



**State of Conservation Report  
Chitwan National Park (Nepal) (N 284)**

***Report submitted to***  
World Heritage Centre  
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)  
Paris, France



***Report prepared and submitted by***  
Government of Nepal  
Ministry of Forests and Environment  
**Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation**  
Babarmahal, Kathmandu, Nepal

November, 2018



## State of Conservation Report of Chitwan National Park (Nepal) (N 284)

### 1. Executive summary

Chitwan National Park (CNP), a world heritage property since 1984, is renowned for its unique diversity of habitats, flora and fauna and outstanding natural features. The park is home to several endangered species of wildlife including One-horned Rhinoceros, Royal Bengal Tiger, Asiatic Elephant, Gangetic Dolphin, Gaur, Great Hornbill, Bengal Florican, Gharial. The Beeshazari and Associated Lake, a Ramsar Site in buffer zone, add the significance of the park. CNP provides a natural linkage to the lesser Himalayas on its north through the Barandabhar, the Siwalik hills and the Tarai forests towards the south, the Parsa National Park in the east. The Tarai habitat of Chitwan bordering India makes the trans-boundary linkage with the Valmiki Tiger Reserve.

The World Heritage Committee in its 41<sup>st</sup> session in the year 2017 has raised few issues regarding the state of conservation of Chitwan National Park. In decision COM 41 7B.31, 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 the status of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Chitwan National Park. Furthermore, this report underlines the view of the State Party to the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee. The report has been prepared using integrated approach; field observation, stakeholders' consultation and independent consultants' input.

Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) is actively engaged in persuasion and coordination with the relevant government line ministries, departments and other concerned agencies to communicate about the sensitivity of protected areas and significance of World Heritage Sites, and obligations to be fulfilled the State Party to convention and issues related to the property. Poaching of Rhino and other wildlife will be controlled through collaborative and concerted efforts of Park staff, Nepali Army, Buffer Zone communities, Conservation Partners, other concerned stakeholders and individuals. The preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Detail Project Report (DPR) of realigned segment of Mechi-Mahakali electrified railway that avoids the property, is underway.

DNPWC has requested Suspension Bridge Division to incorporate the comments and suggestions made by IUCN on EIA report of Balmiki Ashram-Trivenidham Suspension Bridge. The EIA of Terai Hulaki (Bharatpur-Thori section) road is underway. DNPWC has strongly argued not to upgrade the segment of Bharatpur-Thori road passing through the property and to leave it at present condition. Based on information received from department of roads, no decision has been made

*[Handwritten signature]*  
30/11/2018  
[Stamp: DNPWC]



on the alignment of the proposed China-India Trade Link of State 3 and State 4, Madi-Balmiki Ashram road, and Malekhu-Thori road that cross the property. Gajendra Dham, one of the important holy places of Nepal, now the area lies in the buffer zone after the boundary revision of CNP done by Government of Nepal in 2016. All prescriptive provisions for managing visitor flow, waste and other human induced disturbance from Gajendra Dham are included in recently revised management plan of CNP and its buffer zone.

## 2. Introduction

Chitwan National Park (CNP), established in 1973 as the first National Park of Nepal, is situated in southern sub-tropical climatic region of central Nepal (Figure-1). It is extended over four districts viz. Chitwan, Nawalpur (Susta), Parsa and Makawanpur. The park covers an area of 952.63 km<sup>2</sup> while the buffer zone extends to 729.37 km<sup>2</sup>. The park is under IUCN Category II of Protected Area System for the conservation of indigenous Tarai fauna particularly the most endangered species such as One-horned Rhinoceros, Royal Bengal Tiger, Asiatic Elephant, Gaur, Gangetic dolphin, Bengal Florican, Great Hornbill, Gharial in their unique natural habitat. The CNP is a World Natural Heritage Property and it also contains a Ramsar Site - 'Beeshazari and Associated Lakes' in its buffer zone. The park is renowned for its unique diversity of habitats, flora and fauna and outstanding natural features. UNESCO designated CNP as a World's Natural Heritage Site in November 1984 under the World Heritage Convention recognizing its unique biological resources of outstanding universal value.

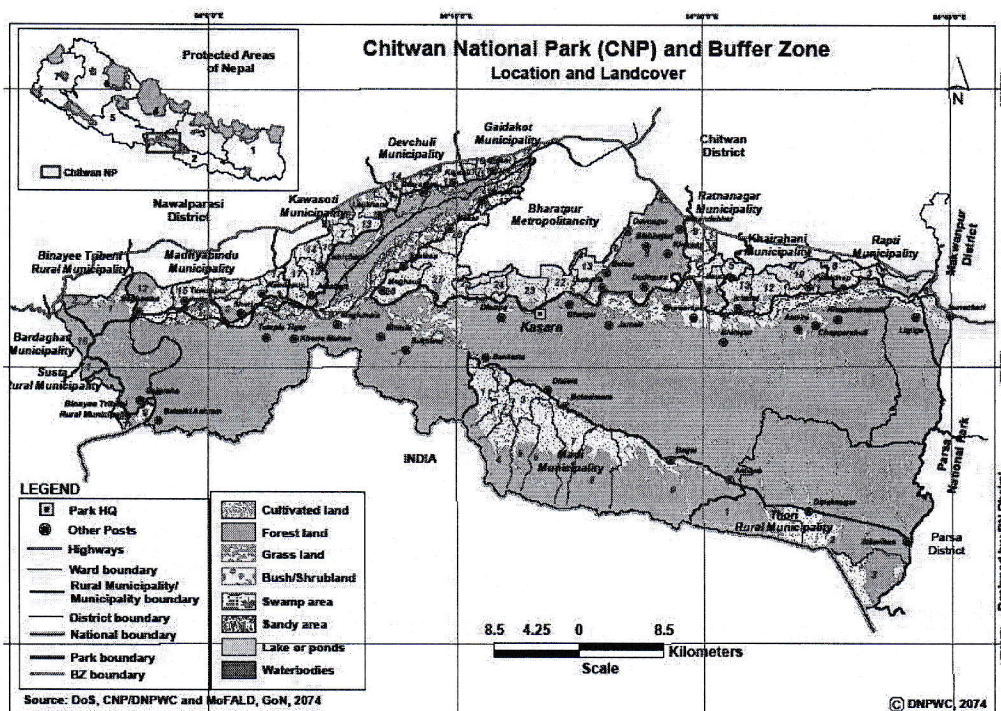


Figure-1: Location map of Chitwan National Park



The park comprises rich ecosystem diversity that encompasses different types of forest, wetland sites and grassland ecosystems across the core area and buffer zone as well. Approximately 70% of the park is covered by Sal forest followed by 10 % grassland. CNP provides a natural connectivity to the lesser Himalayas on its north through the Barandabhar forest, the Siwalik hills and the Tarai forests towards the south, the Parsa National Park (PNP) in the east. The Tarai habitats of Chitwan bordering with Indian protected areas i.e. Valmiki Tiger Reserve makes the trans-boundary linkages. Overall management of CNP and its buffer zone mainly focused on species conservation, habitat management, eco-tourism development and livelihood improvement activities. Due to effective conservation efforts, the population of terrestrial endangered species has improved over time. The CNP has developed a noticeable growing alliance between conservation and tourism agencies and stakeholders. CNP contributes significant amount of revenue to the nation, out of which 30-50 % of collected revenues goes directly to buffer zone communities for biodiversity conservation and community development.

### **3. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee**

#### **3.1 Having examined Document WHC/17/41.COM/7B**

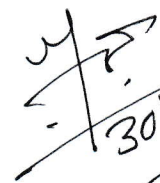
**Response – Not Applicable**

#### **3.2 Recalling Decision 39 COM 7B.15, adopted at its 39<sup>th</sup> session (Bonn, 2015).**

**Response –** These concerns and requests are reiterated by the committee at its 41<sup>st</sup> session (Decision 41 COM 7B.31).

**3.3 Commends the State Party for achieving at least four years (2011-2015) of zero Rhino poaching at the property and, noting that poaching continues to be a threat, urges the State Party to uphold its current anti-poaching efforts, in collaboration with the Nepal Army, in order to ensure their continued success;**

**Response –**First, as a State Party, DNPWC extends its sincere thanks to the World Heritage Committee for commending Nepal's efforts for maintaining zero Rhino poaching years and encouragement for continued success. The department, once again, take this opportunity to report that the zero Rhino poaching has been achieved successfully 365 days+ in 2016/17 due to untiring and collaborative efforts of Park officials, Nepali Army, Buffer zone communities, conservation partners, and individuals involved in antipoaching operations. Further, we believe that collaborative and concerted efforts through Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) would be an added advantage to curb wildlife crime within and outside the park. In addition, modern

  
30/11/2018  
Director General



technology such as Real Time SMART patrolling, Drone, CCTV camera, sniffer and tracking dogs are in use for constant surveillance of the park.

**3.4 Welcomes the State Party's decision to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the alternative alignment of the East-West Electric Railway that avoids the property, and the initiation of an EIA for the Trivenidham-Balmiki Ashram suspension bridge, and requests the State Party to submit copies of these EIAs to the World Heritage Centre, for review by IUCN, as soon as they are available;**

**Response** –The preparation of EIA and Detail Project Reports (DPR) of realigned segment(Nijgadh-Hetauda-Bharatpur) of Mechi-Mahakali (East-West)Electrifiedrailway that avoids the property, is underway.The concerned authorities have been informed that the EIA reports will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review prior to its approval. EIA report of realigned segment of Mechi-Mahakalielectrifiedrailway will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre once made available to DNPWC.

EIA report prepared by Suspension Bridge Division for Balmiki Ashram-Trivenidham Suspension Bridge was submitted by DNPWC for review to the World Heritage Centre on 8 July 2018. A letter dated 26 Oct 2018 was received from World Heritage Centre to DNPWC along with IUCN review report. Based on the received report, DNPWC has requested Suspension Bridge Division to incorporate the comments and recommendations made by IUCN.

**3.5 Also requests the State Party to make an unequivocal commitment not to allow the development of the East-West Railway and the TaraiHulaki (Postal)roadto proceed along their proposed alignments through the property, and not to approve any other new roads or reopening/upgrading of old roads through the property, including the proposed Dumkibas-Tribeni road, the Madi-Balmiki Ashram road, the State 3 and State 4 proposed China-India Trade Links, and the Thori-Malekhuroad;**

**Response** – DNPWC, at central level, is actively engaged in persuasion and coordination with the relevant government line agencies such as Department of Roads, Department of Irrigation, and Department of Railways directly and through the Ministry of Forests and Environment to communicate about the sensitivity of protected areas and significance of World Heritage Sites, and obligations to be fulfilled by the State Party to convention and issues related to the property. Now, the Department of Environment has come under the Ministry of Forests and Environment due to restructuring of Government ministries and departments. Similarly, at field, CNP has increased interaction with local level government and buffer zone representatives,

local communities and partner organizations in highlighting the importance of World Heritage Sites and obligations to maintain the OUV of the Property.

With constant and rigorous efforts, the concerned officials of the Department of Railway have agreed to shift the proposed alignment of Mechi-Mahakali (East-West) electrified railway passing through the Property to out of the CNP. The new alignment of Mechi-Mahakali electrified railway is proposed to pass partially through buffer zone. The preparation of EIA and DPR of realigned segment (Nijgadh-Hetauda-Bharatpur) of Mechi-Mahakali electrified railway that avoids the property, is underway.

On 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2018, an interaction program was organized by DNPWC on “Linear Infrastructure and Wildlife Conservation” in Kathmandu. The department heads from Railways, Irrigation and DNPWC and senior officer from Department of Roads participated as panelists. The Department of Forests, other relevant institutions, media houses and conservation partners also participated in the program. The interaction program was very fruitful in experience sharing and developing common understanding amongst the stakeholders on the issues related to conservation threats due to development projects.

The EIA of Bharatpur-Thori road i.e. section of Tarai Hulaki (Postal) road, is on-going. DNPWC has strongly argued not to upgrade the segment of above road passing through the property and to leave it at present condition. Once the EIA report is made available to DNPWC, it will be forwarded to World Heritage Centre for review.

Based on the information received from department of roads, no decision has been made on the alignment of the proposed China-India Trade Link of State 3 and State 4, Madi-Balmiki Ashram road, and Malekhu-Thori road that cross the property. DNPWC and CNP will remain alert and oppose those roads passing through the property. Similarly, DNPWC has opposed officially for the proposed Dumkibas-Tribeni road and has not given any permission to carry out the EIA.

**3.6 Considers that if any of the aforementioned road and railway developments were to proceed according to their proposed alignments through the property, they would represent a clear potential danger to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property, in accordance with paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and a clear basis for inscription of the property on the list of World Heritage in Danger;**

**Response** –Concerned ministries and departments have been made aware of the consequences such as listing the Property “In DANGER” in accordance with paragraph 180 of the *Operational Guidelines* if any road passing through the Property creates detrimental effects to OUV of the World Heritage Property.





**3.7 Notes with concern that Chitwan District Road Office has called a tender for tarmacking the Bharatpur-Thori road through the property, and further requests the state party to ensure that any upgrading of the parts of the Bharatpur-Thori road that are located inside the property, including black-topping and widening, shall not be permitted;**

**Response** –Division Office of Roads, Chitwan has informed that the tender for tarmacking the Bharatpur-Thori road, has called for RiuKhola-Devendrapur Section (15 Km) only, this section falls within the bufferzone. DNPWC has requested concerned authority not to upgrade or widen the road passing through the property and this matter should be strictly incorporated in the EIA report, which is on the way of preparation. The EIA report will be submitted to World Heritage Centre for review once it is made available to DNPWC.

**3.8 Requests furthermore the state party to undertake a thorough EIA of the Proposed Thori-Birgunj road, including assessment of potential impacts on the OUV of the property, considering that this road has the potential to increase the demand for transportation of commercial goods to destinations beyond Thori, which would generate an increase in heavy traffic through the property;**

**Response:** Department of roads had prepared the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) of proposed Thori-Birgunj road and was approved by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Construction in 2009. However, based on decision of World Heritage Committee, DNPWC has requested department of roads to undertake a thorough EIA of the proposed Thori-Birgunj road, including assessment of potential impacts on the OUV of the property.

**3.9 Regrets that the State Party did not provide further information on encroachment at Gajendra Dham and important wildlife habitats of the property, and on progress achieved in the demarcation of the property's boundaries;**

**Response:** Government of Nepal has revised the boundary of CNP in 2016 by adding 20.63 km<sup>2</sup> area from buffer zone into core area of CNP. Now the area of CNP is 952.63 km<sup>2</sup> and buffer zone is 729.37 km<sup>2</sup>. Gajendra Dham, one of the important holy places of Nepal, occupied approximately 0.0818 km<sup>2</sup> and now the area lies in the buffer zone after the boundary revision of CNP done by Government of Nepal in 2016. The boundary demarcation of the area used by Gajendra Dham at ground has been done clearly with GPS coordinates. Dhansari Stream-dry Nala (stream) in the east separates Gajendra Dham from CNP so that there is no chance of further encroachment. Similarly, one permanent security post of national park is already established and functional nearby stream. All prescriptive provisions for managing visitor flow,

Director General



waste and other human induced disturbance from Gajendra Dham are included in recently revised management plan of CNP and its buffer zone.

**3.10 Taking note of the recommendations of the 2016 IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission, requests moreover the State Party to fully implement all these recommendations in the best delay;**

**Response:** The State Party assures that the implementation of the decisions and recommendations will be adopted fully. Most of the recommendations of IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission are addressed through above paragraphs. Responses for remaining recommendations of IUCN Missions are as follows:

***R6. Ensure, in collaboration with Nepal Telecom and the Chitwan National Park Office, the implementation of measures to avoid and mitigate any impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property that could result from the construction of the Optical fibre between Kasara and Bankatta;***

**Response:** Report on EIA of laying optical fibre network from Jagatpur to Chitwan National Park (between Kasara and Bankatta) to Gardi, is prepared by Ministry of Information and Communication, and approved by Ministry of Environment. Construction work will be carried out through Nepal Telecom and Chitwan Unique Cable Television Pvt. Ltd. jointly in close supervision of CNP office, without having any impacts to the OUV of the property. Optical fiber shall be buried 1.3 m deep from the ground. Top width and bottom width of trench will be 0.7 m and 0.6 m respectively. Nepal Telecom and Chitwan Unique Cable Television Pvt. Ltd. have agreed for planting seedlings as a replacement to damaged tree/vegetation. The proponent will fully implement an environmental management plan (EMP) of EIA report.

***R11. Coordinate with the Chitwan National Park Office, The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and other relevant government institutions, local communities, NGO's and organizations to seek appropriate solutions to address encroachment of important wildlife habitats in the buffer zone of the property and to rehabilitate encroached areas, in order to ensure the conservation of wildlife corridors and to reduce human-wildlife conflict;***

**Response:** Encroachment is a complex and cross cutting issue in the country and it is not an exception to some of the protected areas. Some of those encroachments were already there before the establishment of buffer zone. Now, this problem is expected to be resolved with the recently formed stable government in the country.

*30/11/2018*  
Director General



**R12. Investigate the impacts from the recent construction of flood control dykes on the northern bank of Rapti River outside the property, and ensure that any proposed construction of flood control dykes subject to a full EIA, including specific assessment of impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property;**

**Response:** Park and seven buffer community forestry user groups (BCFUGs) are carrying out monitoring of wild animals in the surrounding area of dyke along the Rapti river. The wildlife movement in the area has not been restricted by dyke. The dyke has been proven effective in saving human life, farmlands and trees, and it has drawn public sentiment too. DNPWC has received an informal information that there is a plan to extend the existing dyke from Sauraha to Kasara (towards west) with external assistance. The concerned government line agency and donor agency will be informed about the requirement of conducting EIA of the dyke to be extended and to consider the wildlife friendly structure.

**3.11 Finally requests the State Party to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2018, an updated report on the state of conservation of the property, including detailed information on the implementation of each of the recommendations made by the 2016 mission, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session in 2019.**

**Response:** DNPWC has prepared State of Conservation Report of Chitwan National Park to submit it to the World Heritage Centre by 1 December 2018. The report has been prepared through integrated approach including field observation, stakeholders' consultation, independent consultants' input and discussion in DNPWC with expert groups and department staff.

**4. Other Current Conservation Issues identified by the State Party which may have an Impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value.**

**Response -** Human-wildlife conflict is increasing day by day due to increase in population of major wildlife and habitat degradation. Forest fire and invasive alien species are other threats to maintain park biodiversity. The trend shows that fire incidents have been increasing mostly in the hot summer seasons. Local buffer zone user committees are closely working with park authority to control the forest fire in the core and buffer zone as well.

Climate change has been one of the most serious challenges for biodiversity conservation over the last decades. One of the most likely impacts of climate change is shift in spatial and temporal pattern in availability of suitable habitats for terrestrial species. The main potential impact of climate change to CNP is related to invasion of alien species, degradation of habitats such as grasslands, wetlands and shrinkage of riverine mixed forests.

5. In conformity with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, describe any potential major restorations, alterations and/or new construction(s) intended within the property, the buffer zone(s) and/or corridors or other areas, where such developments may affect the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, including authenticity and integrity.

**Response:** Due to the new political transformation in Nepal and with the successful completion of three level of political elections (Federal, Provincial and Local), the expectations of people for rapid development and urbanization has highly increased. This situation has created a great challenge to balance development and conservation.

30/11/2018  
Director General