



Georgia

UNDP/GEF project “Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Areas System” (00070382)

Testing site-level revenue generation mechanisms in Tusheti PAs

Task Report on Assessment for Tusheti PA Reclassification

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Introduction

According to the most recent definition a protected area is “A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (IUCN 2008)¹.

In order to comply with this definition and achieve its primary aim, the long term conservation of nature adequate classification and spatial physical planning of any protected area (PA) is of outmost importance.

In Georgia there are a number of different protected area categories. As defined by the national legislation each of them allows a different set of permitted activities and levels/types of resource use. Hence without undermining PA’s primary aim correct zoning could create opportunities not only for adequate law enforcement, but also for certain forms of human activity and resource use that may be critical for meeting local communities’ cultural or economic requirements. In addition, adequate zoning could also be important for the development of sustainable tourism on the protected area. Tourism in turn may be an important contributor to the financial sustainability of the PA and also (if properly managed) a more acceptable alternative to the forms of direct use of natural resources by the local communities.

Protected area management has a long history in Georgia but the national experience of planning modern and complex protected areas is limited. The old Soviet system that only recognised one PA category, the State Nature Reserve (a strict protection zone in which no human interference was allowed) was substituted by a multi-category far more flexible PA system only in 1995. This new system has been based on IUCN recommendations and has six PA categories with different goals and objectives and relevant protection regime and resource use levels. In addition, after the breakup of the Soviet Union serious changes took place in both the overall national context and approaches in the national PA system development. In order to increase their ecological effectiveness many of the existing small reserves have been significantly expanded. This inevitably created new management challenges. Favourable situations were created for actual or potential conflicts with local population at many of the newly expanded PAs in different parts of the country. Lessons learnt around the world suggest that effective PA management is practically impossible without addressing conflicts with local communities, especially local resource users. These conflicts are likely to provoke strong negative attitudes toward the PA in question and even undermine the PA concept in general. All this may eventually affect the success of the PA and the whole national PA system.

¹ Dudley, N. (Editors) (2008) Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management categories. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. x+86pp.

Wherever there is a proven need of reclassification or changes in the zonation of a protected area this process must be based on a rigorous evaluation of the issues and for the purpose of addressing a number of zonation anomalies and to take into account local cultural and use values.

There are different options for resolving conflicts with local resource users including:

- Modification of the existing PA zoning so that new planning allows consensus between the PA and local resources users.
- Development of alternative livelihoods and other mechanisms that can compensate for the limited accessibility to the resources.
- Incentivising local communities so that they become interested in the maintenance of the PA and the persistence of its biodiversity (a classic example of this being income generation by nature-based tourism²)

Ensuring financial sustainability of individual PAs as well as of the entire PA system is another great challenge facing Georgia's conservation sector. Adequate and effective spatial planning and zoning is also very critical for the development of revenue generation opportunities.

All attempts toward resolving the above issues should be based on the need of finding a good balance between the biodiversity conservation objectives and legitimate requirements of the local communities and the need of the PA to facilitate its financial sustainability.

The present document is the preliminary assessment of the Tusheti PA reclassification. The objective of this document is currently limited to a brief overview of the existing situation and the relevant work that has been done so far, and to outlining the main agreed principles on which further reclassification planning process will be based.

1. The planning process and approaches

The development of a socially and ecologically effective new spatial planning for Tusheti PA complex will require: (1) review of all existing information and research/surveys to fill any identified gaps, (2) review of national and international experience and guidelines (relevant IUCN and other guidelines) and (3) ensuring participatory planning process involving all stakeholders especially local communities and resource users. The diagram below (Fig. #1) demonstrates the planning process with the above three main elements, their outputs and contributing components.

² Tourism development may in turn require changes in the zoning of a PA.

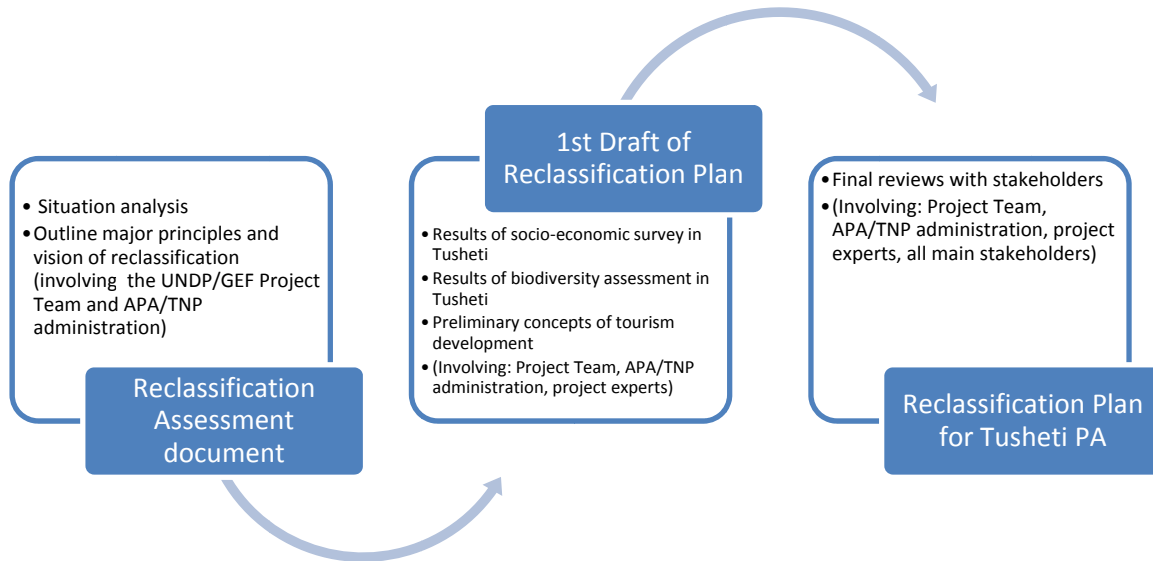


Figure 1: The development of the Tusheti PA reclassification plan

As shown in the above diagram the preliminary assessment is to be conducted as a joint work of the Project Team and APA and involves a brief overview of the situation and establishment of main principles and vision for the reclassification. Specialised surveys will be then conducted in the 2nd stage. The aim of the socio-economic survey will be to understand and incorporate views and vital interests of the local communities. Biodiversity assessment will help update and increase current knowledge of Tusheti PA biodiversity and its aim is to ensure adequate consideration of the primary purpose of the PA, biodiversity conservation. It is also important to consider tourism development perspectives since the realisation of the tourist potential of any particular site depends on its legal status (category). In the final stage, the final draft of the Reclassification Plan will be prepared. Then the relevant legal procedure will have to be initiated by APA to officially approve the plan and begin its implementation.

2. An overview of Tusheti PA: establishment, current status and zoning

The first protected area in Tusheti was established in 1980 as a small nature reserve which was managed by the Akhmeta Nature Reserve administration along with another 2 separate sites also located in the Akhmeta District. The reserve in Tusheti was established with the primary purpose of protecting unique and untouched mountain pine and birch forests. According to the law, human activities on the nature reserve were limited to scientific research and education.

Tusheti PA complex in its current capacity was established in 2003 by "Law on the Creation and Management of the Tusheti, Batsara-Babaneuri, Lagodekhi, and Vashlovani Protected Areas". The total area of the PA complex is 118,319 ha and includes: (i) Tusheti State Nature Reserve (NR; 10,881 ha), (ii) Tusheti National Park (NP; 76,004 ha), and (iii) Tusheti Protected Landscape (PL; 31,434 ha). (See Annex 1 for map of Tusheti PA complex).

In 2006 the Tusheti PA Directorate was established as a semi-independent body (with the official legal status of "Legal Body of Public Law") to manage the site on the ground under the supervision of the Department of Protected Areas of the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Recourses. A major reorganisation took place in the national PA system in 2008 as a result of which the Tusheti PA administration became a territorial entity of the Agency for the Protected Areas (APA), itself a Legal Body of Public Law.

Presently the Tusheti NP and Tusheti NR are managed by APA's Tusheti PA administration and the Tusheti PL is managed by the Akhmeta district municipality through its Tusheti territorial entity.

In addition to the conservation of Tusheti's rich biodiversity the Tusheti PA complex administration has committed itself to contributing to regional development and to its own financial sustainability.

As defined by law (Law of Georgia on Protected Areas System, 1996) and its management plan (2003-2008) each of the sites of the PA complex (NP, NR and PL) requires a specific protection regime and allows certain forms of use including resource use (see Annex #1 for details on legal status and protection regimes relevant to each of the 3 sites of the PA complex).

3. Activities to date for Tusheti PA complex reclassification

Soon after the Tusheti PA administration became operational and measures were initiated to enforce law on the site, obvious problems were noted in the current spatial planning and zoning of the Tusheti PA complex. Conflicts with local communities were observed in multiple locations. On the other hand there major problems were encountered with the physical protection of the site. It became clear to the PA complex administration that the possibility of the reclassification of certain sections of the NP and NR was to be explored for the effective site protection and for meeting some of the critical requirement of the local communities. In 2006 the PA administration initiated reclassification discussions within the Environmental Ministry on the grounds of increasing discontent among the local communities and the

lack of capacity of the PA Administration to adequately enforce site protection with available resources and current zoning.

In 2007 the Agency of Protected Areas (then Department of Protected Areas) in cooperation with the Sustainable Development Projects Implementation Unit (a projects implementation unit under the Environmental Ministry) began to investigate the issue and conducted a preliminary survey and meetings with local communities in some of the main villages of Tusheti.

The following year APA established a special commission entitled “Commission for the reclassification of certain sections of the Tusheti PA complex”. In addition to APA officials and specialist representatives of research institutions and NGOs were invited to participate. Commission members visited every known site having problems with local communities, had meetings with local villagers and local authorities. They also reviewed available information on local biodiversity. The objective was to eliminate/minimise all known conflicts with the local communities. They found that all of the known conflicts were caused by law enforcement attempts by the PA administration that implied limiting the access to certain resources. The Commission prioritised those sites at which the resources in question were of vital importance to local communities and where no alternatives were available locally. In Tusheti such resources include fuel wood and pastures. So the Commission primarily looked at the conflicts that involved the access to these resources. The commission prepared a report (see Annex 3) with concrete recommendations and relevant justification for reclassifying these sites. Most of the recommendations were related to strictly protected forests near the villages. The status of the Nature Reserve completely excludes access to any resources located on the site including fuel wood and non-timber forest resources whereas the local villagers have no alternative to fuel wood. Notably among the 8 recommendations for reclassification there was one that was related to a small scale development project in the protected landscape but adjacent to the nature reserve. It was about the construction of small hydropower facilities. The Commission considered the provision of power to the nearby villages as vital importance to those communities and proposed a downgrade of a small section of NR adjacent to the construction sites.

The Commission recommended the following: (1) 2,507 ha of NR to be transferred to NP and 92 ha of NR to be moved to PL with total area of 2,599 ha to be removed from NR, (2) 106 ha of NP to be transferred to PL and (3) 4,368 ha of NP’s Strict Protection zone should be transferred to NR.

The next step would be to prepare a draft amendment to the “Law on the Creation and Management of the Tusheti, Batsara-Babaneuri, Lagodekhi, and Vashlovani Protected Areas, 2003” and initiate the

formal procedure with the parliament. However this process was postponed due to the upcoming reclassification work to be conducted under the UNDP/GEF project **Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia's Protected Areas System**.

The recommendations proposed by the Commission could resolve almost all the known conflicts with local communities and create better conditions for sustainable use of fuel wood and pastures. However the proposed changes may not be sufficient for the Tusheti PA complex's zonation to become suitable for the effective site management and for achieving its long-term goals and objectives. of the PA complex in the,

4. Vision and principles of reclassification

Presently as more experience of Tusheti PA complex management has been accumulated and considering the current challenges facing the administration critical questions are:

- How relevant is the existing classification to the effective management of the Tusheti PA complex and to ensuring the long-term conservation of species and ecosystems in Tusheti?
- How suitable is the existing classification for meeting local people's vital socio-economic needs and cultural requirements (hence for resolving/preventing conflicts) and for contributing to overall regional development (e.g. energy supplies)?
- How appropriate is the existing classification for facilitating revenue generation for both the PA complex and local communities to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Tusheti PA and to enable incentivising of local communities?

As mentioned above the planning process will involve specialised surveys such as socio-economic survey, biodiversity assessment including existing information analysis and gathering new data on priority components of biodiversity, exploration of tourism development opportunities and planning. These activities will help answer the above questions and also identify and assess specific factors that create major forms of conflicts of interest (Fig. 2).

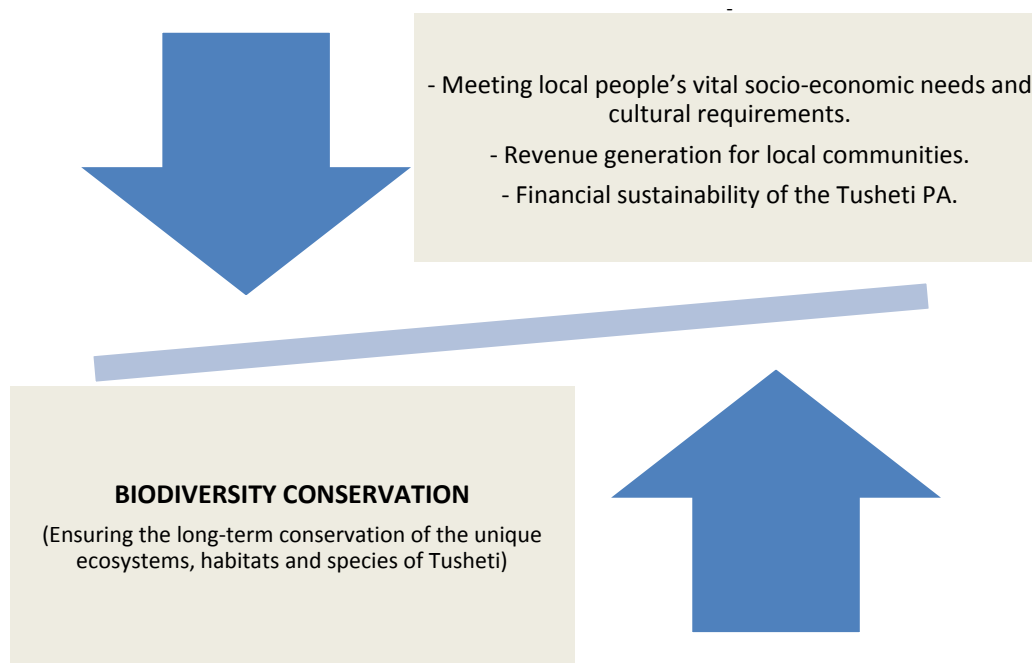


Figure. 2: Simplified illustration of conflicts of interests in Tusheti PA complex

The interest conflicts shown in *Fig. 2* may be very obvious in certain cases however many of the underlying factors may in fact be closely linked with each other and if properly addressed they may even have positive effect on each other in the long run. This would be the “win-win” situation that may be considered ideal for Tusheti. Such a situation may prove to be extremely difficult to achieve and usually requires a comprehensive approach and effective planning. Yet, this should be the principle approach in the reclassification planning for Tusheti PA complex. Hence the ultimate vision for the Tusheti PA complex as regard to spatial planning and zoning should be formulated as follows:

The spatial planning of Tusheti PA complex ensures the long-term conservation of the region's biodiversity while creating better opportunities for meeting local people's vital socio-economic and cultural requirements, and allowing effective revenue generation mechanisms for both local communities and the PA.

This ambitious vision can be illustrated by the situation in which the key elements representing opposing interests actually become interlocking concepts and driving forces for each other (*Fig. 3*).

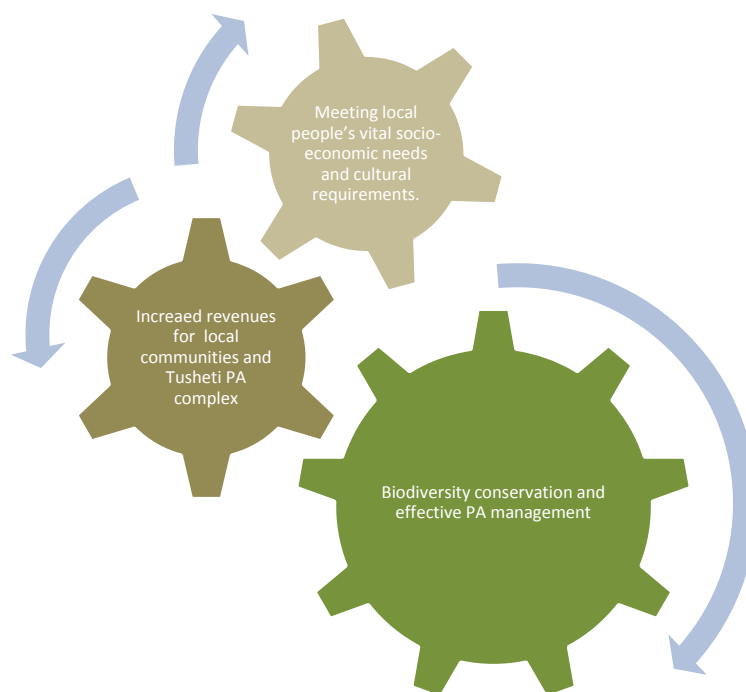


Fig. 3: Favourable situation where formerly opposing elements become driving forces for each other

The development of the reclassification plan for Tusheti PA complex will be based on the recognition of the following main concepts/criteria:

- Local communities legitimate rights for sustainable use of critical resources (fuel wood, pastures).
- Local people's cultural and traditional requirements (religious sites, traditional hunting, traditional farming, etc.)
- Energy supply needs (one of the biggest problems in Tusheti)
- Tourism development objectives.

The process will consider:

- (1) modification of the legal status of certain sections of the PA. this may involve changes between the categories (e.g. certain parts of the nature reserve to be amended to the status of national park or protected landscape or *vice versa*), and in between the various zones of the national park (e.g. increase of the Strict Protection zone of NP at the expense of other zones).
- (2) the possibility of introduction of new (for Tusheti) PA categories (e.g. creation of a managed reserve or other types of PA).

5. Annexes

Annex 1: Legal status and short description of Tusheti PA complex: Tusheti Nature Reserve, Tusheti National park and Tusheti Protected Landscape (from Tusheti PA Management Plan, 2008)

The Law of Georgia on the Creation and Management of the Tusheti, Batsara-Babaneuri, Lagodekhi, and Vashlovani Protected Territories ("Law on Creation", 2003) establishes Tusheti protected areas as a combination of a State Nature Reserve (strict reserve) with a National Park and a Protected Landscape. According to the principles of The Law of Georgia on the Protected Area System 1996 ("Framework Law") the territory of the National Park can be subdivided into functional zones. The management plan stipulates the set of functional zones, their borders and provides for rules and regulations in each of the zones. In TNP the following zones are being established: Wilderness Zone, Managed Protection zone, Traditional Use Zone, Recuperation Zone, Administration Zone, and Visitor Zone.

State Nature Reserve

Protection status according to IUCN protection category I. The State Nature Reserve is an insignificantly altered unique ecosystem. It is a valuable site from a point of view of scientific research.

Objective:

The reserve aims at preserving the integrity of self-regulating ecosystem, as well as to protect and study it scientifically.

Description - substantiation:

The initial reason for the establishment of Tusheti State Reserve in 1980 was to conserve unique pine (*Pinus kochiana*) and birch woods (*Betula litvinovii*, *B. raddeana*). These fragments of forest are also vitally important as habitats for rare animal species, as well as for their erosion-preventive and water regulating functions. The subalpine birch woods and Caucasian rhododendron shrubberies (*Rhododendron caucasica*) of this zone are believed to play a role in the prevention of landslides and erosion as well as protection against avalanches. In addition these plant species are endemic relics of the tertiary period.

The reserve is an important part of the ranges of many rare and endangered animal species. The following species should be noted: Caucasian Wild Goat (*Capra aegagrus*), Tur (*Capra cylindricornis*), Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*), Lynx (*Lynx lynx*), Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*), bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*), Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), etc. This territory is believed to be especially important as the area of distribution of Caucasian Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), its number being reduced to a few individuals in the whole Caucasus.

Regulation:

The following is prohibited in the Tusheti State Nature Reserve:

- Alteration of the ecosystem and its components;
- Any form of encroachment on renewable and especially on non-renewable resources whether for restoration, agricultural, recreation purposes or scientific research (damage, extraction, disturbance, including hunting, fishing, grazing of cattle, mowing, timber felling, admission and distribution of plants and animals);
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution, audio-visual disturbance);
- Admission and distribution of foreign or exotic living organisms;
- Admission of visitors for non-educational purpose;
- Bringing into the reserve of firearms, hunting and fishing tools or any other appliances;
- Staying of visitors within the protected areas, except places and time specially arranged for them (educational trails and designed places);
- Moving by motorized (car, helicopter) or any other type of transport (except horses);
- Construction of buildings, roads (save the Administration Zone);
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources and leasing it out (except the Department of Protected Areas defined by the law).

The following is permitted in the Tusheti State Nature Reserve:

- Scientific research;
- Admission of visitors with scientific and educational purpose; (contract should be signed in advance);
- Collection of biological data with scientific purpose is strictly controlled and requires a special permit of Department of Protected Areas;
- Any scientific research and obtaining of information should be conducted by permission and under control of the Park Administration;
- Arrangement of any constant or temporary constructions and signs requires a special permission of the Park Administration;
- Moving is permitted only on foot and horse on specially designed trails.
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control.

National Park

Protection status according to IUCN category II. The overall aim of the Tusheti National Park is to preserve the rich natural heritage and to develop eco-tourism, as well as to maintain sustainable

traditional economic activities and to implement the appropriate management regimes for the different zones of the park.

The following zones have been designated within the territory of the National Park:

- Wilderness zone (22,096 ha)
- Managed Protection zone (32,403 ha)
- Recuperation zone (2,376 ha)
- Traditional Use zone (19,129 ha)
- Visitor zone
- Administration zone

Wilderness Zone

The zone presents a self-regulating ecosystem, relatively less altered, with a retained natural shape and with excellent makings of eco-tourism and scientific study object.

Objective:

To preserve and protect the integrity of self-regulating ecosystem; to carry out scientific research; to develop eco-tourism for recreation purpose to a limited extent.

Description - substantiation:

The wilderness zone of TNP includes practically intact and well-preserved areas, namely tur habitats (Sajikhveebi), Caucasian rhododendron shrubberies and patches of pine forest. The protection regime as defined by law for the Wilderness zone is appropriate for the conservation of these natural areas.

Regulation:

Activities prohibited in the Zone:

- Any form of usage of renewable and especially non-renewable natural resources (violation, damage, extraction);
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution, audio-visual disturbance);
- Making fire and leaving of everyday rubbish;
- Movement by means of transport without approval of TNP administration;
- Admission of excessive number of visitors;
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources.

The following activities are permitted in the Zone:

- Scientific research can be carried out only after a relevant contract is signed between a contractor and the TNP administration (and DPA), which defines duties and responsibilities of both parties (see section 5.9);
- Collection of biological data with scientific purpose is strictly controlled and requires a special permit of protected areas administration;
- Visitors are admitted only when it does not go in conflict with law enforcement, research and monitoring programs. Visitors strictly follow designated trails and routes.
- Design of any constant or temporary constructions and signs requires a special permission of the Park Administration;;
- Travel is admitted only on foot or horse.

Managed Protection Zone

Explanation:

The zone represents the natural landscape degraded under the influence of anthropogenic factors (felling, hunting, excessive grazing). The zone will ensure sustainability of ecosystems through strictly regulated measures.

Objective:

The key objective of the zone is to protect/rehabilitate biodiversity through active management in parallel allowing regulated ecotourism as well as research and education activities.

Description - substantiation:

The zone includes areas of TNP in which active management measures are required for the conservation/maintenance of natural ecosystems and their components. For example, the Vebo area is the only part of TNP where red deer are occasionally sighted apparently entering from neighbouring Dagestan. Through adequate protection and certain measures red deer individuals may be encouraged to remain on the site and establish a population.

The narrow sections between the protected landscape and the wilderness zone of TNP will also serve as buffer areas for the wilderness zone.

Regulation:

The following is prohibited in the Managed Protection Zone:

- Alteration of the ecosystem and its components;
- Damage, extraction of natural resources, hunting, fishing, grazing of livestock, mowing, timber felling;
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution, audio-visual disturbance);
- Admission and distribution of foreign or exotic living organisms;

- Bringing into the reserve of hunting and fishing or any other appliances;
- Staying of visitors within the protected areas, except places and time specially arranged for them (educational trails and shelters and specially designed places);
- Admission of excessive number of visitors that could be harmful to the environment;
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources and leasing it out (except the Department of Protected Areas defined by the law).

The following is permitted in the Managed Protection Zone:

- Scientific research
- Activities that promote the restoration of degraded ecosystems and sustainable utilization of renewable resources;
- Any activity permitted in the zone shall be carried out with approval and under control of the administration of protected areas;
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control;
- Facilities constructed for carrying out the permitted activities shall harmonize with the environment;
- Moving is permitted on foot, by car (with approval of the administration), horse and non-motorized boat on specially designed trails and roads.

Recuperation Zone

The zone is dedicated to recuperation of natural ecosystem damaged and altered due to anthropogenic influence (e.g. rehabilitation of vegetative cover, soils, animal species).

Objective:

Major objective of the zone is to restrict human activities imposing danger of further degradation of the environment; to ensure recuperation of wildlife and other components of natural ecosystem under permanent monitoring of the process.

Description - substantiation:

Chigos Khevi is an important part of the wild goat range. Due to past grazing the area is to some extent degraded and currently only rarely used by wild goats. However, the area has a good potential for wild goat decolonisation from neighbouring areas.

Regulation:

The following activities are prohibited in the Recuperation Zone:

- Any activity that may cause/encourage further deterioration of the ecosystem and its components;

- Any form of encroachment on renewable and especially on non-renewable resources (damage, extraction, disturbance, including hunting, fishing, grazing of cattle, mowing, timber felling,);
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution; as well as audio-visual disturbance, except during the implementation of restoration programs);
- Admission and spread of non-native living organisms;
- Admission of visitors;
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources and leasing it out (except the Department of Protected Areas defined by the law).

The following activities are permitted in the Recuperation Zone:

- Construction of infrastructure/facilities envisaged by or to be used for the implementation of the management plan especially restoration/natural recovery programs.
- In comparison with artificial interference, natural regeneration is given priority, if such a possibility exists;
- Monitoring of recuperation process should be carried out;
- Manipulations necessary for restoration are permitted;
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control.

Traditional Use Zone

The zone is designed for meeting unchangeable economic interests of local population's by means of traditional use of nature resources.

Objective:

A major objective is controlled and sustainable utilization of renewable natural resources for meeting the economic interests of the local population, nature protection and monitoring provided.

Description - substantiation: the zone includes all sheep pastures located on the TNP.

Regulation:

The following is prohibited in the Traditional use Zone:

- Any form of usage of non-renewable natural resources (violation, damage, extraction);
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution);
- Admission and distribution of foreign or exotic living organisms;
- Admission and distribution of non-traditional breeds or crossing them with local kinds;

- Land cultivation and construction of nontraditional permanent structures related to agricultural activities;
- Movement by means of transport without approval of TNP administration;
- Admission of excessive number of visitors;
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources.

The following is permitted in the Traditional Use Zone:

- Development of programs to ensure sustainable use of natural resources, as appropriate;
- All kinds of resource utilization are managed and controlled by the TNP administration in accordance with the relevant programs;
- Only traditionally constructed and arranged artificial objects, being in harmony with the environment are admitted in the zone;
- Only activities historically tested in these areas are admitted;
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control.

Visitor Zone

The zone represents less damaged natural areas, where development of infrastructure connected with education and recreation activities is confined within the limits of providing optimal conditions for nature comprehension to visitor's benefit.

Objective:

To create conditions for comprehension of landscapes and natural sites by visitors without causing harm to the natural environment.

Description - substantiation: The zone covers a variety of natural and cultural heritage sites: scenic landscapes, diverse habitats including old growth pine forest, subalpine shrubbery, subalpine and alpine meadows, glaciers (the zone functionally also includes remarkable examples of Tushetian mountain architecture, churches, towers, functional and deserted villages, etc. that are located on the protected Landscape).

Regulation:

Activities prohibited in the zone:

- Encroachment of non-renewable natural resources (violation, damage, extraction);
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution, audio-visual disturbance);
- Making fire and leaving of everyday rubbish, save in places specially arranged for these purposes;

- Movement by means of transport without approval of TNP administration;
- Admission of excessive number of visitors;
- Collection-extraction of natural resources (flora, fauna, soil, etc.);
- Change of state property on the protected areas and natural resources.

Activities permitted in the zone:

- Arrangement of trails, shelters, sight-seeing platforms, resting places, bridges and roads integrated well with the landscape;
- Visitors are admitted only with education and recreation purposes to specially arranged places;
- Travel is admitted by car, on foot, astride, admitted is photo shooting and filming, visual observation without any disturbance for the resident flora and fauna.
- Night stay in shelters specially constructed for this purpose.
- An entrance-fee may be established, to be registered at the visitor centre.
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control.

Administrative Zone

The zone embraces areas and respective infrastructures, used by the administration for providing protection measures, services, control and security.

Objective:

To provide the necessary infrastructure for efficient protection and management of the reserve and national park.

Regulation:

- Selection of sites for the purposes of administration infrastructure is carried out with due regard for the safety of environment.
- Only design of constructions and sites, which harmonize with the natural environment are admitted.
- Implementation of measures necessary for fire control.

Tusheti Protected Landscape

Protection status according to IUCN protection category V. The Protected Landscape is a large natural or semi-natural area of high aesthetic value. This category of protected area is established to preserve outstanding natural and/or cultural landscapes for recreation and tourism, and for the maintenance of traditional economic activities.

Objective:

The protected landscape aims at preserving unique ecosystems as well as historical and cultural sites of Tusheti, to address increasing recreation/tourism in the region by encouraging relevant infrastructure, to maintain and develop traditional culture and arts, and to promote sustainable utilization of renewable natural resources and traditional farming. Tusheti Protected landscape will contribute to the improvement of living conditions of local people, create new sources of income (tourism, market for traditional handicrafts), encourage the maintenance of endemic breeds of domestic animals.

Description - substantiation:

Tusheti Protected Landscape abounds in unique high mountain architectural monuments, historical, cultural and religious sites. Combined with exceptional natural and semi-natural landscapes they form a remarkable example of natural-cultural landscape of high aesthetic value.

The architecture and cultural heritage of Tusheti includes: (i) human settlements, e.g. unique high mountain architectural complexes of deserted castle-villages (Chontio, Hegho, Dakiurta, Old Diklo, Tsaro, Mozarta, Indurta, Etelta), villages with old as well as more recent architecture (Dartlo, Docho, Shenako); (ii) churches and other religious sites (so called Jvar-Khatis, tomb-churches such as found at villages Dartlo, Gudaanta, Tsaro, churches (examples of more recent Christian architecture at villages Jvarboseli, Bochorna, Iliurta, Omalo, Shenako, Natsikhari, Dartlo, Parsma), (iii) defense structures, castles and towers, (iv) archeological sites such as ancient settlements (Nishtakos Gori at village Shenako), tombs (villages Hegho, Chigho, Alisgori, Tsaro).

The historically developed settlement system in the Pirikita Alazani gorge is of linear type (along the river), in the Gometsari Alazani gorge is of blind alley type (along the tributaries of the Alazani), while in the Tusheti depression it is of a mixed type.

Most of the protected landscape has been heavily modified by centuries of human activities. Nevertheless practically intact patches of subalpine birch forest and Caucasian rhododendron still persist providing critical habitat for the Caucasian Black Grouse. This vegetation is also important in respect of avalanche and erosion control. Many areas of the protected landscape are also important temporary or permanent habitats for the local wildlife including large mammals.

Sustainable use of pastures should not only ensure long term benefits to local sheep farmers but also contribute to the maintenance of viable wildlife populations, both on the protected landscape and the national park.

Regulation:

Activities prohibited on the protected landscape:

- Encroachment of non-renewable natural resources (violation, damage, extraction);

- Modification of cultural landscapes (i.e. all construction/reconstruction works must be carried out with due regard to the local traditional architectural style and only using traditional building materials).
- Pollution of environment (chemical, bacteriological, radioactive or any other kind of soil, water and air pollution, audio-visual disturbance);
- Distribution of non-native and exotic living organisms;
- Admission of excessive number of visitors;

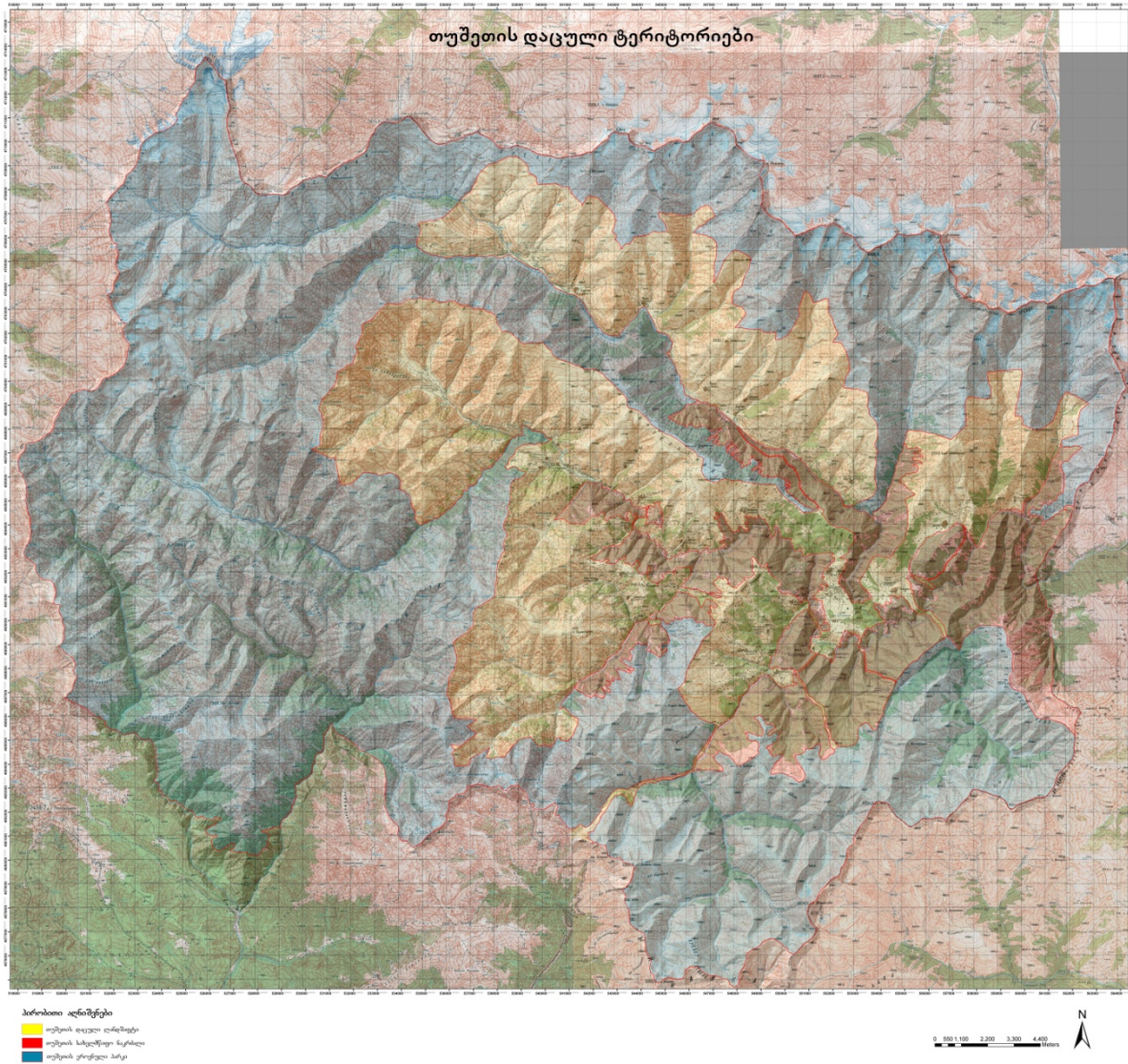
The following activities are permitted on the protected landscape:

- Activities aimed at the preservation and restoration of natural, historical and cultural heritage sites
- Scientific research and biodiversity monitoring
- Activities related to ecosystem conservation and the rehabilitation of fauna and flora species
- Recreation, tourism and educational activities
- Traditional forms of land use

Annex 2: Current spatial planning (boundaries) of Tusheti PA complex

(Map provided by APA)

[Legend: Blue - National Park; Red – Nature Reserve; Yellow – Protected landscape]



Annex 3: Report prepared by “Commission for the reclassification of certain sections of the Tusheti PA complex” (an extract)

Present situation:

There is no alternative source of energy (gas, electricity) in Tusheti and local villagers depend on the forest for fuel wood throughout the year especially during the severe and long winters typical of Tusheti. On average up to 12 sq. meters of fuel wood per person is needed for the winter season. On the other hand no resources may be extracted from nature reserve (NR).

Livestock farming is a major livelihood in Tusheti. During droughts some livestock has to be grazed in the forests near the villages due to absence of other alternatives. This is a violation of the protection regime too. Overall more than half of the total population use/depend on natural resources such as pastures, fuel wood, wild fruits and berries, etc. Therefore restrictions to the access to these resources naturally in local population's discontent and significantly complicates the protection of the sites.

Considering the above, changes in legal status (category) for certain sections of Tusheti Protected Areas is recommended. These changes would enable sustainable/traditional use of natural resources. The change of reserve regime on certain sites adjacent to the villages and downgrading them to national park's (NP) traditional use zone will resolve problems for local communities, which were actually caused by the establishment of Tusheti protected areas and introduction of certain corresponding limitations.

Part 1. Sections to be transferred from NR to NP

Total area: 2,507 ha

Chagma Gorge

1. Pine forest stands adjacent to villages ***Zemo Omalo*** and ***Kvemo Omalo*** and Tusheti protected areas administrative building: These sections include Tusheti PA complex administrative building and visitors' centre as well as some tourist infrastructure. Considering daminsitrtative and touris purposes of these areas they should be transferred to NP



Village Omalo



Tusheti PA administrative building

2. Village ***Shenako*** is surrounded by pine forest. There are about 60 households of which 3 remain there throughout the year. Most villagers have livestock that often have to be grazed in NR. There are also livestock trails crossing through the area. Certain small sections of the pine forests should be transferred to NP. There is also an abandoned village ***Ageurta*** with religious and cultural sites that also has tourist importance. These sites should also be removed from NR and included in NP.

3. Forests and meadows adjacent to ***village Diklo*** are included in NR. These areas are traditionally used by local communities for livestock grazing, hay, mushrooms and berries collection as well as for recreation. Certain sections of these areas should be moved to NP. There are 14-20 families in Diklo during summer; among these 6 families have 75-80 livestock. 2 families stay in winter. There are also 2 summer sheep farms near the village. The forest is typically pine rarely mixed with birch and poplar. Among red listed fauna there are wild goat, lynx, bear, etc. Other fauna include hare, wolf, marten, squirrel, etc.



Village Dikolo



4. Villages **Chero** and **Intsukhi** are located at the border with Dagestan (Russian Federation). The trail between these villages crosses through the NR forest. Therefore these sections should be transferred to NP. Village **Intsukhi** (106 ha) is located within NP and should be transferred to PL (Protected Landscape).

Pirikita Gorge

1. There are 65 families in village **Dartlo**, among them 5 are involved in livestock breeding, 1 remains over the winter and 8 have summer sheep farms.
2. There are 6 families in village **Kvavlo**, 1 has a livestock farm, 1 remains over the winter.
3. 35 families live in village **Dano**, 6 keep livestock, 1 remains in winter.

As from the above, local villagers are involved in livestock farming. The nearby sections of NR include livestock trails and pastures. A 300 m wide section of the reserve along the river Pirikita Alazani from the natural boundary to the Dartlo road (NR demarcation sign) should be transferred to NP.

The forest is typically pine in some areas there are also deciduous stands with birch including red list species such as Litvinov's birch, Rade's birch, also poplar, high mountain maple, etc. Local fauna includes red deer, roe deer, lynx, bear, etc.

4. The **Atsunta trail** (to Khevsureti) should be transferred to NP since this is a frequently used trail for livestock movement and also a popular tourist trail.

Gometsari Gorge

1. Villages **Iliurta**, **Bukhurta** and **Vestomta**.
10-12 families live in village **Iliurta** in summer, 2 in **Bukhurta** and 3 in **Vestomta**. Most of the local villagers keep livestock. The nearby forests are within NR and no livestock grazing, hay and fuel wood collection is allowed. There are 2 summer sheep farms just above village **Vestomta**. The trail between the three villages crosses through the reserve. There are also a religious site (Kasmuri) and Kasmuri castle in this section of NR. The local communities have annual village festivals at these sites.

In order to allow the above traditional activities and sustainable use of natural resources the forest and meadows near *Iliurta, Bukhurta, Vestomtá and Goglurta* should be transferred to NP (Sections #14 and 15 of NR).

The road to village *Iliurta* is also included in NR. This road is frequently used by people and needs to be maintained annually that involves heavy machinery. Therefore the section can not qualify for NR and should be transferred to PL.

The forest habitat is typically pine. There is also birch and poplar, high mountain maple, etc. Local fauna includes red deer, roe deer, wolf, lynx, bear, etc.

There are also a number of tourist trails that also violates NR regime.



Villages Iliurta and Bukhurta

Chanchakhovani Gorge

1. Villages ***Kumelaurta, Tsokalta, Khiso and Chala***. 10 families live in village Kumelaurta, 4 in village Tsokalta, 10-15 in Khiso, 8 in village Chala; there are 4 summer sheep farms above villages Tsokalta and Kumelaurta and 3 farms at Khiso. The nearby forests are within NR. There is also a religious site *Chikhale* where the annual festival “*Atnigenoba*” is held. At village Chala (protected landscape adjacent to the reserve) small hydro power facilities are being built with the support of the World Bank. The construction of these facilities would effect the reserve.

However due to its significance and the above reasons the forest areas near *Kumelaurta*, *Tsokalta*, *Khiso* and *Chala* should be transferred to NP.



Hydro power facility construction site



Villages Kumelaurta, Tsokalta

2. There are 2 summer sheep farms and a ranger station along the river ***Nakhidura*** (Samkhevi). There is also a road used for livestock movement from Kakheti to Tuseti and a livestock resting site near *Urtsikhe*.

The forest habitat is typically pine and birch. Local fauna includes wild goat, roe deer, lynx, etc. There is also the remains of a Soviet period power line.

Due to the above mentioned this section does not qualify for NR should be transferred to NP.

Part 2. Sections to be transferred from NR to PL

Total area: 92 ha

1. The Diklo village cemetery and its immediate surroundings should be transferred to PL.
2. NR sections at villages Dochu and Beghela were included into NR by mistake in 2005. These areas have always been used by locals for various purposes. The forest is composed by pine and birch and there are also small stands of poplar. Local fauna includes wolf, red fox, bear, hare, etc.
3. Village Khakhabo is surrounded by NR forests. This village is located on the left of the river Chachakhovnis Alazani. The religious and annual festival site “Kerelovani” of this village is also on NR. These areas should be moved into PL.

4. There is a building owned by Tushetian sheep breeding company near Zemo Omalo and Kvemo Omalo and Tusheti PA administrative building. The small section of NR on which this building is situated should be moved to PL.
5. Meadows near village Goglurta should be transferred to PL.
6. There are 3 families engaged in livestock farming in village Vakisdziri, the Gometsari gorge. There is a summer sheep farm near the village too.
The local villagers have problems with the use of NR pastures and hay meadows as well as forest for firewood.
The NR sections adjacent to this village should be moved to PL.

The Commission also considers appropriate to transfer 4,368 ha Speroza section of the NP's Strict Protection zone be transferred to NR.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Commission recommends the following:

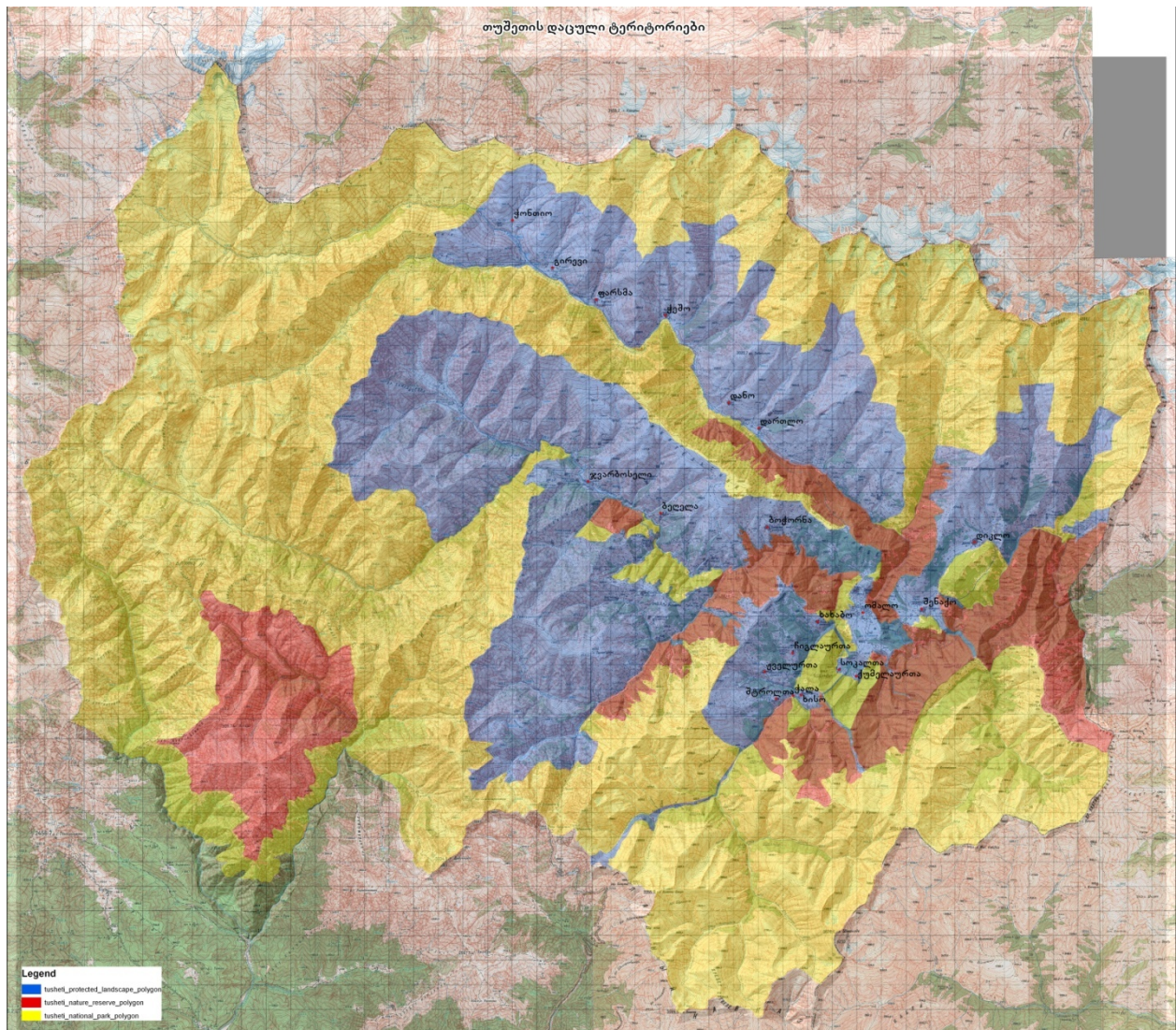
Considering social and economic needs of the local communities, the need of ensuring sustainable use of natural resources, and that of sustainable tourism development and in order to ensure effective conservation and management measures, (1) 2,507 ha of NR should be transferred to NP and 92 ha of NR should be moved to PL with total area of 2,599 ha to be removed from NR, (2) 106 ha of NP to be transferred to PL and (3) 4,368 ha of NP's Strict Protection zone should be transferred to NR.

PA category	Present size	Proposed size
Tusheti NR	10 858,2 ha	12 627 ha
Tusheti NP	71 482 ha	69 515 ha
Tusheti PL	31 320 ha	31 518 ha
Total	113 660,2 ha	113 660,2 ha

New zoning proposed by “Commission for the reclassification of certain sections of the Tusheti PA complex”

Map prepared by the Commission

[Legend: Blue – Protected landscape; Red – Nature Reserve; Yellow – National Park]



Annex 4: Summary of interviews and meetings

Record of Interviews

Friday 11 June, 2010

Telephone interview with Anzor Gogotidze, Director Tusheti PA complex (877 92 11 33)

Problems with the current zoning of Tusheti PA complex were encountered very soon after the PA administration was established and relevant protection regime had to be enforced.

The Tusheti PA administration reported about the problems and requested initiation of discussions on reclassification in 2006.

In 2008 a relevant commission was established at APA that prepared report with concrete recommendations for reclassifying certain sections of the nature reserve to accommodate local people's legitimate needs.

Monday 14 June, 2010

NACRES office, Tbilisi

Meeting with Anzor Gogotidze, Director Tusheti PA complex.

Reviews for reclassification should be conducted once in a five-year period.

The main challenge facing Georgia's PAs is how to ensure ecosystem integrity and time local socio-economic development at the same.

Tusheti PA administration's experience has shown that site protection can not be ensured relying only on law enforcement. Local communities need to be persuaded to join in and cooperate. This can only be achieved through:

1. Education programmes for local communities
2. Support to traditional activities that are based on sustainable use principles
3. Development of sustainable tourism as an alternative source of income (special emphasis on its multiplier effect)

Anzor also thinks that new PA categories should be considered for Tusheti including *biosphere reserve* and *managed reserve* in which sustainable hunting may be allowed, and the role of nature reserve should also be reconsidered as properly planned national park and other PA categories may be sufficient for ensuring long-term conservation objectives.

Tuesday 15 June, 2010

Working session at APA head office

List of participants:

- Lasha Moistsrapishvili, Deputy Head, APA
- Tea Barbakadze, Head of Division of Planning, APA
- Lali Tevzadze, Head of Development Division, APA
- Khatuna Tsiklauri, Senior Specialist, Development Division, APA
- Avtandil Mikaberidze, Senior Specialist, Development Division, APA
- Giorgi Chkheidze, Assistant Team Leader, NACRES
- Irakli Shavgulidze, Director of NACRES

Giorgi Chkheidze presented the aims of the reclassification assessment document and distributed the draft outline.

Irakli Shavgulidze asked if the Agency had already initiated the legal procedure with the Ministry of Justice and consequently with the Parliament of Georgia to introduce changes to the existing zoning of the Tusheti PA complex.

Lasha Moistsrapishvili clarified that although the relevant commission had prepared report for reclassification APA had decided to delay the legal procedure and wait for the more comprehensive reclassification plan to be prepared within the upcoming UNDP project.

When discussing the main criteria to be looked at during the reclassification planning process Lasha Moistsrapishvili proposed that the views and needs of the local communities need to be fully considered and incorporated.

Other important factors also named by the participant included: use of pasture and fuel wood by local communities, tourism development needs and energy supply needs (the construction of a number of small hydropower facilities are being planned in Tusheti).

The participants agreed that the reclassification plan should not limit itself to reclassifying existing PA categories but the option of introduction of a new PA category (e.g. *managed reserve*) should also be considered.

Avtandil Mikaberidze raised the issue that most visitors do not actually go into NP; most of the tourist activities are confined to the Protected landscape. He also thinks options should be considered for the expansion of Tusheti PA complex toward the south to incorporate existing Batsara-Babaneuri PA complex.