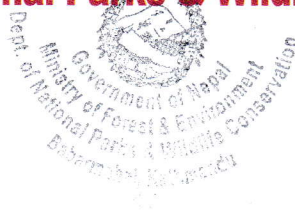




Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest and Environment
Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation



RF-1904

12 April, 2021

Director General
World Heritage Centre
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 (Nepal)(N284), prepared by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation based on the 43rd of World Heritage Committee's decision WHC/19/43.COM/7B.11.

Thank you so much for your kind cooperation.

Sincerely Yours,

.....
Dr. Deepak Kumar Kharal
Director General

CC:

Nepal National Commission for UNESCO
UNESCO Office in Kathmandu



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 2030 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 WWF's Global 200 Ecoregion, 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.

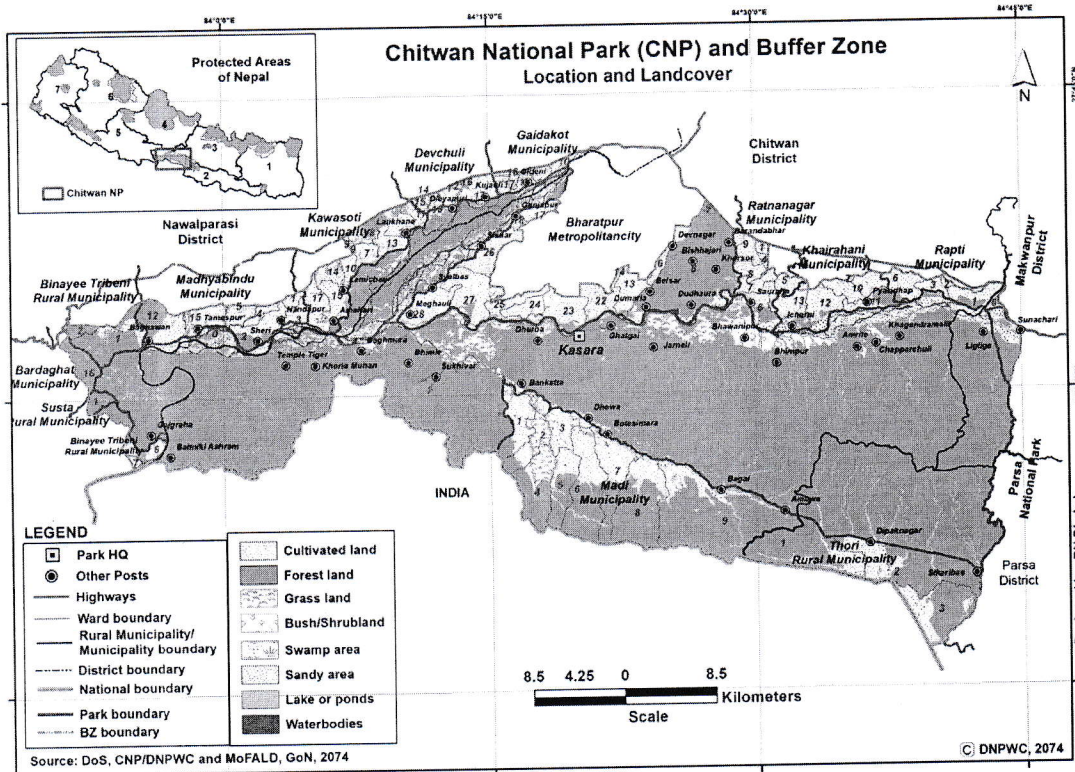


Figure 1: Location Map of CNP

82% of the park area is covered by forests while the coverage of grassland 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 transboundary linkages between protected areas as well.

3. Response to the Decision of World Heritage Committee

3.1 Having Examined Document WHC/19/43.COM/7B

Response- Not Applicable

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3.2 Recalling Decision 42 COM 7B.31, adopted at its 41st Session (Krakow, 2017)

Response- These concerns and requests are reiterated by the committee at its 43rd session (decision 43 COM 7B.11).

3.3 Welcomes the ongoing collaborative efforts of Chitwan National Park, the Nepal Army, local communities and other partners to combat rhinoceros poaching and urges the State Party to uphold these anti-poaching efforts.

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. Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Bufferzone communities, WWF, NTNC, ZSL, Forest offices, Political Leaders, Media peoples, 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, Drone, CCTV camera, SMART eye camera, sniffer and tracking dogs are being increasingly integrated for constant surveillance of the park. However, unfortunately recently 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 out of which six have been

3.4 Also Welcomes the decision by State Party to Shift the alignment of the East-West Electrified Railroad so that it does not cross the property and to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for this alternative route, and requests the State Party to 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 Assessment.

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. An alternative route for the East-West Electrified Railroad is being resurveyed by Department of Railways. Following media coverage that the present alignment will pass between the Barandabhar-Tikouli national highway and Beeshazari and Associated Lakes, DNPWC has formally requested the Department of Railways for shifting the alignment north of the Barandabhar-Tikouli national highway. In its alternative alignment request the DNPWC has indicated the current proposed alignment to be a hotspot for migration and dispersion of major wild species of the Park and is internationally recognized as an important wetland. 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. From its several meetings and coordination, 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 wildlife friendly structure (for example cross bridges, underpasses and overpasses) will be constructed to maintain connectivity with the forests and other critical habitats outside the property.

3.5 Notes the confirmation that tarmacking of the Thori-Madi-Bharatpur road will only concern the section passing through the buffer zone of the property and not the property itself, but recalls that the 2016 IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission also provided specific recommendations regarding the use of the road following its upgrading outside the property, including ensuring that the road will not be used for transportation of commercial goods to destinations beyond Thori, and also requests the State of Party to implementation.

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 6:00 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.

3.6 Also notes the decision to undertake an EIA for the proposed Thori-Birjung road, including an assessment of Potential impacts on the OUV of the property

Response- As stated in the SOC report of CNP 2018, Department of Roads had prepared an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) of the proposed Thori-Birgunj road that was approved by the Ministry of Physical Planning and Construction in 2009. However, based on the decision 41 COM 7B.31 of the World Heritage Committee

(Krakow, 2017), DNPWC has requested the Department of Roads to undertake a thorough EIA of the proposed Thori-Birjung road including a detailed assessment of potential impacts on the OUV of the property.

3.7 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 and State 4, the Madi-Balmiki Ashram road and the Malekhu-Thori road, and reiterates its request to the State Party to make an unequivocal commitment not to allow the development of the Terai Hulaki Highway to proceed along its proposed alignment through the property, and not to approve any other new roads or the reopening/upgrading of old roads passing through the property

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 been 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.



3.8 Reiterates its position that, if any of the aforementioned road and railway developments were 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

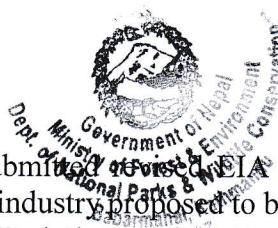
Response- All relevant aforementioned roads and railways development projects pass through the buffer zone of the park. So, they are expected to have low direct impact on the OUV of the property. However, no doubt these projects may pose indirect negative impact on property in spite of this-these roads 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 Further requests the State of Party to submit information on any proposed projects to the World Heritage Centre for review by IUCN, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, and to ensure that the construction of infrastructure will not be permitted if it could negatively impact on the OUV of the property

Response- There are no developmental infrastructures projects proposed within the World Heritage Property of CNP. The table below depicts some projects that have been proposed in the Buffer Zone of the Park. EIA reports of these projects have been shared with IUCN through the World Heritage Centre for review since November 2018 (after the last SOC report of CNP was submitted) but feedback has not been received yet.

SN.	Name of the Project	Requested Date
1.	Thori-Madi-Bharatpur Road Section, Road Upgrading Works, Chitwan National Park	14 th February 2019
2.	Badarmudhe Khola Bridge, Pateri Khola Bridge and Rimal Khola Bridge along Madi-Thori Road, Chitwan, Nepal	26 th July, 2019
3.	Madi-Thori road bridges (Riyu Khola bridge 240m, Magui Khola Bridge 97.1m and Baghai Khola Bridge 70m)	15 th January 2021
4.	Kisan Egg Project, Binayi Triveni Rural Municipality-1, Nawalparasi, Gandaki Province	19th January 2021





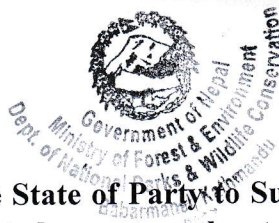
Accordingly, DNPWC has submitted an EIA report of the establishment of soft drink, mineral water and juice industry proposed to be built in a private land in the Buffer Zone of the Chitwan National Park through its letter of 19 July 2020.

3.10 Taking note of the information that GajendraDham is reportedly no longer located within the boundries of Chitwan National Park, following a revision of boundaries in 2016 and the demarcation on the ground, also urges the State of Pary to provide further clarification on any change to the boundaries in order to assess whether a boundary modification is required, in line with Paragraph 164 of the Operational Guidelines

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 GajendraMokchhyaDham of Tribeni (earlier in core area) into park's buffer zone. An enclosure for adaptation of translocated Asian Wild Water Buffalo has been established at the Padamapur site, while the GajendraMokchyyaDham 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. As there is no mention 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.

3.11 Noting the confirmation that provisions for visitor management at Gajendra Dham were included in the updated Management Plan for Chitwan National Park, and also recalling requests furthermore the State of Party to provide detailed information on how these management provisions address the Misssion's recommendations

Response- The management plan has adopted holistic strategies for tourism management and promotion both in core and buffer zone of the Park. GajendraDham 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.



3.12 Finally requests the State of Party to Submit the World Heritage Centre, by 1 December 2020, 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 45th Session in 2021

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.

4. Other current conservation issues identified by the State(s) Party(ies) which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Value

Response-The CNP at present is dealing with few conservation based (related?) challenges, which need to be addressed carefully for biodiversity conservation in general and to ensure viable population of the species of significance in particular. Wildlife crime, human-wildlife coexistence, habitat management, orphan and rescued animal management, aquatic ecosystem management, community livelihood development activities, coordination and collaboration with Local and Provincial governments and sustainable eco-tourism promotion have been identified as being major opportunities and concern points, proper management of which will continue to require using holistic approaches.

5. Inconformity with paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, describe any potential major restorations, alternations 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 OUV of the property, including authenticity and integrity

Response- As the governance system of Nepal has recently been changed and restructured at Federal, Provincial and Local levels, with all three tiers of government have become fully operational, there is high degree of pressure on common resources most often from the local government for gravel mining, road construction and timber. Mostly forests land seems to be targeted for construction of governmental superstructures such as buildings for state ministries, municipalities, communal hospitals, etc. This situation has generated great challenge for the site manager to maintain balance between conservation and development.

6. Public access to the state of conservation report

Response-This full report can be uploaded on the website of the World Heritage Centre for public access and the DNPWC will also upload it on its website after submission.