

REPORT ON THE CONSERVATION OF STATUS OF WORLD NATURAL HERITAGE PHONG NHA - KE BANG NATIONAL PARK

Property name: Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park

Member State: Viet Nam

Identification number: N951bis

1. Executive Summary of the report

Implementing Decision 45COM/7B.90 of the World Heritage Committee at the 45th Session (Ryadh, Saudi Arabia, 2023), the People's Committee of Quang Binh province issued Official Dispatch No. 612/UBND-KT dated April 9, 2024 directing the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park to preside over and coordinate with relevant departments, branches, units and localities to advise and strictly implement the recommendations of the WHC at its 45th Session.

Identifying the conservation of World Heritage values as both a responsibility and an opportunity and driving force for local socio-economic and environmental development, in recent times, Quang Binh province has focused on leading and directing departments, branches and localities to closely follow relevant legal regulations, Regulations on management and protection of the World Natural Heritage Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (in Decision No. 45/2021/QĐ-UBND dated November 26, 2021 of Quang Binh PPC) and the 1972 Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage to effectively preserve and promote the values of the World Natural Heritage Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, thereby achieving very positive results. Forest management, protection, research and biodiversity conservation have been effectively implemented, resulting in forest coverage exceeding 95%. Efforts to develop and implement programs, projects and plans for forest protection and heritage management is focused on implementation¹. Implementing the target program for sustainable forestry development, Emission Reductions Payment Agreement Program (abbreviated as ERPA) and other programs... to create jobs and improve income for people in the buffer zone, contributing to reducing pressure on Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park resources. International cooperation activities of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board have also been promoted and implemented in various fields. In particular, the effort to support the implementation of the transboundary conservation cooperation program with Hin Nam No National Park, Lao PDR to complete a nomination dossier for Hin Nam No National Park as a transboundary World Natural Heritage with Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park in the near future².

The People's Committee of Quang Binh province would like to submit the State of Conservation Report and the implementation of the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee.

¹ Issued the Ecotourism Project and the Digital Transformation Project of Phong Nha Ke Bang National Park; Implementing three provincial-level scientific research topics, four state-level scientific and technological topics and tasks and many programs, projects on investigation and survey of geology, geomorphology and biodiversity. Discovered 01 new species for science. Effectively implement the breeding program of rare and precious native plants with high conservation and economic value; care and rescue of wild animals and plants are well implemented with a successful rescue rate of 94.5%. Receive 7 individuals of Indochinese Tiger for rescue and conservation in the form of ex-situ conservation;

² Yorkshire Dales National Park - United Kingdom, Na Kai Nam Theun – Laos, California University, Irvine, U.S.A, Animals Asia Foundation (AAF), Vietnam Forestry University, Vietnam Museum of Nature, Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Center, Center for Nature Conservation and Development (CCD).

2. Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee at 45th session

2.1. Regarding the requirement to develop a clear strategy and action plan to address the threat posed by the 14 invasive alien species in the property based on the results of experimental eradication project of *Merimia boisiana* (in paragraph 4 of Decision 45COM/7B.90)

Implementing the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee in Decision No. 43.COM/7B.90, the report of the 2018 mission on the assessment of the conservation state of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park World Heritage and Report No.160/BC-BCSD dated May 2, 2024 of the Party Committee of the People's Committee of Quang Binh Province on the results of implementing Directive No. 39-CT/TU dated January 7, 2020 of the Provincial Party Committee on promoting the conservation and promotion of the values of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park World Natural Heritage, Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee (Quang Binh PPC) has issued Action Plan No. 44/KH-UBND dated January 10, 2024 of the Provincial People's Committee on the implementation of Resolution No. 01/NQ-CP of the Government and Resolutions of the Provincial People's Council on socio-economic development tasks and state budget estimates for 2024. In which, the Plan has included and directed the good implementation of the content: Deploying the project "Eradication of *Merrimia boisiana* species in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province" according to UNESCO's recommendations. Based on the proposal in Document No. 448/TTr-VQG of the Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board on requesting approval and funding to implement the Project "Eradication of *Merrimia boisiana* species in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province", Quang Binh PPC has directed relevant agencies and units to study and consider funding arrangements for the implementation of this project. In particular, it is expected to identify funding sources from the Sustainable Forestry Development Target Program; the North Central Region Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Payment Program (ERPA), sources from environmental careers and other service revenue sources of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

Merrimia boisiana is neither an invasive alien species nor is it on the List of Invasive Alien Species as prescribed in Circular No.35/2018/TT-BTNMT dated December 28, 2018 of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment stipulating criteria for determining and promulgating the List of invasive alien species. However, this is a light-loving plant species that grows quickly and has the ability to invade relatively quickly in vacant land areas along traffic routes or in some forest areas that have been eroded by natural disasters or affected by bombs after the war, so the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park has proposed specific methods to eradicate it. Currently, through monitoring, inspection and supervision of the encroachment of the *Merrimia boisiana* after implementing treatment measures³, observations indicate that *Merrimia boisiana*

³ the Project "Eradicating the species *Merrimia boisiana*" in Decision No. 2336/QD-UBND dated July 17, 2018 of the Quang Binh PPC on approving the Outline of tasks and Estimates for the experimental plan for eradication of *Merrimia boisiana* in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (treating 100 ha); Project on Application of Remote

primarily grows in vacant, sunlit areas with lots of light, along both sides of the traffic routes passing through the Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park. There is little or no *Merrimia boissiana* growing in primary forests and areas deep inside the core zone of the National Park. In the areas where the forests have been replaced, the areas where the forests have been restored and the areas where the chemicals have been used for experimental treatment, the growth of the *Merrimia boissiana* has been controlled and significantly reduced, the woody forest trees have developed well. Inspection, monitoring activities and measures for reforestation and restoration have been promoting the control and limitation of the invasiveness of the *Merrimia boissiana*.

Regarding the experimental eradication project of *Merimia boissiana* in Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park, this is a highly specific experimental project. Although the experimental project was successful, currently, pesticides containing the active ingredient Glyphosate have been removed from the list of pesticides permitted for use in Vietnam (according to Decision No.1186/QĐ-BNN-BVTV dated April 10, 2019 of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). Therefore, in the coming time, the method of using Glyphosate will not be applied according to the results of the Project. Up to now, through monitoring and evaluation, it has been shown that the level of development and the scope of influence of the species *Merrimia boissiana* are under control and do not seriously affect the ecosystem of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee respectfully sends the World Heritage Center and IUCN a summary report on the implementation results of the project to eradicate the *Merimia boissiana* as requested.

(Attached Appendix 1. Summary report on the results of the implementation of the experimental eradication plan for the Merrimia boissiana in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park).

Along with focusing on handling the encroachment of the *Merrimia boissiana*, Quang Binh PPC has also developed and issued strategic plans, including Plan No. 78/KH-UBND dated January 17, 2023 on promulgating the Action Plan on biodiversity conservation to 2030, with a vision to 2050 in Quang Binh province to conserve biodiversity combined with sustainable use of ecosystem services and biodiversity, contributing to socio-economic development, poverty reduction, and improving the quality of life of people. The plan also aims to increase the area of natural ecosystems that are protected, restored and ensure integrity and connectivity; biodiversity is preserved and used sustainably, contributing to socio-economic development in the direction of a green economy, proactively adapting to climate

change, in accordance with the Quang Binh Provincial Planning for the period 2021 - 2030, with a vision to 2050.

To continue to control the *Merrimia boisiana* species sustainably, in the coming time, Quang Binh PPC will include the content of controlling the *Merrimia boisiana* species in the World Heritage Management Plan of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park for the period 2025-2030, with a vision to 2050, and continue to prioritize including it in the activities of the Sustainable Forestry Development Programs in the new period with appropriate control measures.

2.2. To revise and update the 2010-2020 Sustainable Tourism Development Plan and its integration with other key management tools, to enhance governance based on the overarching principles of sustaining and preserving the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property by paying careful attention to the balance between tourism development and biodiversity conservation, as well as increased benefit sharing among stakeholders (in paragraph 5 of Decision 45COM 7B.90)

Based on the Master Plan for the construction of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province to 2030 approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 209/QD-TTg dated February 8, 2015 and the planning of Quang Binh province for the period 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050 in Decision No. 377/QD-TTg dated April 12, 2023 of the Prime Minister, on March 13, 2024, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province issued Report No.77/BC-UBND on reviewing and evaluating the Master Plan for the construction of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province to 2030, submit to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Construction. Currently, central ministries and branches are researching and consulting the Prime Minister to adjust the Master Plan for the construction of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province until 2030 to preserve and develop Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park comprehensively, in accordance with practical requirements and in accordance with current legal regulations.

In addition, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province has also issued Plan No. 593/KH-UBND dated April 5, 2024 to implement Directive No. 08/CT-TTg dated February 23, 2024 of the Prime Minister on comprehensive, rapid and sustainable tourism development in the coming time. Pursuant to the provisions of the current Forestry Law, tourism management and development in the National Park are implemented according to Decree 156/2018/ND-CP of the Government. The Provincial People's Committee has directed to focus on developing and issued Decision No. 153/QD-UBND dated January 23, 2024 approving “*The Project on eco-tourism, resort and entertainment in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, period 2021-2030*” to promote and call for investment in developing tourism in a scientific and sustainable manner, ensuring harmony of interests of businesses, local people and the State. Striving by 2025, Phong Nha - Ke Bang tourist area meets the criteria and is recognized as a national tourist area. By 2030, Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park will become an adventure tourism center in Asia, a leading destination for exploring and experiencing nature in Vietnam with a synchronous, modern infrastructure system, diverse, high-quality tourism products, sustainable tourism development

associated with community benefits, in which typical products are cave exploration; research, study of biodiversity, indigenous culture and archaeological relics.

Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee has actively coordinated with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to develop project documents, commit and be ready to arrange counterpart funds (according to Official Dispatch No. 1804/UBND-NCVX dated September 30, 2022) to implement the Project "Promoting wildlife conservation and responsible nature-based tourism for sustainable development in Vietnam"⁴. Quang Binh province has also ordered a state-level scientific research project on "Assessing the tourism capacity of some caves in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park". The project is chaired by the Institute of Geology under the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology and will be put into application in 2025.

On the basis of continuing to implement the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park and other important tourism development plans, Quang Binh province has focused on mobilizing resources, taking advantage of support from the Central Government, international organizations, local budgets, promoting socialization, diversifying investment sources to develop tourism infrastructure. The planning, supporting and promotion of investment in tourism development have been focused on and implemented synchronously and tourism infrastructure is increasingly improved.

Identifying the province's potential and strengths in the field of forest carbon credit trading, Quang Binh has promptly developed a proposal to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to participate in the Project "Support for REDD+ Readiness Preparation in Vietnam" funded by the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) through the World Bank. Quang Binh province has implemented and achieved the Project's objectives and activities related to policies, techniques and communications to raise awareness of climate change and REDD+ as the basis and conditions for implementing the emission reduction payment agreement for the period 2023-2025 according to Decree No. 107/2022/ND-CP dated December 28, 2022 of the Government⁵. In particular, the Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park Management Board is also a beneficiary of the North Central Region Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA). Revenue from ERPA has initially contributed to increasing investment funds for forest protection and development, contributing to creating jobs and increasing income for people, communities living dependent on forests and forest owners in the province in general and in Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park in particular. Communities, households and individuals assigned natural forests have had

⁴ The project was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on June 6, 2023. On June 19, 2023, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) sent a Letter to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment requesting approval of the project and signing of the Project Document.

⁵ According to the 2023 Financial Plan, Quang Binh province will pay more than VND 80 billion to beneficiaries, including: 10,762 forest owners who are households, individuals, and communities; 16 forest owners who are organizations; 71 commune-level People's Committees assigned by the state to manage forests and 9 forest owners who are other organizations assigned to manage forests. Currently, the Forest Protection and Development Fund has paid over VND72 billion to beneficiaries, reaching 88% of the plan. The remaining unpaid funds will be included in the 2024 financial plan for continued payment according to regulations.

additional funding to manage and protect forests. The implementation of ERPA has contributed to raising public awareness of the importance of forest management and protection, reducing violations of forestry laws.

Promoting the values of Heritage resources to share benefits and minimize impacts on Heritage values is an effective protection solution that the Provincial People's Committee always focuses on and promotes. The Provincial People's Committee directed the Management Board of PNKB National Park to integrate the Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project in the buffer zone communes of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park; Implement activities to support income increase for people in the buffer zone of the National Park through developing production and trading of high-value, environmentally friendly non-timber forest products; Promote the support of linkages between businesses and producers to enhance the value of agricultural and forestry product chains. Thereby, it has gradually contributed to improving the livelihoods of the buffer zone, creating jobs for over 10 thousand people, gradually increasing income for people in the buffer zone, and developing the local economy and society.

2.3. Requests furthermore that such measures be continued to inform priority management actions for the property, and to maintain sufficient staffing capacity to ensure the ongoing protection and management of the property (in paragraph 7 of Decision 45COM 7B.90)

To ensure the continuity of heritage protection and management, Quang Binh province has directed the effective implementation of the contents of Decision No. 3220/QD-UBND dated October 8, 2021 on approving the Plan for sustainable forest management of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park for the period 2021-2030 and Decision No.3605/QD-UBND dated December 11, 2014 on approving the Socio-Economic Development Plan for the Buffer Zone towards the conservation of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park until 2020, with a vision to 2030; issue Decision No. 311/QD-UBND dated February 17, 2023 on promulgating the Plan to implement Decision No. 809/QD-TTg dated July 12, 2022 of the Prime Minister approving the Sustainable Forestry Development Program for the period 2021 - 2025 in Quang Binh province and Plan No. 911/KH-UBND dated May 21, 2024 to implement Directive No.13-CT/TW dated November 12, 2017 of the Secretariat on strengthening the Party's leadership in forest management, protection and development. Accordingly, the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park also issued Plan No. 657/KH-VQG dated July 24, 2024 on implementing Plan No. 911/KH-UBND dated May 21, 2024 of the Provincial People's Committee.

Along with the development and implementation of Plans and Projects to protect and sustainably develop the World Natural Heritage Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Quang Binh province has also paid much attention to stabilizing the organizational structure of the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park. The Quang Binh PPC has directed the effective implementation of the Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project (VFBC) (approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Decision No.

1689/QD-BNN-HTQT dated April 21, 2021). The project was implemented in the core and buffer zones of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park with many components and practical activities that have greatly contributed to improving the capacity of the Management Board and improving the livelihoods of people in the buffer zone. With support from the VFBC Project, the Park Management Board has developed a Key Species Monitoring Plan in Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park (8 key species in the IUCN Red List); established and effectively operated 11 community-based trap removal patrol teams. The staff participating in the management and protection of Heritage is increasingly strengthened through the maintenance and use of contracted forest protection staff from local people from programs and projects such as the "Agreement on payment for greenhouse gas emission reduction in the North Central region (ERPA)" according to Decree No. 107/2022/ND-CP dated December 28, 2022 of the Government and the "Sustainable forestry development program for the period 2021-2025" according to Decision No. 809/QD-TTg dated July 12, 2022 of the Prime Minister, thereby attracting the participation of 50 buffer zone communities in forest management and benefiting from livelihood support activities from this source.

The Provincial People's Committee has also directed the development and approval of the Job Position Project and Financial autonomy project in the period 2025-2030. Planning, training and coaching are also focused on to improve the quality of the National Park staff⁶. In addition, departments, branches, sectors and units have actively coordinated with training institutions in the province to organize training courses to improve professional capacity for those participating in tourism activities, and basic skills in developing community tourism for people⁷.

Currently, the organizational structure of Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park is still operating stably, without any fluctuations. Forest Protection Department of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park has 11 forest protection stations, 02 Mobile Forest Protection Teams, 02 Professional Departments. There are 02 Ranger Stations with barriers in charge of controlling the eastern and western gateways of the National Park. To strengthen the

⁶ Supplementing leadership positions for specialized departments and affiliated units; developing a project for job positions at affiliated units and the Office of the Park Management Board; Submit to the Provincial People's Committee Party Committee for approval on the transfer and transfer of positions for cadres under the management of the Provincial People's Committee Party Committee to hold positions for 2 consecutive terms; Convert 26 civil servants, forest rangers and 02 positions for 10 consecutive years in accordance with regulations; add leadership positions of specialized departments and units under the Park Management Board.

⁷ From 2023 to present, nearly 500 students have participated in training courses to improve knowledge, skills and tourism expertise. The Management Board has successfully planned and organized 07 training courses for officers and civil servants of affiliated departments and units, and hundreds of officers have participated in training courses organized by other units; Send 02 officers to attend the training course for potential cadres at the Provincial Party Committee level for the 2025-2030 term and at the department and branch level for the 2026-2031 term; 20 officers participated in the Intermediate Political Theory training; 02 officers participated in the State Management training program for Senior Specialist; 02 officers participated in the State Management training program for Senior Specialist; 03 officers participated in the State Management training program for Specialist; 01 officer trained in department-level management skills; 03 officers participated in the National Defense and Security Knowledge training class for subject 3... The Department of Culture and Sports of Quang Binh has organized activities to preserve and promote traditional cultural values of ethnic minorities and mountainous areas. Preserving 02 traditional festivals; organizing 02 training courses, fostering professional expertise, teaching intangible culture; Building 02 traditional cultural models and 04 folk cultural activity clubs in ethnic minority and mountainous areas; Coordinate with the Department of Tourism and local authorities to develop products to serve tourism development.

protection of the area adjacent to the core zone of Hin Nam No National Park (Lao PDR), Quang Binh province has issued Document No. 394-TB/BCSD approving the policy of establishing Con Roang Ranger Station on the basis of Project No. 892/DA-VQG dated September 19, 2024 of the Park Management Board on the establishment of Con Roang Ranger Station under Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Ranger Department to ensure good implementation of forest management and protection tasks in the border area, adjacent to Hin Nam No National Park.

In addition to the achieved results, the organizational restructuring of the Management Board of PNKB National Park still faces difficulties and problems regarding the organizational model of the Forest Protection Department according to the provisions of the Forestry Law and Decree No. 01/2019/ND-CP of the Government. However, the National Park Management Board is still maintaining the model of the Forest Protection Department under the Management Board of National Park to ensure good implementation of the task of protecting forests and protecting Heritage values. Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has a Plan to develop legal documents in 2024, including the content of amending Decree No. 01/2019/ND-CP of the Government (Decision No. 3567/QDBNN-PC dated December 18, 2023). In the coming time, the Provincial People's Committee will continue to propose to the Government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Home Affairs to consider and provide guidance to resolve difficulties in the organizational model of the Management Board of National Park; At the same time, direct the Management Board to study and develop a project to perfect the organizational structure, functions, and tasks of the unit to ensure compliance with regulations.

2.4. Integrating and harmonizing the various management and conservation plans and tools under a concerted vision of governance (in paragraph 8 of Decision 45COM 7B.90)

In 2013, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province issued Decision No. 808/QD-UBND dated April 9, 2013 approving the Strategic Management Plan for the period 2013 - 2025 for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Decision No. 809/QD-UBND dated April 9, 2013 approving the Operational Management Plan for the period 2013 - 2020 for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park. Up to now, these Plans have expired or are about to expire and many contents are no longer suitable or do not meet the practical and legal requirements for the management of World Natural Heritage.

Implementing the recommendations in Decision No. 45.COM/7B.90 at the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee, pursuant to Decree No. 109/2017/ND-CP dated September 21, 2017 of the Government on the protection and management of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in Vietnam and Decree No. 08/2022/ND-CP dated February 10, 2022 of the Government guiding the implementation of the Law on Environmental Protection, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province issued Document No. 1190/UBND-KT dated June 27, 2024 on agreeing the policy of developing a World Natural Heritage Management Plan for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park and issued Decision No. 2838/QD-

UBND dated October 8, 2024 on allocating from the Planning Capital source of the provincial budget in 2024 to provide funding for the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park to develop a World Natural Heritage Management Plan for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, period 2025 - 2030, vision to 2050. Currently, the Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board is coordinating with relevant departments, branches and localities to implement the next steps according to current regulations, expected to be completed in 2025. In addition, Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board has organized an assessment of the effectiveness of conservation management work through the use of the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT-4). The METT-4 management performance monitoring tool helps the Park Management Board analyze risks and collect information on status and trends in protected areas. From there, it aims to propose solutions to improve management to maintain and increase forest cover and conserve biodiversity in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

(Attached Appendix 2. Monitoring and evaluation table of METT-4 management effectiveness at Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park)

The issuance of the Sustainable Forest Management Plan, the Project "Ecotourism, recreation and entertainment in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, period 2021-2030", using the METT-4 management effectiveness monitoring tool and implementing the development of the World Heritage Management Plan demonstrate the efforts and seriousness of Quang Binh province in implementing the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee, contributing to the integration of goals and unification of governance vision in the management, conservation and promotion of the values of the Heritage.

The People's Committee of Quang Binh province has also directed the Park Management Board to focus on strengthening research and updating documents related to the management and conservation of Heritage to develop and implement specific plans, projects and schemes suitable to the practical situation to effectively manage natural resources sustainably, especially forest resources, landscapes, environment, ecosystems, endangered and rare species of flora and fauna, cave systems and historical and cultural relics in the National Park; to effectively conduct research and conservation of biodiversity, geology and geomorphology.

Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee pays great attention to and values the integrity of the Heritage. In order to continue to preserve and promote the value of the World Heritage and develop the local socio-economy, Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee sincerely propose and suggest the following contents:

- The World Heritage Center to continue to pay attention, provide financial support and resources to contribute to improving Heritage management capacity in general and support the development of cross-border Heritage nominations in particular. in the Hin Nam No National Park area (Lao PDR) and the World Heritage Site of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (Vietnam).

- The World Heritage Center and specialized agencies of UNESCO are interested in and support Quang Binh province in developing the 3rd World Heritage

nomination dossier on criterion (vii), actively supporting the submission of the nomination dossier for recognition of the World Biosphere Reserve for Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (expected in 2025).

- The World Heritage Committee/World Heritage Center and specialized agencies of UNESCO create conditions for Quang Binh province and the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park to participate in international forums on conservation management at sites that are both World Heritage Sites and World Biosphere Reserves and Global Geoparks to enhance learning and experience sharing in World Heritage conservation management.

2.5. The continued cooperation with the State Party of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) for the conservation of biodiversity in the transboundary protected area and the submission of a nomination for a transboundary significant boundary modification to extend the property and include Hin Nam No National Park (Lao PDR) (in paragraph 9 of Decision 45COM 7B.90)

Since 2023, cooperation with Khammouane Province, Lao PDR in the conservation of transboundary biodiversity and support for the submission of proposals for important transboundary boundary adjustments to expand the heritage including Hin Nam No National Park (Lao PDR) has achieved the following results:

- Regarding the conservation and promotion of biodiversity values in the World Natural Heritage area of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park and the Management Board of Hin Nam No National Park, the authorities of the two provinces have included the content of cooperation in conservation and promotion of biodiversity values and outstanding values of the two National Parks in the working program and the Minutes of the high-level talks of the two provinces in 2023 and 2024. Accordingly, the two provinces will continue to cooperate in preserving and promoting the values of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park and Hin Nam No National Park, aiming to become the first transboundary World Natural Heritage site in Southeast Asia. Quang Binh province will continue to share experiences and support Khammouane province so that Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park (Quang Binh), Hin Nam No National Park and Na-kai-Nam Thon National Park (Khammouane) can be recognized in the Green List.

- The workshop "Promoting the value of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park World Heritage in the trend of integration and sustainable development" was held to share experiences and unify visions to contribute to improving the effectiveness of management, conservation and promotion of Heritage values in the direction of adaptation, integration and sustainable development.

- Maintain an annual rotating meeting between the two National Parks to share information and lessons learned from the two National Parks.

- The Management Board of Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with two National Parks of the Lao PDR, including: Memorandum of Understanding with the Management Board of Hin

Nam No National Park on sharing experiences in managing National Parks to build a World Heritage nomination dossier for Hin Nam No National Park; Memorandum of Understanding with the Management Board of Nakai – Nam Thon National Park on sharing information, experiences in managing National Parks, and providing technical support so that the two National Parks can better manage, conserve, and promote the exceptional values of each National Park.

- Ordering a state-level scientific and technological task on “Research to determine the value of geology, geomorphology, and biodiversity to serve the construction of a dossier of a transboundary world natural heritage (Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park - Vietnam and Hin Nam No National Reserve - Lao PDR). The task is chaired by the Institute of Geology under the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology for the period from 2021-2024.

- Issue Plan No.1748/KH-UBND dated September 20, 2024 to organize the signing of the agreement on residential clusters on both sides of the border between Thuong Trach commune, Bo Trach district, Quang Binh province/Vietnam and Noong Ma village cluster, Bua La Pha district, Khammouane province/Laos to promote the role of the people and border protection forces of the two provinces (Quang Binh, Vietnam - Khammouane, Laos) to jointly protect territorial sovereignty, national border security, protect resources, environment, national and ethnic interests of each other, contributing to building a peaceful, friendly, cooperative and developing border.

On January 30, 2024, the Government Office issued Official Dispatch No. 715/VPCP-QHQT on supporting the nomination dossier of Hin Nam No National Park (Laos) as a transboundary World Heritage Site with the World Natural Heritage Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (Vietnam) to submit to UNESCO for recognition as a World Heritage Site. Quang Binh Provincial People's Committee has actively coordinated to support Khammouane Province and Hin Nam No National Park Management Board to develop a World Heritage nomination dossier. The two sides signed the Minutes of the meeting on agreeing on the proposed map serving the nomination dossier for the inter-border Hin Nam No National Park World Heritage Site with the Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park World Heritage Site; Agree on the transboundary management framework and give unified opinions on the 3 criteria for nominating the transboundary Heritage Profile of Hin Nam No National Park (*criterion (viii), criterion (ix), criterion (x)*); Participate in supporting the meeting between the Department of Heritage of the Lao PDR and the Department of Heritage of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to unify the dossier and map of the nomination of Hin Nam No National Park as a World Natural Heritage to submit to the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam with a letter of support for the nomination dossier of Hin Nam No National Park to the World Heritage Committee; Participate in working with Management Board of Hin Nam No National Park, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Khammouane Provincial Government, IUCN experts and relevant parties to support Management Board of Hin Nam No National Park on some contents regarding the transboundary cooperation process between Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park and Management Board of Hin Nam No

National Park, issues in management and conservation of Hin Nam No National Park. Up to now, the World Heritage Nomination dossier of Hin Nam No National Park, Lao PDR has been submitted to the World Heritage Committee.

In the coming time, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province will direct the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park to continue to advise and coordinate with the authorities of Khammouane province, the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, the Management Board of Hin Nam No National Park and relevant parties in supporting the implementation of the contents of the World Natural Heritage nomination dossier of Hin Nam No National Park, Lao PDR as well as implementing cooperation activities in biodiversity conservation in the inter-border area between the two National Parks.

2.6. To continue monitoring the grazing activities to prevent negative impacts on the property's OUV while ensuring that no illegal grazing occurs within the property ((in paragraph 10 of Decision 45COM 7B.90))

Based on the report on the conservation status of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park World Heritage in response to the Official Letter CLT/WHC/APA/HG/NH/SB/23/41 regarding the World Heritage Center's request to clarify information related to livestock farming in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, the Provincial People's Committee has directed the Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board to maintain coordination with local authorities and relevant units to strengthen environmental protection, manage and control the grazing of cattle and livestock of local people, business activities, trading of livestock and poultry... to have measures to monitor, manage and mobilize people not to increase the number of herds and livestock, raise awareness of environmental protection, and not to arbitrarily graze livestock and livestock in the forest area of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

After consulting with local authorities of 13 communes and 3 districts in the buffer zone of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, on May 9, 2024, Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park Management Board issued Plan No.401/PA-VQG on managing livestock and livestock grazing activities in adjacent areas and within the forest area of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park (hereinafter referred to as the Plan). The plan includes propaganda activities, mobilizing local people to properly carry out livestock and animal grazing activities according to the provisions of law; Reviewing and making specific statistics to monitor and have control measures, minimizing the impact of livestock and animals on the outstanding global value of World Heritage, at the same time, research and propose zoning areas for livestock and pets suitable to natural conditions and the specific socio-cultural and religious characteristics of local communities, ensuring stable life, security, order, social safety and ensuring environmental sanitation and natural landscapes. After issuing the plan, local authorities of the buffer zone communes and the Forest Protection Department of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park have worked together to drastically and synchronously handle the situation of livestock grazing that affects the landscape, environment and tourism activities. In the Doong village area of Tan Trach commune, based on Plan No. 401 of the Management Board of PN-KB

National Park, the Forest Protection Department has developed Plan No.336/KH-HKL dated July 12, 2024 for implementation and has conducted inspections and statistics of the entire number of buffaloes and cows in the village, organized propaganda to mobilize people not to buy more cattle for breeding to increase the herd due to mechanical factors, and required reporting to the Forest Protection Department when there is a change in the number of cattle (decrease/increase in number due to natural reproduction). Support funding for building fences to demarcate livestock grazing areas for villagers to prevent livestock from entering the forests of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

Within the framework of the USAID-funded Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation (VFBC) Project, the Park Management Board organized a multi-sectoral dialogue forum with authorities at all levels and stakeholders to discuss and agree on management solutions for livestock grazing in the Heritage area. The parties have jointly signed a Cooperation Agreement on the consensus to establish a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Forum and a Multi-Sectoral Consultative Council for the Sustainable Development of the World Natural Heritage of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, contributing to enhancing the effectiveness and participation of stakeholders in resolving issues arising in the management process of the World Natural Heritage of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

In addition, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province also issued Decision No.1353/QD-UBND dated May 31, 2023 on approving the buffer zone dossier in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park with the goal of determining the boundary scope, location, and area of the buffer zone in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park in accordance with the land use status of people in Doong village, Tan Trach commune, Bo Trach district to stabilize people's lives and minimize impacts on resources in the area. Accordingly, the buffer zone area in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park in Doong village is determined to be 55.5 hectares. On September 4, 2024, the Provincial People's Committee also issued Official Dispatch No.4241/VPUBND-TH on the policy of supporting funding for the implementation of the project of Marking the boundary of the buffer zone inside Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park in Doong village, Tan Trach commune, Bo Trach district. In addition, the People's Committee of Bo Trach district also issued a Decision to allocate capital to support the people of Doong village to renovate 2.5 hectares of wasteland that had been planned for wet rice cultivation to help improve the livelihoods of households in the village.

In the coming time, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province will continue to direct the Park Management Board to effectively implement plans for managing livestock grazing activities, continue to closely monitor livestock grazing within the National Park, and always prioritize the best conservation solutions to prevent impacts on the exceptional value of the Heritage; strictly implement the protection of forests and heritage resources; regularly monitor impacts to have timely intervention measures.

3. Other current conservation issues identified by the State Party which may have an impact on the property's Outstanding Universal Values (This includes

conservation issues which are not mentioned in the Decision of World Heritage Committee or in any information request from the World Heritage Center)

Quang Binh province realizes that there are no other issues affecting the conservation of the Heritage other than the content of the Decision issued by the World Heritage Center.

4. 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

Until now, there are no buildings and new constructions in the core zone, buffer zone, ecological corridors that impacted on the integrity of the property.

5. Public access to the state of conservation report

Member State of Vietnam agrees to share the conservation report of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park on the website of the World Heritage Center./.

cc:

- Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism;
- Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO;
- Chairman and Vice Chairmen of QBPPC;
- Management Board of PNKB NP;
- QBPPC Office;
- Archival: VT, KT.

**VICE CHAIRMAN
OF QUANG BINH PROVINCIAL
PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE**

Hoang Xuan Tan

No: 349 /BC-VQG

Quang Binh, May 26th 2020

**REPORT ON RESULT
OF THE EXPERIMENTAL ERADICATION PROJECT OF *Merimia boisia*
IN PHONG NHA – KE BANG NATIONAL PARK**

Implementing the recommendation of the World Heritage Committee in Decision WHC/17/41.COM/7B. On July 17, 2018, the People's Committee of Quang Binh province issued Decision No. 2336/QD-UBND approving the Task Outline and Estimate of the Plan for experimental eradication of the *Merrimia boisia* species in PNKB National Park, accordingly the Provincial People's Committee assigned the Management Board of National Park to be the investor and organize the implementation of the Plan. Over the implementation period, the project has completed the items and contents according to the outline approved by the Provincial People's Committee. The Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park reports to the Provincial People's Committee the implementation results as follows:

I. General information

1. Title: Experimental eradication of the *Merrimia boisia* species in Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park.

2. Investment decision-making agency: People's Committee of Quang Binh province.

3. Investor: The Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park.

4. Consulting unit for implementation: Phap Lam PC Company Limited

Representative: Mr. Nguyen Viet Phuong Nam – Director.

Address: No. 17, Hoang Thi Loan Street, Hue City, Thua Thien Hue Province.

5. Project objective: Prevent the invasion of the *Merrimia boisia* species to biodiversity and ecosystems in PNKB National Park.

6. Scope of implementation: Administrative Service Sub-area, PNKB National Park, Son Trach commune (now Phong Nha town), Bo Trach district, Quang Binh province (plots 3, 7, 10 of sub-area 615A; Plots 3, 6 of sub-area 615).

7. Approved budget: 1,554,779,000 VND.

8. Duration: From November 2018 to March 2020.

II. Implementation process

1. Pursuant to Decision No. 3074/QD-UBND on approving the plan to select a contractor to implement the experimental plan to eradicate the *Merrimia boisia*

species in PNKB National Park, the Management Board of PNKB National Park has prepared a request file and related procedures in accordance with regulations and has appointed Phap Lam PC Company Limited as the consulting unit to implement the experimental eradication plan. Phap Lam PC Company Limited and the Park Management Board have signed a contract, implementing from November 2018 to December 2019.

2. In April 2019, the Management Board established a Council to evaluate and conduct a mid-term inspection of the implementation of the consulting unit.

3. In December 2019, the consulting unit completed all work contents according to the signed contract and the outline approved by the Provincial People's Committee with a treatment of 100 hectares; completed the impact assessment report after treatment; developed a treatment process for *Merrimia boissiana* species; organized a scientific workshop.

4. On March 3, 2020, the Garden Management Board established a Council and organized a final assessment and acceptance.

III. Results of implementation

1. The workload and quality of work

- The consulting contractor has carried out a trial eradication of the *Merrimia boissiana* species on an area of 100 hectares according to the outline approved by the Provincial People's Committee.

- Use the root pulling method for *Merrimia boissiana* with diameter ≤ 1 cm; the sponge application method for *Merrimia boissiana* with diameter from 1 to ≤ 3 cm; the infusion method (Using a needle and syringe to inject chemicals into the plant stem) for *Merrimia boissiana* with diameter from 3 cm or more.

- Fully implemented the contents according to the Outline including: Assessing the natural conditions, ecology and distribution of the *Merrimia boissiana* according to 06 types of terrain; dividing plots to evaluate each specific indicator, establishing 07 survey plots to determine the implementation content; building a diagram to monitor the transformation of the *Merrimia boissiana* after infusing the drug; monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of eradication; evaluating chemical residues in the soil and water environment; building a Process to eradicate the *Merrimia boissiana* species and proposing a budget estimate and unit price for implementation.

- The methods are fully implemented according to the Outline; the eradication efficiency for the found and destroyed trees is 100%, (the eradication rate per 100 hectares is 90%, estimated at about 10% remaining because the roots have not been found yet); the impacts on environmental factors of soil, water and ecosystem, insects are within allowable limits.

- The project has fully met the objectives, content, scale and workload requirements according to the approved Outline in Decision 2336/QĐ-UBND of the province dated July 17, 2018.

- Current results:

+ At the time of acceptance of the results, the plots showed that the stems of the *Merrimia boissiana* species had rotted, and no regenerated the *Merrimia boissiana* species appeared; earthworms and small insects appeared at the base of the *Merrimia boissiana* species. No *Merrimia boissiana* species appeared in the forest layers within the testing area.

+ Vegetation grew well, no unusual tree deaths were observed; it was noted that the use of chemicals during the test did not affect the ecosystem and environment inside and outside the test area.

+ The contractor has strictly implemented the collection and treatment of tools and chemical bottles after use.

2. Products of the Experimental Eradication Plan

The results of the implementation include: The report on the results of the eradication and the technical process of the eradication have been reviewed and evaluated as satisfactory by the Mid-term Acceptance Council and the Official Acceptance Council.

- The report on the effectiveness of the Eradication Plan is presented fully and clearly with research contents, main products are specifically stated, the report is accompanied by specific data tables on field investigation results, accompanied by illustrative images, and analysis results of some indicators.

- The process of eradicating the *Merrimia boissiana* is clearly established, easy to understand and can be applied in practice to organize the eradication of *Merrimia boissiana* plant in areas with similar ecological characteristics.

3. Implementation costs and payment requests

- Budget approved by the Provincial People's Committee: 1,554,779,000 VND.

- Budget for implementation approved for payment: 1.503,170.600 VND.

- Funding has been granted: 1.200.000.000 VND (In which, the budget refund due to the end of 2018 not being transferred to 2019 is: 19.899.400 VND. The remaining funding has been granted: 1.180,100.600 VND).

- Remaining proposed funding: 323,070,000 VND.

IV. Difficulties and obstacles in the implementation process

1. This is a very special experimental project, implemented for the first time and there are no specific procedures or regulations. On the other hand, the terrain of the experimental area is complicated, the ability to access to handle and eradicate the Yellow Morning Glory is too difficult compared to the estimate, the unfavorable weather, erratic rain and wind and the delay in funding have greatly affected the implementation process and work progress.

2. Although the pilot project was successful, currently pesticides containing the active ingredient Glyphosate have been removed from the list of

pesticides permitted for use in Vietnam (Decision No. 1186/QD-BNN-BVTV dated April 10, 2019). Therefore, the method of using the active ingredient Glyphosate to eradicate the Morning Glory in the future is not allowed.

V. Recommendation

1. We respectfully request the Provincial People's Committee to direct relevant authorities to develop solutions to manage the experimental area to ensure that the Morning Glory plant does not re-invade in an effective and sustainable manner.

2. Faced with the serious encroachment of the Yellow Morning Glory on the biodiversity and ecosystem of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park and continuing to implement the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee in Decision No. 43 COM 7B.12, the report of the Monitoring Team responding to UNESCO on the assessment of the conservation status of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park World Heritage and Directive No. 39-CT/TU dated January 7, 2020 of the Standing Committee of the Quang Binh Provincial Party Committee on promoting the conservation and promotion of the values of the World Natural Heritage of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, we respectfully request the Provincial People's Committee to consider allocating annual funding for the unit to carry out the eradication of the Yellow Morning Glory on a large scale.

3. Currently, there is no chemical to replace Glyphosate. Therefore, we respectfully request the Provincial People's Committee to have a special mechanism for the case of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park to continue using chemicals containing the active ingredient Glyphosate or other alternative chemicals to eradicate the Yellow Morning Glory in areas with similar ecological characteristics.

Above are the results of the implementation of the Pilot Plan to eradicate the Yellow Morning Glory species in Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, the Management Board of Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park respectfully reports to the Provincial People's Committee./.

To:

- Quang Binh PPC;
- Mr. Tran Tien Dung – Vice Chairman of Provincial People's Committee;
- Director of PNKB NP Management Board (for reporting);
- For file: VT, SICD.

**On behalf of Director
Vice Director**

Truong Thanh Khai