow@iucn.org

About us

The IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) is the IUCN's youngest commission, established in 1996. It is a network of volunteer experts, numbering approximately 800, from around the world working on ecosystem management related issues, for example climate change adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Red List of Ecosystems (RLE), fisheries and ecosystem restoration and services. The Commission works closely with other IUCN Commissions, regional offices and global thematic programmes.

CEM receives membership and communications support from the Ecosystem Management Programme (EMP), its counterpart thematic programme in the IUCN Secretariat. EMP is part of the Nature Based Solutions Group of the Secretariat, which is housed in IUCN's Headquarters in Gland, Switzerland. While CEM is an IUCN Commission composed of volunteer scientists, EMP is comprised of IUCN Secretariat employed staff, and the Head of EMP is the focal point in the IUCN Secretariat for CEM.

BACKGROUND AND MISSION

The Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) is the successor to the Commission on Ecology (COE), established in 1954. COE was the early home in IUCN for many of the biome-related programmes, such as the forest conservation or water programmes, and was responsible for many IUCN achievements over the following two decades. COE was replaced by CEM at the 1996 Members' Assembly at Montreal (Canada) with a mandate "to further the IUCN mission" by supporting the ecosystem management components of the Union's programme.

Priorities for CEM's work included the development of participatory methods of ecosystem management, ecological economics, and dryland degradation. In practice, CEM has focused on the elaboration and promotion of the 'ecosystem approach' as a framework within which other themes could be tackled.

CEM's current mission statement is "To provide expert guidance on integrated approaches to the management of natural and modified ecosystems to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable development", with the principle objective being to mainstream ecosystem approaches to natural resources management worldwide.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

CEM has taken a focus on promoting the Ecosystem Approach in line with its mission. The well-being of people depends on the goods and services provided by ecosystems, including food, medicines, fuel, construction materials, clean water and air, and protection from natural hazards. Ecosystems, however, are under increasing pressure due to unsustainable use, degradation and conversion to other forms of use, such as farmland, plantation forests, and biofuels.

During the first four years' programme, CEM worked with the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) to establish guidelines for Ecosystem Management. The twelve principles of Ecosystem Management were endorsed by the 8th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Nairobi in 2005. These principles were inspired by and based on the ten "Sibthorpe Principles of Ecosystem Management" developed under the guidance of CEM's first chair, Ed Maltby (1996-2000). Based on this, CEM promotes the sound management of ecosystems through the use and application of the Ecosystem Approach — a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that places human needs at its centre. The aim of the IUCN CEM Ecosystem Management Series of publications is to support best practice ecosystem management, both at field and policy levels, and to help realise IUCN's vision of a just world that values and conserves nature. CEM has nine key publications, which are available online¹.

During the chairmanship of Hillary Masundire (2000-2008), CEM focused more on making the ecosystem approach usable by policy makers, and applicable by practitioners. This led to a number of guidelines and publications, backed up by presentations at conferences, seminars and workshops, such as the very influential "five steps to the ecosystem approach" by Gill Shepherd, guidelines for mining in drylands, and a publication on lessons learned from the application of the ecosystem approach in Latin America. Translating the Ecosystem Approach into implementation action has resulted in a number of achievements, including:

1. CEM has helped make the case for Ecosystem Based Adaptation to climate change (EBA), and has published a book and a number of papers highlighting its importance as a core component of climate change adaptation, which is now increasingly accepted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This has been achieved through convening side events and sessions on EBA at COPs of CBD and of the UNFCCC (Copenhagen, Cancun, Durban, Nagoya), as well as a variety of separate workshops.
2. Ecosystem and environmental approaches to DRR are often seen as neither the domain of conservation or of the disaster risk reduction communities. Through the work of CEM and EMP, such approaches are increasingly seen as important for the UN International Strategy

for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) Global Platforms in 2009 and 2011, where the importance of environmental and ecosystem options is increasingly recognized – CEM played an important role in hosting side events. CEM was one of the founder members of the broad Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR), which has carried out a number of successful trainings.

3. More recently CEM and other partners convened a major workshop on the Mexican Gulf Oil Spill, together with the IUCN Washington office, which resulted in important influence on the policies and implementation strategies for the clean-up operations.
4. CEM has helped raise the importance of drylands natural resource management, through promoting and adapting the ecosystem approach to dry rangeland systems, for examples the Steppe Conference in Mongolia, or the importance of ecosystem management of oases. As a result of this, there is now a Global Drylands Initiative in the EMP.
5. In line with its broad mandate, CEM has helped raise awareness, through a variety of workshops, conferences and publications about the importance of different forms of ecosystem services – for example for environmental restoration, mountain ecosystems, food security, improved marine governance.

MAJOR CURRENT INITIATIVES

The current CEM programme (2009-2012) builds on the insights and initiatives taken during the previous periods. RLE, for instance, was identified by Ed Maltby as a potential product, while Hillary Masundire took the initiative to start working on disaster management in response to the 2004 tsunami.

RED LIST OF ECOSYSTEMS (RLE)

RLE² will become a global standard for how we assess the status of ecosystems, applicable at local, national, regional and global levels. RLE will categorise ecosystems as: not at risk; vulnerable; endangered; or critically endangered. This will be measured by assessing losses in area, degradation or other major changes. A standardized system will allow for objective, transparent and repeatable assessments of ecosystem risk, and losses of ecosystem functions and services. Such assessments will be scientifically comparable. At the global level, IUCN will assess the conservation status of the world's terrestrial, freshwater, marine and subterranean ecosystems, aiming to achieve complete coverage by 2025. RLE is working towards five major targets:

1. List the world's ecosystems and document their status;
2. Focus not only on threatened ecosystems but also on those that are in good condition as a result of active management, and so highlight best practices in ecosystem management;

¹ http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cem/cem_resources/cem_ems/

² See accompanying article in this volume.



3. Establish a “secretariat” to manage the RLE process in collaboration with the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species so as to ensure strong linkages;
4. Enhance technical and institutional capacity for ecosystem red-listing at national, regional and global levels; and
5. Develop strong linkages between good ecosystem management and sectors which are not necessarily focused on conservation (e.g. national and economic planning, livelihood improvement, and the private sector).

ECOSYSTEM BASED ADAPTATION (EBA)

As CEM and EMP have a joint and shared programme of work, they both promote EBA in climate change and biodiversity negotiations. For example, CEM compiled case studies and lessons from field experiences on EBA and presented them (under the title “Threatened Ecosystems, Vulnerable People”) in a CEM side event at COP 10 in Nagoya, 2009. CEM also took the lead in drafting a publication³ on policy principles and guidelines for implementing EBA in adaptation policies and projects, which was prepared by more than ten international organizations, and was launched at COP 17 in Durban, 2011. These guidelines will be updated for the UNFCCC COP in Doha, 2012.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR)

DRR is gaining in importance within IUCN, with particular reference to nature and environment based solutions. CEM and EMP have been piloting this work, which has involved developing and delivering training materials in collaboration with PEDRR partners, including:

- “Environmental Guidance Note for DRR” – first published in 2009, reprinted twice to date;
- “Ecosystems for DRR” – book to be launched 2012/2013 in collaboration with United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- “Ecosystems for DRR, European context” – paper commissioned by TGL for Council of Europe and converted into recommendation to be adopted by Council of Europe, EUR-OPA agreement on natural hazards management in April 2012;
- a Master’s degree programme, “Eco-DRR” is being developed with UNEP, WWF, UNU, Cologne University and ten southern Universities, for launch in the winter of 2012/2013.

FISHERIES

The Fisheries Expert Group of CEM organized [14–16 October 2010, in Nagoya, before CBD COP 10] an international Scientific Workshop on selective fisheries and balanced harvest in relation to ecosystem sustainability. The conclusions were

presented to CBD members in a side event. Recognizing that the conventional “increased selectivity” paradigm may be inconsistent with Ecosystem Management principles, alternate fishing strategies were reviewed and analysed. Balanced harvesting was defined as *a strategy that distributes fishing pressure across the widest possible range of trophic levels, sizes and species, in proportion to their natural productivity, reducing fishing pressure where it is excessive*. The report is available⁴ and policy and management implications were published in the Policy Forum section of the journal Science⁵.

CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

CEM has a joint work programme with the EMP and various funding opportunities are evolving with this, for example with respect to DRR or RLE – which are also examples of IUCN’s One Programme in action. As CEM has a diverse portfolio of activities, dependent on individual volunteer member interest, maintaining a strong focus is a challenge – though this is reduced by having a strong work programme with EMP.

RLE is a Union Wide knowledge product – but this also raises expectations as well as challenges as to how RLE can be integrated into other products (such as the Red List of Threatened Species, Key Biodiversity Areas, World Database on Protected Areas), and other important areas of work such as land/water use planning and macro-economic decision making.

EBA is gaining in importance, but it still remains a “fuzzy” concept when compared to other, more infrastructural, forms of climate change adaptation. CEM and others will continue to strengthen the case for ecosystem based options to climate change either on their own, or as part of more integrated approaches. The same can be said for ecosystem and environmental options for DRR, so as to continue to make the case to the two different communities of practise (conservation and the DRR communities).

Having a network of high level volunteer and motivated experts, who have a wide range of demands placed on them, makes it difficult to fund raise directly. Yet continuing to find ways and approaches to address these challenges will be at the fore front of improved conservation based arguments and economic justification of ensuring that the ecosystem approach is good for conservation and essential for the long term well-being of society. The time spent on fund-raising and program management will need to be balanced.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Like other IUCN commissions, CEM has a matrix structure with Thematic Groups (TGs) that work at global or regional levels and regional chairs that look after ecosystem management

³ *Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in a Changing Climate: From Practice to Policy? Lessons learnt from islands*. Adaptation Hub, Cop 17, Durban, 2011; and Adaptation Knowledge Day III, Bonn, 2012.

⁴ <http://data.iucn.org/dbtw-wpd/edocs/2011-001.pdf>.

⁵ Garcia et al. (2012). Reconsidering the Consequences of Selective Fisheries. *Science* 335(6072): 1045-1047.

issues to be addressed by CEM in the IUCN regions⁶. In a limited number of countries the Regional Chair is supported by national focal points. These normally are appointed at the request of the membership of that country. CEM, encourages its members to establish TGs around topics that are of special interest to them; currently they number 21, almost all active. Examples include the Fisheries Expert Group (mentioned earlier), and the TGs on Mediterranean Ecosystems and Oases. A TG on Invasive Species and Ecosystems is in the making.

Other TGs were created at the request of partners of CEM. These include the TGs on Urban Ecosystems (following requests from architects), Nutrient Cycling (requested by IUCN's President), and Capacity Building (identified by COP-8 of the CBD in Bonn, Germany). Some TGs were established to match existing programmes within the IUCN secretariat, for example with respect to Islands, Drylands, Wetlands, Coastal Ecosystems, and Ecosystems and the Private Sector.

CEM has nominated a limited number of Special Advisors and Focal Points to be called upon for specific questions related to their field of expertise. Two are former Focal Area Leaders who had completed two terms (for the Ecosystem Approach and Ecosystem Restoration).

The Steering Committee has adopted a policy to nominate young professionals as co-leads to TG Leads and Regional Chairs. This policy will be stepped up for the next intersessional programme.

GOVERNANCE OF CEM

The Steering Committee is composed of five people, including the Chair. This small team is an effective and efficient means to govern the Commission. The Head of EMP sits on the steering committee as an observer. As a small Steering Committee is less costly, it has been possible to organize two Steering Committee meetings per year, in different IUCN regions, covering the continents that are represented in the Steering Committee. Each Steering Committee meeting is associated with a workshop that addresses an issue of relevance for the IUCN region where the meeting is held. Collaboration and co-funding for the workshop is sought with the IUCN Secretariat, councilors and IUCN Members. This formula has been very successful, and CEM and IUCN have become more visible in the regions, and their positions strengthened. It also helps to bridge the gaps between practitioners and policy makers, between theory and practice, and across sectors and disciplines.

⁶ There are some minor differences between CEM regions and IUCN regions.