Position Statement on Mining and Associated Activities in Relation to Protected Areas

Introduction

This position statement is put forward as a global framework statement which recognises that clear rules are easier to understand and defend than ones which depend too much on interpretation. It is considered more appropriate to provide clear global guidance in a statement such as this and leave it to countries to consider what adaptations are needed in local circumstances. This statement defines the position of IUCN’s World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) towards mining1 and associated activities in and adjacent to protected areas2. WCPA is the world’s largest network of protected area professionals with 1,300 members in 140 countries. This position statement acknowledged the increasing application of “best practices” environmental approaches and lower impact technology and co-operation and partnership between the mining industry and protected areas to promote ecologically sustainable development on the part of the mining industry.

The process for preparing this position statement has involved: (a) preparation of a draft statement; (b) wide circulation of the draft statement has involved: (a) preparation of a draft statement; (b) wide circulation of the draft statement has involved: (a) preparation of a draft statement; (b) wide circulation of the draft statement has involved: (a) preparation of a draft statement; (b) wide circulation of the draft statement; (c) consideration of comments and amendments; and (d) review by the IUCN Council before adoption by WCPA.

Position Statement

WCPA (The World Commission on Protected Areas) believes:

1. A comprehensive approach to planning should be adopted where possible to establish an adequate and representative protected area system set within the broader landscape. Assessment should be based on good science including assessments of natural and mineral values. This is particularly relevant to the establishment of new protected areas.

2. Exploration and extraction of mineral resources are incompatible with the purposes of protected areas corresponding to IUCN Protected Area Management Categories I to IV, and should therefore be prohibited by law or other effective means.

3. In Categories V and VI, exploration and minimal localised extraction is acceptable only where this is compatible with the objectives of the protected area and then only after environmental impact assessment (EIA) and subject to strict operating, monitoring and after use restoration conditions. This should apply “best practices” environmental approaches.

4. That should exploration be permitted in category V and VI, an EIA should be required following such exploration before extraction is permitted. Approval for exploration should not imply automatic approval for extraction.

5. Proposed changes to the boundaries of protected areas, or to their categorisation, to allow operations for the exploration or extraction of mineral resources should be subject to procedures at least as rigorous as those involved in the establishment of the protected area in the first place. There should also be an assessment of the impact of the proposed change on the ability to meet the objectives of the protected area.

6. Exploration and extraction of mineral resources, and associated infrastructure, which are outside of, but negatively affecting the values for which protected areas were established should be subject to EIA procedures which consider, inter alia, the immediate and cumulative effects of the activity on the protected area, recommend operating and after use conditions, and ensure that the values of the protected areas are safeguarded.

7. In recognising the important contribution the mining industry can play, opportunities for co-operation and partnership between the mining industry and protected area agencies should be strongly encouraged. Collaboration with the mining industry should focus on securing respect and support for this position statement; broadening the application of best environmental practice for mining activity; and exploring areas of mutual benefit.

Objectives of Management

- to protect and maintain the biological diversity and other natural values of the area in the long term; to promote sound management practices for sustainable production purposes; to protect the natural resource base from being alienated for other land-use purposes that would be detrimental to the area’s biological diversity; and to contribute to regional and national development.

Guidance for Selection

- The area should be at least two-thirds in a natural condition, although it may also contain limited areas of modified ecosystems; large commercial plantations would not be appropriate for inclusion;
- The area should be large enough to absorb sustainable resource uses without detriment to its overall long-term natural values.

Organizational Responsibility

Management should be undertaken by public bodies with an unambiguous remit for conservation, and carried out in partnership with the local community; or management may be provided through local custom supported and advised by governmental or non-governmental agencies. Ownership may be by the national or other level of government, the community, private individuals, or a combination of these.

Equivalent Category in 1978 System

This category does not correspond directly with any of those in the 1978 system, although it is likely to include some areas previously classified as “Resource Reserves”, “Natural Biotic Areas/Anthropological Reserves” and “Multiple Use Management Areas / Managed Resource Areas”.

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