

Applicability of Results from the Protected Area Benefit Assessment Tool (PA-BAT) to Protected Area Management in Croatia – The Example of Paklenica National Park

Transfer project in the framework of the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

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Executive Summary

The Protected Area Benefit Assessment Tool (PA-BAT) (Dudley & Stolton, 2009) is a methodology used to identify the full range of current legal and future socio-economic benefits of individual protected areas (PAs), including PA management challenges, gathered through facilitated, inclusive, **participatory stakeholder workshops**. A PA-BAT assessment was conducted by WWF in the 58 PAs of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo¹, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) with more than 1,250 local stakeholders (WWF MedPO, 2014)

The aim of the PA-BAT is to:

- generate knowledge and incentivise changes in the way that PA managers and stakeholders understand, use and develop the environmental, cultural, social and economic services that PAs provide,
- inform the national and regional decision makers supporting PAs in order to promote sustainable development and wise usage of natural resources.

Within the framework of the PA-BAT, 22 values were assessed and they were organised around nine main groups: nature conservation, protected area management, food, water, culture, health and recreation, knowledge, environmental services, and materials.

In the last three years, WWF has assessed PAs values and benefits using the PA-BAT in 18 PAs in Croatia (WWF Adria, 2016). The process itself enables stakeholders to understand the role, values, benefits and potentials of PAs, provide networking opportunities and direct contacts with the PA management. The assessment is also practical for identification of the main challenges and obstacles in PA management. The PA-BAT workshops are also collecting stories, making alliances and discussing issues/problems.

One of the main conclusions from the PA-BAT analyses in the Western Balkans and in Paklenica National Park (NP) is that certain stakeholder groups (local community, CSO) are not included in the PA management, especially in the development or revision of management plans. Therefore, these stakeholders are not able to directly influence decision-

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the IJC opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

making and, in particular, resource management. These stakeholders also lack knowledge on the full set of the PA values and ecosystem services that these PAs provide.

This is why the main objectives of the project are:

- to prepare **PA-BAT analysis** according to the data gathered in the PA-BAT workshop in NP Paklenica in April 2013
- to **develop recommendations for the Paklenica NP management plan according to the PA-BAT analysis** and,
- **to adapt existing guidance documents** on the PA-BAT application into management plans **to Croatian conditions**

The management plan of Paklenica NP is undergoing revision in 2017 and the results of this transfer project will be used by the PA management authority during the revision process. The guidance document, as well as recommendations for the Paklenica NP management plan, will be used by the Croatian Agency for Environment and Nature (CAEN).

Having in mind that many PAs in the Western Balkans do not have management plans, the PA-BAT could be a useful tool for engagement of stakeholders in the process of developing the management plan, especially in the early phase of identifying values and threats to the areas. Based on the experience with the first application of the PA-BAT tool at the local level (NP Paklenica), there is a real possibility of replicating the approach across the 17 assessed PAs in Croatia, as well as in seven other countries (40 PAs) of the Western Balkans, where the assessment has been conducted with help of WWF Adria and Parks Dinarides Association (a network of PAs in Dinaric Arc).