

State of Conservation Report
Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal

Report submitted to

UNESCO Headquarters

Paris, France



Report prepared and submitted by

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1. Executive Summary

Sagarmatha National Park (SNP), a world heritage property since 1979 is an example of superlative and exceptional natural beauty, which is embedded in the vivid mountains, glaciers, deep valleys and majestic peaks including the world's highest peak, Mt. Everest. The park is home to several rare species of wildlife including snow leopard and red panda. The area contains the world's highest ecologically characteristic flora and fauna, intricately blended with the rich Sherpa culture. The intricate linkages of the Sherpa culture with the ecosystem are a major focus of the park and they form the basis for the sustainable conservation of the natural resources, which eventually contributes for the wellbeing of the local communities.

The World Heritage Committee in its 38th session in the year 2014 has raised issues regarding the state of Sagarmatha National Park as a world heritage property. In decision 38 COM 7B.68, the committee has requested the State Party to update and submit the relevant information to the World Heritage Centre as well as suggested the necessary actions to address the issues raised by the committee. In this context, this report is an update on state of conservation of the natural world heritage site, Sagarmatha National Park. Furthermore, this report underlines the opinion of the Government of Nepal to the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee.

2. Introduction

SNP was designated as one of the pioneer protected areas of Nepal in 1976 and it covers an area of 1148 square kilometers. The highest peak of the world, Mt. Everest, is located inside the park core area. The park represents the high altitude pristine ecosystems. Local communities, more popularly called Sherpa ethnic groups, are native to the area and well known for their mountain climbing skills. An area of 275 square kilometers including the human settlements inside the park and the peripheral area of the park was declared a buffer zone in 2002. The park was enlisted as the UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979 as the first UNESCO natural world heritage site of Nepal. In addition to that, Gokyo Lake, which is located inside the park core area, is enlisted in the Ramsar List as one of the high altitude wetlands of global significance.

SNP is a suitable habitat for snow leopard, himalayan thar, ghoral, musk deer and many birds. Ecotourism is the major source of income, which not only benefits the local communities, but also generates significant amount of government revenue. Mountaineering and trekking are the major attractions for the visitors. Proximity to Mt. Everest is a prime factor in the area's popularity. In 1963, 20 tourists visited

Everest region whereas the number of tourists increased to 3500 in 1973. In 1980, there were 6000 tourists. In 2000, the number of tourists to SNP peaked at 26500. However, number of visitors dropped to 14000 in 2002 due to political instability of the country. With improved political situation in 2004, the number of tourists increased to 21000 and there are slightly more than 30000 tourists visiting SNP annually in the recent years.

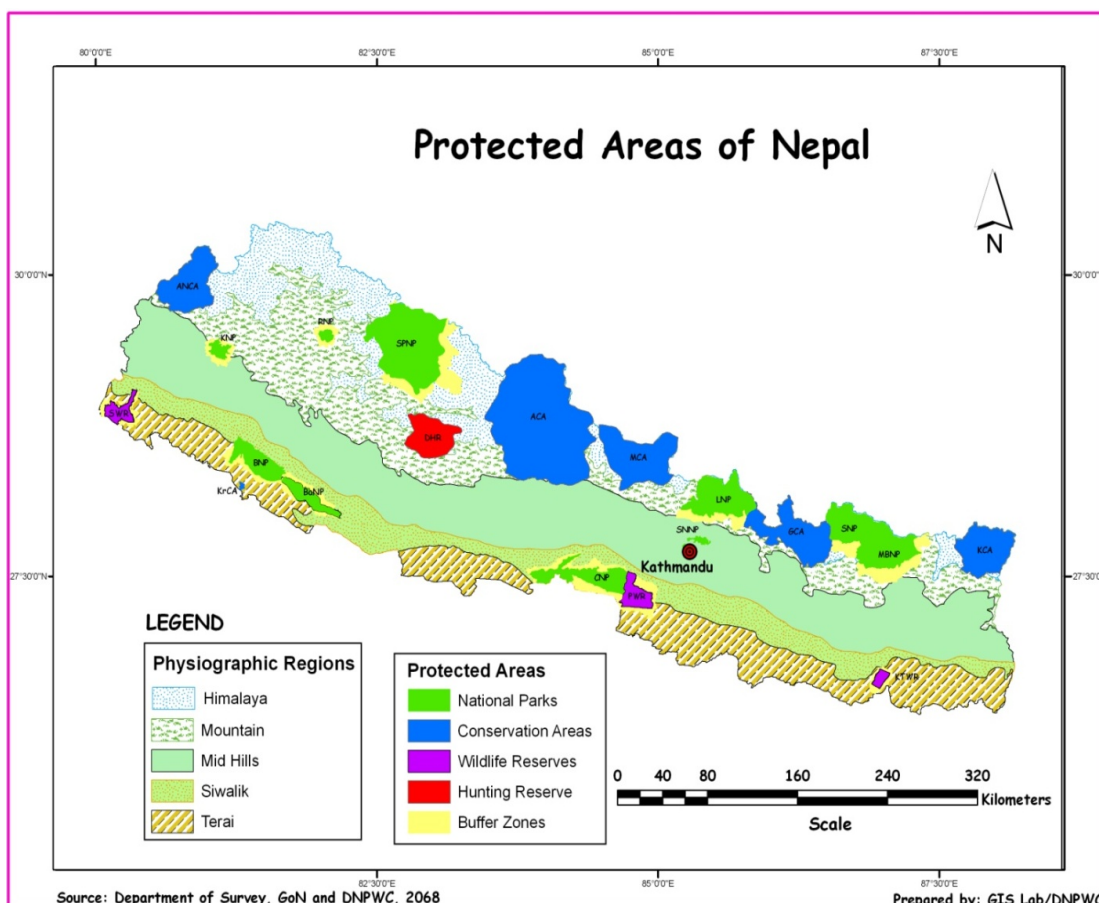


Figure 1 Location Map of Protected Areas of Nepal

3. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee

3.1. Having examined Document WHC-14/38.COM/7B. Add

Response: NA

3.2. Recalling Decision 36 COM 7B.14 adopted at its 36th session (Saint Petersburg, 2012)

Response: NA

3.3. Expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the Sherpas killed in the avalanches on 18 April 2014

Response: NA

- 3.4. Reiterates its concern that the verdict of the Supreme Court of Nepal remains unknown with respect to the Kongde View Resort which is within the property and is reportedly still operating, and urges state party to submit the verdict to the World Heritage Centre as soon as it is issued by the court

Response: The Konge View Resort was constructed in in Chaurikharka VDC Ward No. 1 of Solukhumbu district. The proponent of the resort established the hotel after they got the approval from the Government of Nepal to establish and operate the resort in their private land in the buffer zone of Sagarmatha National Park. The Government of Nepal has also approved the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of Konge View Resort on 2061 Mangsir (2004 November), and the Resort has implemented the EIA report as per the government rules and regulations. However, there is a dispute regarding the land ownership. The legal case on land ownership dispute is under investigation at Supreme Court of Nepal. In the meantime, the Supreme Court of Nepal has issued an interim order to Sagarmatha National Park Authority on 2068-10-22 (5th February 2012) to allow the operation of the Konge View Resort as usual until the verdict of the Supreme Court is issued. This is the reason why Konge View Resort is still in operation despite the controversy on land ownership.

Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) will inform the World Heritage Centre immediately after the verdict of the Supreme Court of Nepal is issued regarding the Kongde View Resort. However, it is observed that the EIA report of the Kongde View Resort was not consulted with World Heritage Centre as per the UNESCO Guideline 172 while the area deserve as one of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). DNPWC has realized the weakness in the process and will follow the due process in the following case in the days to come.

- 3.5. Recommends the State Party to consult the Mountains Biome Specialist Group of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas and the IUCN Theme on Indigenous and local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA) for technical advice on the overall state of conservation of the property with particular attention to the impacts of the Kongde View Resort and tourism on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, and the propose buffer zone

Response: Regarding the issue, the Director General of DNPWC has written a letter to the Director of the World Heritage Centre on 14th September 2014.

- 3.6. Encourages the state Party to invite an advisory mission to provide advice on these matters and suggests that the state party request international assistance in this regards

Response: DNPWC has written two letters to the Director General of the World Heritage Centre regarding this issue. The last letter was written on March 16, 2015. IUCN Advisory Mission was supposed to take place from 30th April to 8th May 2015, but due to the earthquake, which struck Nepal on 25th April, the mission was cancelled. DNPWC aims to reorganize the mission in Spring 2016.

- 3.7. Requests the State Party to submit an electronic and three printed copies of the (draft) revised Sagarmatha Park Tourism and Management Plan for 2014-18 for review by the world Heritage Centre and IUCN

Response: The management plan of SNP and its buffer zone and Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) report of that plan are ready to share and DNPWC will send these documents to the world Heritage Centre and IUCN as soon as possible.

- 3.8. Also encourages the state party to submit a minor boundary modification to formally recognize the existing buffer zone of Sagarmatha National Park as a buffer zone to the property consistent with the Operational Guidelines

Response: DNPWC submitted the map of SNP to UNESCO in 2012. However, the map does not clearly reflect the park zonation i.e. buffer zone and core zone. DNPWC has requested Sagarmatha National Park Office to update the map based on the original one and once it is prepared, DNPWC will share it to UNESCO. The map of Sagarmatha National Park, which was submitted to UNESCO, is as follows.

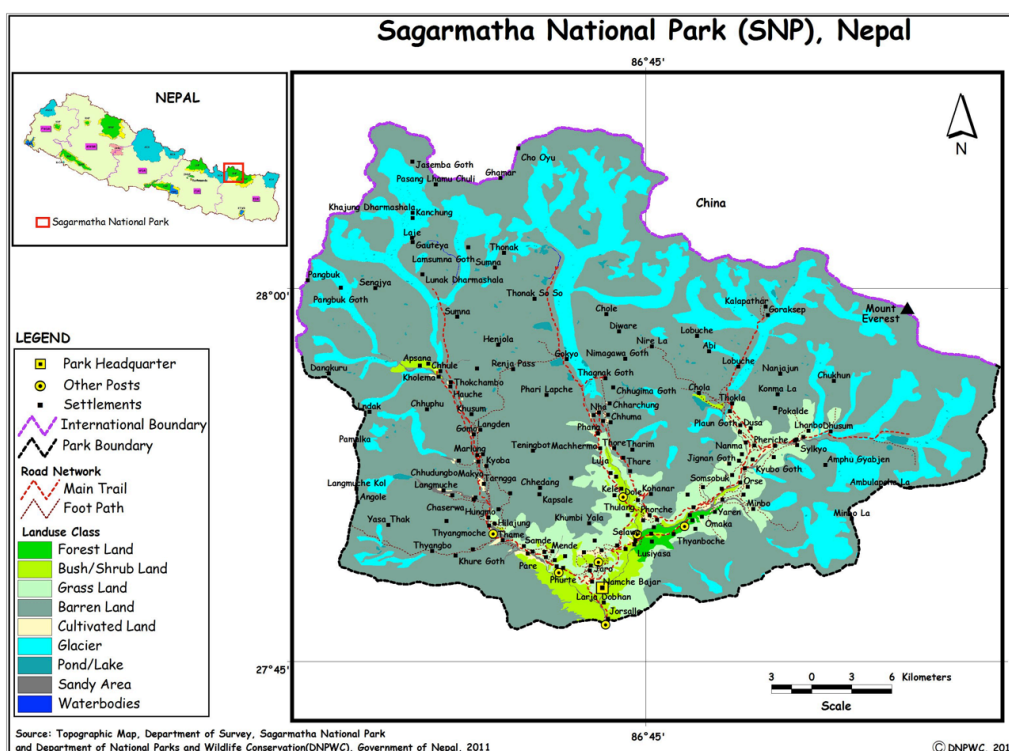


Figure 2 Map of Sagarmatha National Park

- 3.9.** Also requests furthermore the state party to submit to the World Heritage Center, by 1 December 2015, an updated report, including a 1-page executive summary, on the state of the conservation of the property and on the progress with respect to legal proceedings related to the Kongde View Resort, for examination by the world Heritage Committee at its 40th session in 2016.

4. Other Conservation Issues identified by the State Party

Sagarmatha National Park is a unique natural and cultural asset, which encompasses the highest peak in the world. Mt. Everest has attracted large number of tourists from all over the world. Natural biodiversity and landscape beauty of this park are major attractions for both domestic and foreign tourists. Ecotourism is the main source of income and it has outstanding impacts to the livelihood of local communities and national economy as well. Garbage management is a major challenge to the park. The park authority has been mobilizing the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), which is a non-governmental organization established in 1991 by the people of Khumbu in close collaboration with SNP. It is a local environmental institution and has been actively engaged in waste management in the three VDCs: Chaurikharka, Namche and Khumjung of Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone. Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation is also coordinating to SPCC to response for monitoring garbage in the permit-required mountains and Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) registered peaks. In direct coordination with SNP and local communities, SPCC also manages garbage in major settlements and along trekking trails. This NGO with the permission from SNP built some solid waste containers along the trekking route (Lukla to Namche, Namche to Tengboche and Namche to Thame).

Forest fire is another threat to park biodiversity as the park is popular for pine forests in and around the park areas. Pines are fire prone species so that forest fire occasionally occurs and creates severe impacts in the forests. Local buffer zone user committees are closely working with park authority to control the forest fire. The trend shows that fire incidents have been increased mostly in the hot summer seasons. However, the detailed assessment is not carried out, the impact of global warming can be seen in the park in terms of snow melting, raising water level in glacier lakes and more frequent forest fire incidents.

The local people are allowed to collect dry fuel wood for their subsistence use; however, collecting fuel wood from the forest is prohibited without permission of the National Park Authority, growing number of potters, time to time collects fuel wood illegally for cooking and heating has direct impact on existing forests. Although there are possibilities of hydropower in major tourist routes, very little have been captured so far.

5. Major restorations, alterations, and/or new constructions envisaged within the protected area and its buffer zone and/or corridors

A UNDP funded project called **Community Based Flood and Glacial Lake Outburst Risk Reduction Project** is under implementation aiming to reduce the possible risk of glacial lake outburst flood on biodiversity of the National Park and the local communities residing in the buffer zone in downstream. The project is designed as a part of Sagarmatha National Park Management Plan and IEE report also incorporates its ecological, socio-economical and physical impacts. The project is planning to implement closely with Sagarmatha National Park authority. The project management authority and park authority are aware and are planning in such a way, which minimizes the negative impact on physical environment of the park in the course of project implementation.