



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest and Environment
Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation



28, November 2022

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Director General

World Heritage Center,

UNESCO

Paris, France

Subject : State of Conservation Report of Chitwan National Park

It is my pleasure to submit the State of Conservation Report of the World Heritage Property, **Chitwan National Park**, prepared by the Department of National parks and Wildlife Conservation based on the 44th of World Heritage Committee's decision 44 COM the 7B.188. The Department aims to develop a climate resilient and self-sustaining protected area of Nepal including Chitwan National Park, which is hereby enclosed. Your kind cooperation to materialize the dream of the strategy is highly appreciated.

Thank you so much for your kind cooperation.

Sincerely yours

Maheshwar Dhakal, PhD
Director General

Director General

CC :

Nepal National Commission for UNESCO

UNESCO office in Kathmandu

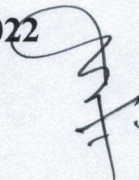


**State of Conservation Report
Chitwan National Park (Nepal) (N284)**

**Submitted to
World Heritage Center
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)
Paris, France**

**Prepared and Submitted by
Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest and Environment
Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
Kathmandu, Nepal**

November, 2022


Director General



State of Conservation Report of Chitwan National Park (Nepal) (N284)

1. Executive Summary

World Heritage properties qualify in terms of their outstanding natural and unique cultural traits bearing an invaluable international importance. Two natural sites (Sagarmatha and Chitwan National Parks) and two cultural sites (Kathmandu valley and Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Buddha) of Nepal are inscribed on the List of World Heritage due to their outstanding universal value (OUV). The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and the Department of Archaeology are the focal institutions for the conservation and management of these natural and cultural sites (properties) respectively.

In its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) the World Heritage Committee has examined and raised some issues concerning the state of conservation of the Chitwan National Park. In the Decision 43 COM 7B.11, the Committee has requested the State Party to submit an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of its recommendations for examination by the Committee at its 45th session in 2021. In this context, this report provides an update about the status of the Chitwan National park. In addition, it underlines the view of the State Party to the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee.

2. Introduction

Chitwan National Park (CNP), established in 230 B.S. (1973 AD), is the first National Park of Nepal. The Park that constitutes an important component of the Terai Arc Landscape is a biodiversity hotspot as designated by Conservation International and WWFs' Global 200 Eco-region, adjoined by a Ramsar Site (Beeshazari and Associated Lakes). It is located in the southern central Terai of Nepal with initially 544 Km² area of the Park which was then extended to 932 Km² in 1977 AD. On 17 October 2016, the area of the Park reached to 952.63 Km² as a result of addition of Padampur and readjustment of the area by excluding Gajendra Mokchhya Dham of Tribeni. It extends over four administrative districts -Chitwan, Nawalpur, Parsa and Makwanpur- three provinces of Bagmati, Province No 2 and Gandaki. Due to its OUV, it has been inscribed on the World Heritage Site in 1984 under the criteria (vii) for its exceptional natural beauty, criteria (ix) for bearing outstanding ecological and biological processes, and criteria (x) for providing significant natural habitats for endangered species. In 1996, an area of 750 Km² consisting of forests, human settlements and private lands surrounding (adjoining with) the Park was declared as a Buffer Zone. In

2003, Beeshazari and Associated Lakes within the buffer zone were designated as a Ramsar Site a wetland of international importance. In 13 April 2016, the DNPWC signed the Sister Park Agreement amongst the Sagarmatha National Park, the Lantang National Park, CNP and Yosemite National Park-USA to enable experience sharing and exchange in research, monitoring and capacity building among sister park members.

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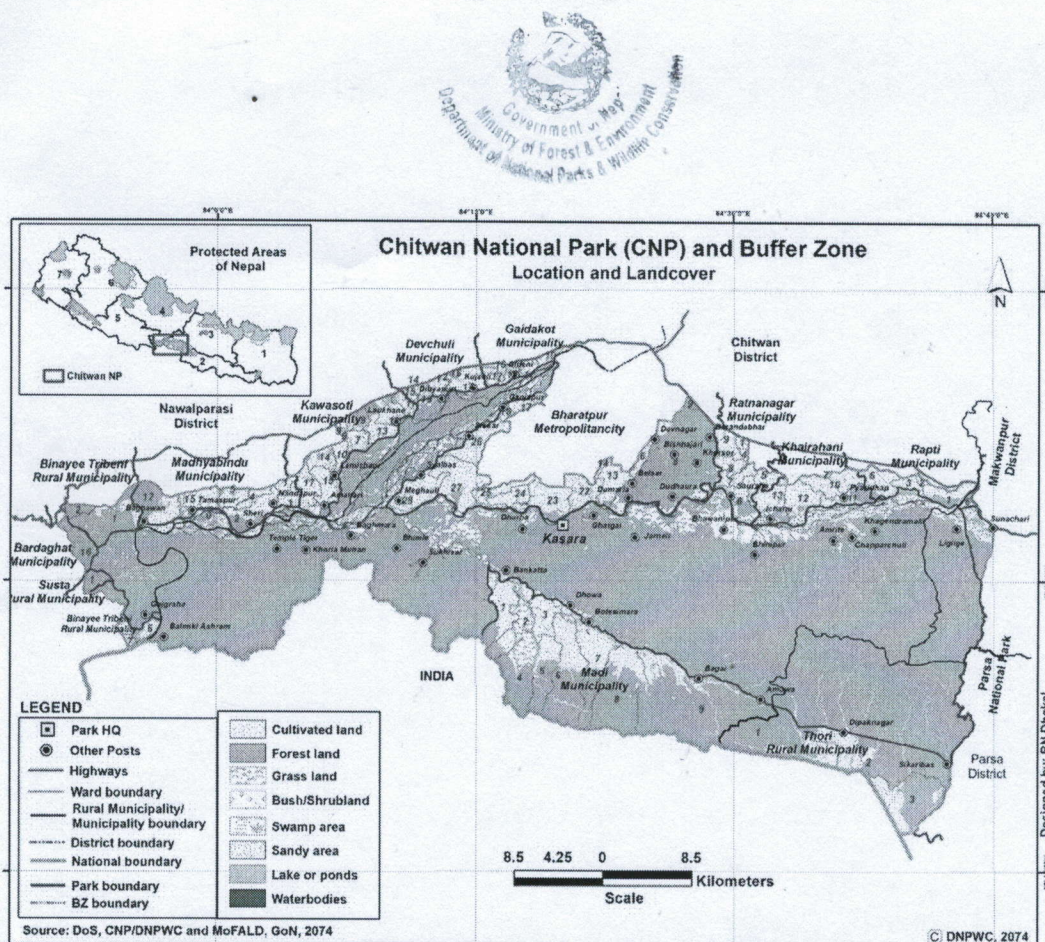


Figure 1: Location Map of CNP

The most significant land use of CNP is forest which covers 82% of the park area. While the coverage of grass land and water bodies is 5.36% and 3.45% respectively. The CNP is home to 70 species of mammals, 49 species of reptiles and amphibians, 541 species of birds, 120 species of fishes and several species of invertebrates. The CNP provides a natural connectivity to the lesser Himalayas on its north through the Barandabhar forest corridor. Eastern and Northern boundaries of the park are connected to Parsa National Park of Nepal and Valmiki Tiger Reserve of India. Thus, CNP is crucial for maintaining Trans boundary linkages between protected areas as well.

3. Response to the Decision of World Heritage Committee

3.1 Having Examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7B.Add,

Response- Not Applicable

3.2 Recalling Decision 43 COM 7B.11, adopted at its 43rd Session (Baku, 2019)

Response- These concerns and requests are reiterated by the committee at its 44th session (decision 44 COM 7B.188).

[Signature]
Director General



3.3 Welcomes the ongoing efforts to combat rhinoceros poaching, but notes with concern the recent poaching of four rhinoceros as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on surveillance and urges the State Party to actively continue its efforts to address poaching and illegal trafficking

Response- The DNPWC is thankful to the World Heritage Committee for welcoming Nepal's successful efforts for combating rhinoceros poaching and encouraging its further success. The department, once again takes this opportunity to report that Nepal has successfully achieved six 'zero poaching' years over the previous 9 years (3,287 days) as a result of coordinated and collaborative actions among various agencies and stakeholders – e.g. District Forest office, Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Buffer zone user communities, WWF, NTNC, ZSL, Political Leaders, Media persons, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau that have led to strengthened institutional mechanisms, improved community participation and enhanced interagency coordination all focused on dismantling illegal trade networks and contributed to curbing poaching in Nepal. Use of modern technologies such as Real Time SMART patrolling, uses of Drone, CCTV camera, SMART eye camera, sniffer and tracking dogs are being increasingly integrated for constant surveillance of the park. Unfortunately four rhinos were killed by poachers from the blind spots of CNP. The main reason behind this being related to the COVID-19 repercussions on wildlife conservation. With due attention, all cases of rhino poaching are being investigated and fourteen poachers have been arrested. Coordination and collaboration with various stake holders which are directly or indirectly related with wildlife conservation and law enforcement agencies are given high priority by DNPWC to address illegal trafficking and poaching.

3.4 Also Welcomes the continued confirmation by the state party that the alternative alignment of the East-West Electrified Railroad will be located outside the property, and that Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be completed, request the State Party to provide a detail map of the alignment when it is available, and reiterates its request that the State Party ensure that all potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property are fully assessed by the EIA, in line with the IUCN Advice Note on Environmental Assessments

Response- DNPWC expresses its gratitude to the World Heritage Committee for welcoming our effort to shift the alignment of the East-West Electrified Railroad outside the property. The new alignment has not been finalized yet but it has been assured that the alignment will be made outside the property. The Department of Railways is well aware about the EIA procedures and committed to consider the OUV of the property i.e. natural beauty, ecological processes and habitat of endangered species while conducting the EIA. Several coordination meeting between the Department of Railways and the DNPWC have come to a common understanding that the route which will have minimum impact on the property will be adopted for the railway construction, however proposed construction site is almost outside the property. Further, Government of Nepal has recently approved Wildlife Friendly Infrastructure Guideline, which will be very helpful for wildlife movement in near future for construction of any kind of infrastructures inside the property and maintain connectivity with the forests and other critical habitats outside the property as well.

3.5 Further welcomes the confirmation that the recommendations of the 2016 IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission regarding the Thori-Madi-Bharatpur road have also been implemented outside the property, and also request the State Party to continue this implementation in line with the mission recommendation;

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Response- About 8 km (from Kasara Bridge to Bankatta through Dhrubaghat) of the Thori-Madi-Bharatpur road lies within the property with the remaining part of the road lying outside the property. The 2016 IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission has recommended the State Party to upgrade parts of the road located outside the property to improve access to education, health and other facilities to the communities in the Madi Valley, while ensuring that any upgrading or widening of those parts of the road that are located inside the property shall not be permitted, maintaining current restrictions on the use of the road between 22:00 and 5:00 hours and that the road will not be used as a thoroughfare especially for transportation of commercial goods to destinations beyond Thori. The recommendation has been accepted and being implemented by the State Party. Moreover, since 2017 this road section has been included in the facility road under the Regulation of CNP, 1974 and as per the same rule the site manager (chief warden) can ban (control) the road access during adverse seasons and conditions. The Supreme Court of Nepal has also issued a verdict to stop any upgrading in the road section of Thori-Madi-Bharatpur that lies inside the property without consultation with UNESCO advisory committee. The EIA study of this road section will propose the construction of wildlife friendly infrastructures inside the park for easy movement of wildlife with consultation with UNESCO advisory committee.

3.6 Reiterates its concern that other infrastructure projects continue to pose a threat to the property, including the proposed Terai Hulaki Highway, the China-India Trade Links of State 3 (now Bagmati Province) and Province 4 (now Gandaki Province), the Madi-Balmiki Ashram road and the Malekhu-Thori road; acknowledges the decision to halt the construction of a seven kilo-meter stretch of the proposed alignment of the Terai Hulaki Highway that would cross the buffer zone and further request State Party to confirm that any potential impact of the highway on the OUV of the property has been appropriately assessed before taking any decision to proceed;

Response-Terai Hulaki Highway is one of the national pride programs of the Government of Nepal that covers 21 districts of southern Nepal. Initially, in the IEE report of the project has not mentioned that the road alignment passed through the property. However, during the construction phase seven kilometers of the road section, around the Thori region, was known to be fall within the buffer zone. After which the site manager informed the Postal Highway Project Directorate about the situation. On 21 February 2021, in a meeting held in presence of the Secretary of Ministry of Forests and Environment, Director General of DNPWC and Director of Postal Highway Project Directorate, it has decided to stop the construction work at present in that area and the same order has been dispensed to the construction company. DNPWC is actively and regularly engaged to persuade and coordinate with the Department of Roads and Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport directly and through Ministry of Forests and Environment to convey about the sensitivity of Protected Areas for environmental balance and the crucial need to preserve the OUV of the World Heritage Site.

No decisions have been found made on the alignments of the proposed China-India trade Link of Province-3 (now Bagmati Province) and Province-4 (Now Gandaki Province), Madi-Balmiki Ashram road and Malekhu-Thori road that crosses the property. The DNPWC and CNP are highly alert to oppose these roads passing through the property. To-date there have been no records of initiations made for the construction of all these three road sections even outside of the property.

3.7 Also note that no decision has been taken regarding the China-India trade Link of Province-3 (now Bagmati Province) and Province-4 (Now Gandaki Province), Madi-Balmiki Ashram road and



Malekhu-Thori road and also reiterates its request to the State Party not to approve any other new roads or the reopening/upgrading of old roads passing through the property;

Response No decisions have been made regarding China-India trade Link of Province-3 (now Bagmati Province) and Province-4 (Now Gandaki Province), Madi-Balmiki Ashram road and Malekhu-Thori road that crosses the property. The DNPWC and CNP are highly alert to oppose these roads and any other new roads or upgrading/reopening of old roads passing through the property.

3.8 Reiterates its position that, if any of the aforementioned road and railway developments was to proceed through the property, they would represent a potential danger to the OUV of the property, in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and thus form a clear basis for inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Response- All relevant aforementioned roads and railways development projects pass through the buffer zone of the park. So, they are expected to have low direct impact on the OUV of the property. However, no doubt that these projects may pose indirect negative impacts on property in spite of this-these roads and railways are the National pride project of the country and are also considered strengthening the economy of the nation. Therefore, concerned ministries and departments, conservation-focused NGO/INGOs, communities and civil societies have been regularly advocating about the consequences of inscription of the property on the list of World Heritage "IN DANGER" in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines* and to incorporate mitigation measures while aligning the roads even when they are passing through the periphery of the property in order to prevent any perceived detrimental effects to the OUV of the World Heritage Property.

3.9 Also recalling its request to the State party to provide clarification regarding the report that Gajendra Dham is no longer located within the boundaries of Chitwan National Park, following a revision of boundaries in 2016 and its demarcation on the ground, also notes with concern the reported transfer of 1.818 ha from the Gajendra Mokshya Dham of Tribeni into the buffer zone and of 2063 ha from the Padampur site in the buffer zone into the National Park, and further recalling that any proposed change to the boundaries of a property must first be submitted to the World Heritage Center through a boundary modification process in line with Paragraph 163–165 of the *Operational Guidelines*, request furthermore the State Party to :

a) provide detail information on the legal protection status of property, including provision for visitor management at Gajendra Dham, and the implementation of the recommendation of the 2016 mission, and notably to develop, in collaboration with the Chitwan National Park Office and the responsible authorities at Gajendra Dham, develop a management plan for Gajendra Dham which should include

- i. An appropriate zonation scheme to set aside areas for spiritual practices and for nature conservation,
- ii. Appropriate limits on any further construction of facilities, beyond the normal maintenance work, and
- iii. Adequate measure to minimize impacts from the large number of pilgrim visiting the site annually, including waste management plan and provisions to allow only daytime ritual activities under the observation of the Chitwan National Park Office,



b) Submit a proposal for a boundary modification to the World Heritage Centre in line with the Operational Guidelines, if it wishes to amend the boundaries of the property;

Response- On 17 October 2016, the Government of Nepal has gazetted an additional area of 2063 Ha from Padampur site (earlier in buffer zone) into the Park's core area (property area) and adjusted and degazetted an area of 1.818 Ha from Gajendra Mokchhya Dham of Tribeni (earlier in core area) into park's buffer zone. The Gajendra Mokchhya Dham of Tribeni has been promoted for the religious purposes and tourism activities so that local people can benefit and contribute in revenue generation that will be utilized in the management and conservation of both core and buffer area of the Park. The DNPWC is consulting with the UNESCO office in Kathmandu, Nepal to register these changes on the updated park boundaries. It is not mentioned about the threshold in the operational guideline to distinguish between minor and significant modifications in boundaries, thus we could not confirm whether these changes are minor or major for further procedures. Also, currently there is no plan for further modification of the park's boundaries.

a) **Response -**The management plan of Chitwan National Parks has adopted holistic strategies for tourism management and promotion both in core and buffer zone of the Park. Gajendra Dham now lies outside the core area of the Park but lies within the buffer zone and is being managed by the buffer zone management committee (Triveni Buffer Zone Community User Group). Sufficient dharmasalas (hospices) have been constructed for residential purpose of pilgrimages. Also, solid wastes are collected in ditches and dustbins which are later managed properly by separating as biodegradable and non-biodegradable. Biodegradable wastes are utilized to produce compost manure whereas remaining wastes are buried in dumping sites located far from the property. Likewise, local Rural Municipality is also working to manage the garbage of Tribeni area through its ward offices.

10. Notes with concern the alleged human rights abuses related to Chitwan National Park raised by UNESCO and through the independent Panel report on human rights commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund International, and requests moreover the State Party to provide a full response regarding its considerations of the findings of this report and to implement actions to address the issue raised, in conformity with relevant international norms and the 2015 Policy Document for the Integration of a sustainable Development Perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention;

Response – By laws, the Government of Nepal has a strong commitment to ecological safeguard of the natural heritage site and social safeguard of the local communities. The National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (NPWC), 1973 and its subsequent regulations including buffer zone regulations, 1996 are its evidences. These laws prohibit carrying out the activities that negatively impact to the outstanding universal values of the natural heritage site in one side and give due respect usufruct rights of the local communities on the other. Even park benefit sharing mechanism has been developed based on the accessibility of the people, and their equity and justice. The NPWC act ensures 30 to 50% of the Park revenue to allocate to the local communities through various activities of biodiversity conservation, community development and capacity building. The local communities implement these activities through user committee and user groups based on their need and priority as an integral part of national park management.

The buffer zone area where it has been said that human rights of the local communities has been abused falls under the jurisdiction of Ayodhyapuri User Committee. In the area, some of the households were living there since 1997 as the encroachers. Since the very beginning Chitwan National Park authority has been notifying them to leave the area as their settlements are illegal by prevailing laws. However, they have been living there by disobedience the government laws. In 2020, the local government has constructed some house to resettle them aiming to restore the encroached




areas. However, some of the households tried to double occupation and did not leave the previously encroached areas, which was against the prevailing laws. In order to avoid such double occupation and avoiding the prevailing laws, the local authorities dismantled those old houses, while there is no single intention to abuse the human rights of the local communities, rather than to support them through development of new settlement areas together with local government and user communities.

The Chitwan National Park is fully aware for securing the fundamental rights of the local communities while implementing the laws. The park authority is always taking the local communities as an integral part of park management and implementing the wildlife conservation and habitat management activities together with them. As a result of active participation and strong stewardship of the local communities, the Chitwan National Park is also succeeded to celebrate rhino zero poaching and to double the tiger population in the last decade and it has been praised nationally and internationally as well. The inclusion of the park in the **Natural World Heritage Site** is the national pride and a proud of Nepali people as well so that simply the park authority cannot abuse the human rights while implementing and managing the park activities. Department entrusted to the field staff and also request to the committee not to take an interpreted regular law enforcement business as an abuse of human rights rather than regular duty of the government official.

In addition, the department requests UNESCO committee not to rely on third party information unless it is verified from the authentic sources. Sometimes, department has an experience of overuse of social media and online news has been misleading the society and demotivated the frontline staff through their (media) role is instrumental for sustainable park management.

3.10 Finally requests the State of Party to Submit the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2022, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property and the implementation of the above, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th Session.

Response-This report has been prepared based on the field observations, discussion with site manager and field staff, concerned line agencies (Department of Roads, Department of Railways), relevant experts and department staff and submitted by the given deadline.


Director General