Introducing the World Database on Ecological Corridors

This document introduces the prototype World Database on Ecological Corridors (WDEC) and briefly outlines the pilot testing process currently underway. It is aimed at national governments and other stakeholders that may be interested in learning more about the database or engaging in the pilot testing.

What is the WDEC and why is it needed?

Habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation represent major drivers of biodiversity decline globally, but cascading impacts can be avoided and mitigated by conserving ecological connectivity. Improvements in ecological connectivity – or "the unimpeded movement of species, connection of habitats without hindrance and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth"[1] - can be achieved by establishing, recognising, and managing ecological corridors. Ecological corridors are defined by IUCN as: "clearly defined geographical spaces that are governed and managed over the long term to maintain or restore effective ecological connectivity" (IUCN, 2020).

The World Database on Ecological Corridors (WDEC) aims to track the location and characteristics of ecological corridors globally. A prototype of the database has been developed by UNEP-WCMC in collaboration with the members of the IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group[2], and it is now ready to be pilot tested with a few pioneering countries.

A comprehensive WDEC will improve understanding of the current state of ecological connectivity globally, enabling the identification of gaps and the effective targeting of new conservation measures. In this way, it will inform the design of resilient ecological networks of protected and conserved areas. Furthermore, by reporting data on ecological corridors to the database, governments will benefit from increased global recognition of their efforts to enhance connectivity, which may help drive regional and global ambition. The vision for the WDEC is that data will be public and accessible to all, supporting scientific research from local to global scales, as well as better informing public and private sector activities and spatial planning processes. It is hoped that the database will ultimately be integrated into monitoring systems for connectivity-related commitments globally.

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[1] CMS (2024) Ecological Connectivity, UNEP/CMS/Resolution 14.16. https://www.cms.int/sites/default/files/document/cms_cop14_res.14.16_ecological-connectivity_e.pdf).

[2] The IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation Specialist Group includes representatives from the Center for Large Landscape Conservation (CLLC), Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), UNEP-WCMC, and over 1200 other individual experts.

What are we currently doing?

An early version of the database has been developed, and UNEP-WCMC and its partners are now working with state actors from several countries to test and adapt its design and usability in response to feedback.

Key activities include:

- Collating basic information on ecological corridors, including spatial data (polygons) and associated attribute data[3], to be entered into the prototype WDEC.
- Collecting feedback from the individuals and organisations involved in pilot testing on the database design, user needs, data collection and reporting processes.
- Adjusting the design and protocols of the WDEC in response to feedback to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.

We're interested in expanding our pilot testing to include more countries.

Who to contact?

For further information on the WDEC or if you are a representative of a national government interested in pilot testing the new database, please contact:

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[3] Attribute data include features such as the name of the corridor, year of establishment, ecological objectives, governance type, and management authorities.