IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment 2017 **(archived)**
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Darién National Park

SITE INFORMATION

Country:
Panama
Inscribed in: 1981
Criteria:
(vii) (ix) (x)

Site description:
Forming a bridge between the two continents of the New World, Darien National Park contains an exceptional variety of habitats – sandy beaches, rocky coasts, mangroves, swamps, and lowland and upland tropical forests containing remarkable wildlife. Two Indian tribes live in the park. © UNESCO

SUMMARY

2017 Conservation Outlook

Significant concern

Darién National Park continues to be one of the largest and most important protected areas and contiguous forest blocks in the sub-region. The conservation values are extraordinary in terms of the biogeographic position and biodiversity at all levels and the high degree of endemism across numerous taxonomic groups. The establishment of such a large park in a relatively small country, the explicit exclusion of mining, a specific fund dedicated to the property, its contiguity with another World Heritage property in Colombia are all encouraging elements of the history of the property. At the same time, the property has been facing strong and increasing threats, both from the outside and in terms of its governance and management. Large tracts of the surrounding landscape in both Panama and Colombia have been subject to high rates of forest loss and degradation. The agricultural frontier has much advanced and, while the property has undoubtedly contributed to halting or at least slowing the advance, it is not immune to it. Inside the property, indigenous peoples and other local communities run the risk of overusing the natural resources and there are economic incentives to be involved in illegal resource extraction and illicit trade. The management response has not been adequate to resolve the dilemma, leaving a grey area in terms of rights and duties of the inhabitants of the national park. The major overarching concerns are the anticipated effects of climate change and the more tangible threats of possible infrastructure development, namely in the form of the expansion of the Pan-American Highway and a proposed power transmission corridor. While both projects do not appear to be imminent, are politically sensitive and would face major challenges, both may still eventually materialize. In all likelihood, major infrastructure would result in fundamental changes to the entire bi-national Darién Gap region. The improving security situation in Colombia is widely considered to be present opportunities for consolidating the coordination and cooperation between the two contiguous World Heritage properties in Panama and Colombia, respectively – perhaps with the eventual formalization of a transboundary World Heritage property as

originally intended decades ago.

Current state and trend of VALUES

High Concern
Trend: Deteriorating

The property continues to be a major conservation gem in the Mesoamerican subregion, not only as one of the largest protected areas and contiguous blocks of forest, but also due to its exceptional biogeographic position and ongoing role at the meeting point of the Americas. The fact that mineral extraction was excluded by Presidential Decree early on and the absence of major road infrastructure to this day have prevented the intensity of human pressure known from the majority of protected areas in the subregion. The property is also privileged through a longstanding fund dedicated exclusively to Darién National Park. Nevertheless, the still extraordinary nature conservation values, and in particular the biodiversity values, have been suffering from a mix of pressures caused by a growing population, an advancing agricultural frontier and uncontrolled resource use. While collection of wild biodiversity, hunting and poaching are fundamental parts of local livelihood systems, its uncontrolled and excessive use threatens many conservation values while also casting shadows over the future productivity and use options. Despite important management efforts there continues to be a lack of conceptual clarity about the governance and management of natural resource use in a park that has been inhabited and used at all times.

Overall THREATS

Very High Threat

The combination of permanent pressure from conversion of forests and overuse of wild biodiversity is advancing. The agricultural frontier drives ecosystem degradation, but there are many other, more subtle pressures. While not imminent and facing political complexity and many other challenges, any major infrastructure project, such as the expansion of the Pan-American Highway and power transmission corridors would in all likelihood result in fundamental changes to the entire bi-national Darién Gap region.

Overall PROTECTION and MANAGEMENT

Some Concern

The threats and the challenges in addressing them in Darién National Park are well-known in the sub-region. Due to the size, remoteness and minimal infrastructure, the management is in a comparatively privileged position. While considerable progress has been made over time and the property has received substantial and ongoing external support, protection and management are not compatible with the challenges. Human and financial resources are scarce despite the noteworthy establishment of a fund, while capacity development leaves room for improvement. Factors beyond control of the government include the border setting. Recent improvements of the security situation in neighboring Colombia imply a promising point in time to enhance coordination and cooperation. One fundamental, insufficiently addressed question mark is the presence of communities inside the national park. While the presence as such cannot and should not be challenged, there continues to be lack of a clear governance and management approach in terms of the role, rights and duties of indigenous peoples and local communities (ANAM et al., 2007).

FULL ASSESSMENT

Description of values

Values

World Heritage values

► **Scenic beauty of natural landscape patterns and geomorphological features**
Criterion:(vii)

Darién National Park, one of the most diverse landscapes of Central America featuring remote and unspolied coasts and coastal plains, hills and high mountain chains, several types of tropical forests, wetlands, mangroves and important rivers, such as Tuira, Chucunaque, Jaque, Sambú and Balsas. The landforms of the Darien Gap were influenced by fluctuations in the sea level related to climate changes and glaciations during the Pleistocene period (World Heritage Committee, 2014).

► **Biological bridge between North and South America**
Criterion:(ix)

Biogeographically speaking, the location at the southernmost end of the geologically young land bridge connecting South America and Central America is a unique, ecologically and scientifically fascinating setting. Following earlier separation, the formation of a land bridge connecting the Americas has resulted in ongoing ecological exchange between North and South America (State Party of Panama, 1981). Darién National Park is within the area of first contact and interchange between two major, previously isolated landmasses, which is reflected in its biodiversity. The property is within the Southern limit of Mesoamerican elements of flora and fauna while also being influenced by elements of South American rainforests, a link

between Central and South America all the way to the Amazon. The property contains the most extensive lowland tropical forest on the Pacific coast of Central America, permitting the conservation and continuation of ecological and evolutionary processes at a large scale. The uninterrupted altitudinal transition of different forest types from the coastal lowlands to the mountains allows the migration, of many species, an increasingly rare large-scale setting and interaction between different ecosystems which contributes to resilience in the face of anticipated climate change (World Heritage Committee, 2014).

► **Exceptional biological diversity and high degree of endemism**
Criterion:(x)

The Darién Gap, where the property and its Colombian neighbor Los Katíos National Park and World Heritage property are located, The forests and wetlands are home to more than 40 endemic plants. The property is large enough for the continuation of evolutionary processes. Unlike in smaller, more or less isolated forest patches of the Central American subregion, the prospects for conserving viable populations of species requiring large ranges are good due to the large scale of the property. Biota Panama (2007) noted 168 mammals species in the property. Noteworthy species include top preators, such as the near-threatened jaguar (Panthera onca), puma (Puma concolor, LC) and the likewise near-threatened harpy eagle (Harpia harpyja). Other large mammals include the endangered Baird’s tapir (Tapirus bairdii), the vulnerable white-lipped peccary (Tayassu pecari) and collared peccary (Pecari tajacu, LC). The degree of endemism is high for both vertebrates and invertebrates and includes even mammals, for example the Darien pocket gopher (Orthogeomys dariensis, LC) (World Heritage Committee, 2013, UNEP-WCMC, 2011). The bird diversity epitomizes the extraordinary biological wealth: Darién National Park itself is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA), bringing together most of the species of two Endemic Bird Areas (EBA, see BirdLife, 2017a,b,c).

Other important biodiversity values

► **Karst forms**

The property boasts noteworthy karst features (Kueny et al., 2002).

Assessment information

Threats

Current Threats

High Threat

There is external demand for natural resources which - jointly with the livelihood needs of a growing population in and near the property - increases the pressure on the national park and its exceptional conservation values. Loss and degradation of forests for agriculture, ranching, timber extraction, as well as unsustainable use of wild biodiversity put strong and increasing pressure on the property.

▶ **Temperature extremes**

High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Climate change is an overarching concern. Reporting from neighboring Los Katíos National Park on the Colombian side of the Darién Gap suggests that the region has already been negatively impacted by increasingly frequent and severe extreme weather events (State Party of Colombia, 2016).

▶ **Logging/ Wood Harvesting, Fishing / Harvesting Aquatic Resources, Livestock Farming / Grazing, Poaching**

Very High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

While the exact current status is beyond the scope of this assessment, there is consistent documentation of expanding and poorly planned and controlled land and resource in and around the property (BirdLife International, 2017c;

World Heritage Committee, 2013; UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2008 and 2007). Ever-expanding cattle ranching, swidden agriculture, logging, fishing and hunting inside and outside the property have direct and indirect effects on the ecosystems and conservation values.

► **Logging/ Wood Harvesting, Fishing / Harvesting Aquatic Resources, Livestock Farming / Grazing, Poaching**

Very High Threat
Inside site, widespread(15-50%)
Outside site

Directly related to the above, indigenous peoples and local communities inside and outside the property depend on a wide range of agriculture, livestock husbandry and use of wild biodiversity. While such use is legitimate per se, there are strong concern about the sustainability of such use in its current form (BirdLife International, 2017c; World Heritage Committee, 2013; UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2008 and 2007). As is common in comparable settings, it is often difficult to draw a line between subsistence and commercial activities.

► **Changes in traditional ways of life and knowledge systems, Identity/ Social Cohesion/ Changes in local population and community**

High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

As elsewhere in the region, indigenous livelihood systems have been subject to external pressure for a long time and, in the case of Darién National Park, suffer from the effects of security issues related to the longstanding conflict in nearby Colombia (Trab Nielsen, 2006; Daniels, 2002).

Potential Threats

High Threat

While not imminent and politically sensitive at the national and bi-lateral levels (Girot, 2002), both the possible expansion of the Pan-American Highway and a proposed power transmission corridor between Colombia and Panama through the Darién Gap pose high direct and indirect threats to the property. The overarching concerns about the anticipated effects of climate change add

further urgency to the need to conserve the vast forest ecosystems as both an adaptation measure and a contribution to mitigation.

► Roads/ Railroads

High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Completion of the missing link of the Pan-American Highway between Colombia and Panama has been debated for decades, raising well documented concern for both Darién and Los Katíos National Parks (Covich, 2015; UNEP-WCMC, 2011, ANAM, 2007; Suman, 2007; Nelson et al., 2004). While opening up Los Katiós National Park in Colombia would face challenges at the level of the Constitution (State Party of Colombia, 2016), the situation is less clear in Panama. The property in Panama is much larger than Los Katiós National Park and, jointly with indigenous lands on the Atlantic coast extends from coast to coast of the narrow isthmus. In other words, any route of the Pan-American Highway in the Panamanian part of the Darién Gap would either have to cross the property or indigenous lands. The project is politically complex in both involved countries and even more complex at the bi-national and broader international level and not actively being promoted at this stage. Nevertheless, due to fundamental change it would bring to the still vast roadless areas of the Darién Gap it is ranked as a high threat.

► Utility / Service Lines

High Threat
Inside site, extent of threat not known
Outside site

Known as the “Inteconexion Electrica” in Panama and Colombia (ICP), power transmission infrastructure connecting Colombian energy supply to Panama has been discussed for years. There are major concerns about direct and indirect environmental impacts the project could cause in both the property and Los Katíos National Park in Colombia. Comparable to the proposed extension of the Pan-American Highway, the project is politically very complex and would face challenges at various levels. In Panama, the infrastructure would inevitably have to cross either the property or indigenous lands. At this stage a definitive route has not been decided and the project development does not appear to be advancing. Nevertheless, and

for the same reasons as above, the project is a ranked as a high potential threats due to the major change it might bring to hitherto almost inaccessible areas (Jaeger, 2015).

Protection and management

Assessing Protection and Management

► Relationships with local people

Some Concern

A Park Management Committee, several community outreach projects, and environmental education all serve to develop sound working relationships with local stakeholders and rights-holders. The common dilemma between formal conservation objectives and local livelihoods remains largely unresolved. Current mechanisms to enable indigenous peoples and local communities to take part in decision-making regarding park management are in their infancy (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2008, 2007, 2006).

► Legal framework

Mostly Effective

The national park was established by Executive Decree in 1980. International recognition as a World Heritage property (1981) and the slightly larger biosphere reserve (1983) add important layers of protection and visibility. Martin et al. (2003) reported the legal framework as such to be excellent. The same source points out a Presidential Decree to eliminate mineral extraction from the national park.

► Enforcement

Some Concern

Law enforcement is unable to adequately respond to uncontrolled and unsustainable resource use (UNEP-WCMC, 2011).

► Integration into regional and national planning systems

Some Concern

The area is comparatively well integrated into provincial and national layers of planning, including the National Protected Area System (SINAP). It is also important to recall that the national park boundaries partially coincide with an international border, which is why the national park is also considered by other national strategic planning (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007; Trab Nielsen, 2006). The international border to Colombia to the East implies limited coordination despite the Darien Gap being one coherent system shared by two countries.

► Management system

Some Concern

Building upon the first management plans in the late 1980s, management is guided by a overarching management plans and Annual Operations Plans. However, information is inadequate to guide management decisions with respect to critical ecosystems, species, and cultural values. The Park has an administrative office in El Real de Santa María and four ranger stations. The rangers are provided with training and basic equipment for protection and the enforcement of regulations. Temporarily, security concerns compromised the effectiveness and even the presence of management (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2008 and 2007; Trab Nielsen, 2006). Once more, the border setting deserves to mentioned, as it adds complexity to the management system, which is in essence interrupted at the border from an ecosystem management perspective.

► Management effectiveness

Some Concern

While the property is in a better position in the country and region, human and financial resources are insufficient to implement the management plan. An evaluation of management effectiveness carried out in 2007 suggests roughly 50% compliance against the management plan (ANAM et al., 2007).

► Implementation of Committee decisions and recommendations

Data Deficient

The proposals for Minor Boundary Modifications were twice referred (World Heritage Committee, 2015 and 2014) following technical recommendations

(IUCN, 2015 and 2014). Both World Heritage Committee decisions encourage follow-up while also encouraging enhance cooperation with Colombia. The current status of follow-up is not known, follow-up on both issues is highly encouraged.

► Boundaries

Some Concern

Due to the sheer size and remoteness of the property the boundary configuration is somewhat secondary compared to most other protected areas in the Central American subregion. While recent efforts to propose a formal Minor Boundary Modification (State Party of Panama, 2015 and 2014) have not yet been met with approval, they indicate the governmental readiness to re-visit the boundaries more than 35 years after the creation of the national park. As noted in other sections, part of the Darien National Park boundary borders coincides with the Colombian and the boundary of the much smaller Los Katíos National Park in Colombia (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007; TNC, n.d.). While the meeting of the two national parks and World Heritage properties results in mutual de facto buffering in that area, the property is vulnerable to land use changes along the much longer boundary with Colombia which does not coincide with protected areas in the neighboring country.

► Sustainable finance

Some Concern

Darién National Park is a privileged high profile protected areas benefitting from a special Conservation Trust Fund established through a debt-for-nature swap between Panama and the United States of America and considerable addition external support (ANAM et al., 2008). While some have suggested that the level of finance may still be inadequate in light of the scale of both the park and the threats it is facing (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; Trab Nielsen, 2006) funding does not appear to constitute a main bottleneck.

► Staff training and development

Data Deficient

Capacity-development is facilitated via the Darien Fund (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007). ANAM et al. (2012) establish ambitious objectives in this

regard. However, no systematic information on compliance appears to be available.

► Sustainable use

Serious Concern

Overall, the uncontrolled use of natural resources by native communities and colonists is the major challenge for Park management. Programs, financed by the Darien Conservation Fund, are being developed to work with local communities to achieve sustainable use of local resources. However, In 2009, only 6 of the 33 communities in the Park were benefitting from the program. (Vergara, 2009; ANAM, 2007)

► Education and interpretation programs

Data Deficient

Environmental education programmes are in place, but are "not well planned and sporadic" (IUCN, 2014). An environmental education centre was established at El Real and radio programs and programes for students and volunteers (UNEP-WCMC, 2001; ANAM et al. 2008 and 2007). The exact status is beyond the scope of this assessment.

► Tourism and visitation management

Some Concern

A low level of ecotourism, especially highly specialized bird watching, is provided by mostly private tour operators (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007). Development of sustainable tourism initiatives is hindered by the remoteness and poor infrastructure, as well as the perception of security challenges in the Darien Gap region.

► Monitoring

Some Concern

A monitoring system has been developed for the national park, but is not systematically being used to inform decision-making and management. While there are selected monitoring projects, for example of the avifauna in some areas the current situation does not amount to a coherent approach and

effort (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2008 and 2007).

▶ Research

Some Concern

The enormous scientific potential of the property is undisputed but remains to be systematically realized (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007). Reasons include the remoteness and poor infrastructure which, however, adds to the attractiveness of the area for ecosystem research on the other hand. It can reasonably be assumed that perceived and actual security concerns have contributed to the relative paucity of systematic research.

Overall assessment of protection and management

Some Concern

The threats and the challenges in addressing them in Darién National Park are well-known in the sub-region. Due to the size, remoteness and minimal infrastructure, the management is in a comparatively privileged position. While considerable progress has been made over time and the property has received substantial and ongoing external support, protection and management are not compatible with the challenges. Human and financial resources are scarce despite the noteworthy establishment of a fund, while capacity development leaves room for improvement. Factors beyond control of the government include the border setting. Recent improvements of the security situation in neighboring Colombia imply a promising point in time to enhance coordination and cooperation. One fundamental, insufficiently addressed question mark is the presence of communities inside the national park. While the presence as such cannot and should not be challenged, there continues to be lack of a clear governance and management approach in terms of the role, rights and duties of indigenous peoples and local communities (ANAM et al., 2007).

▶ Assessment of the effectiveness of protection and management in addressing threats outside the site

Some Concern

Park management is struggling to address the most urgent management needs inside the national park and is thus in no position to influence external threats, besides the absence of a direct mandate. The size, location and

limited infrastructure of the property all contribute to a comparatively low vulnerability of the property to edge effects. Due to the border setting, the property is exposed to developments beyond national control. Some of the environmental and social effects of the longstanding conflict in Colombia swept the border (Trab Nielsen, 2006). Despite considerable improvements, there continue to be concerns about the security situation and its possible volatility. Somewhat paradoxically, the improved security situation in Colombia might lead to new land use pressures near the border.

► **Best practice examples**

The president of Panama decreed the elimination of mining activities within Darien National Park, a change promoted by national non-governmental organization ANCON (Martin et al., 2003).

State and trend of values

Assessing the current state and trend of values

World Heritage values

► **Scenic beauty of natural landscape patterns and geomorphological features**

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

While the geomorphological particularities of the national park are not threatened by human activities, the scenic beauty is starting to be affected by increasing human resource use, resulting in visible loss and degradation of forests in some parts of the property (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007).

► **Biological bridge between North and South America**

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

The function of the property as the largest protected area with a comparatively high degree of naturalness within the meeting point of the

previously separate fauna and flora of North and South America is compromised by the same mix of factors listed above (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2007; Trab Nielsen, 2006). A broader concern beyond individual protected areas is that both Darién and Los Katiós National Park are increasingly isolated in a landscape suffering loss and degradation of its forest and other ecosystems.

► Exceptional biological diversity and high degree of endemism

High Concern
Trend:Deteriorating

Uncontrolled natural resource use by communities and a growing human population in and around the property are exercising increasing pressure which results in degradation of natural habitats. This in turn threatens many of the species, many of which are under additional pressure from hunting, poaching and trade in wildlife and wild plant. Combined with the overarching scenario of climate change the still exceptional biodiversity of the property is deteriorating and raising high concerns (Birdlife International, 2017; UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al. 2007; Trab Nielsen, 2006).

Summary of the Values

► Assessment of the current state and trend of World Heritage values

High Concern

Trend: Deteriorating

The property continues to be a major conservation gem in the Mesoamerican subregion, not only as one of the largest protected areas and contiguous blocks of forest, but also due to its exceptional biogeographic position and ongoing role at the meeting point of the Americas. The fact that mineral extraction was excluded by Presidential Decree early on and the absence of major road infrastructure to this day have prevented the intensity of human pressure known from the majority of protected areas in the subregion. The property is also privileged through a longstanding fund dedicated exclusively to Darién National Park. Nevertheless, the still extraordinary nature conservation values, and in particular the biodiversity values, have been suffering from a mix of pressures caused by a growing population, an advancing agricultural frontier and uncontrolled resource use. While

collection of wild biodiversity, hunting and poaching are fundamental parts of local livelihood systems, its uncontrolled and excessive use threatens many conservation values while also casting shadows over the future productivity and use options. Despite important management efforts there continues to be a lack of conceptual clarity about the governance and management of natural resource use in a park that has been inhabited and used at all times.

► **Assessment of the current state and trend of other important biodiversity values**

Data Deficient

Trend: Data Deficient

Specific information on the status of karst features within the property is beyond the scope of this assessment.

Additional information

Benefits

Understanding Benefits

► **Collection of medicinal resources for local use, Outdoor recreation and tourism, Natural beauty and scenery**

Local communities and indigenous peoples of the remote, largely roadless national park and its surroundings depend on wild biodiversity products for their health (UNEP-WCMC, 2011). The scenic beauty and rich biodiversity attract visitors despite the limited infrastructure.

► **Legal subsistence hunting of wild game, Collection of wild plants and mushrooms, Fishing areas and conservation of fish stocks, Traditional agriculture, Livestock grazing areas**

The forests, wetlands, coasts, rivers and creeks provide subsistence livelihoods for indigenous communities within and around the property. Regardless of the legal situation indigenous peoples are engaged in - and

depend on - a broad range of agricultural, hunting and gathering activities (UNEP-WCMC, 2011).

► **Access to drinking water**

The property protects a substantial part of the watersheds of Panama's Darien Province (IUCN, 2014).

► **Carbon sequestration, Soil stabilisation, Coastal protection, Flood prevention, Water provision (importance for water quantity and quality), Pollination**

The tropical forests of the property, one of the largest remaining in the Central American subregions, delivers the full range of forest environmental services (ANAM et al., 2007).

► **Importance for research, Collection of genetic material**

Though little research has been carried out in the national park, it is of invaluable scientific interest, with its high and only partially documented biodiversity being an irreplaceable genetic treasure (UNEP-WCMC, 2011).

► **History and tradition, Wilderness and iconic features, Sacred natural sites or landscapes, Sacred or symbolic plants or animals, Cultural identity and sense of belonging**

The property is home to several indigenous peoples who have a longstanding relationship with the landscape at the livelihood level, as well as at the cultural and spiritual levels (ANAM et al., 2006; Herlihy, 2003; Daniels, 2002).

► **Collection of timber, e.g. fuelwood, Sustainable extraction of materials (e.g. coral, shells, resin, rubber, grass, rattan, etc)**

Local communities and indigenous peoples use a broad range of non-timber forest products for food, medicine, construction etc. (UNEP-WCMC, 2011; ANAM et al., 2006; Herlihy, 2003; Daniels, 2002).

► **Tourism-related income, Provision of jobs**

While direct generation of employment and income related to park

management and tourism is modest, the long-term potential is high, especially for tourism (ANAM et al., 2007).

Summary of benefits

Beyond the obvious benefits of the national park in terms of conserving extraordinary diverse and highly endemic array of life forms at all levels, the property is the home of indigenous peoples and communities who derive their livelihoods from local natural resources and depend on the forests for their cultural and spiritual survival. Watershed protection benefits are likewise high, as are the well-documented multiple environmental services associated with large intact forests.

Projects

Compilation of active conservation projects

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
1	Wildlife Conservation Society / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		The Central American Megaflyover is described as a plane-based survey to gauge the influence of humans and their livestock on the 5 largest remaining forests in Central America. Darién is among these top 5 forest areas in all of Central America.
2	Fundación Natura	From: 2016	The Darién Fund was established through a deb- for-nature swap between the governments of Panama and the United States of America, with contributions from environmental NG The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The fund is to facilitate the management of the national park according to three strategic lines: sustainable community development inside and around the national park; highlighting and conserving ecological values and ecosystem services; and financila and administrative consolidation of the national park.

№	Organization/ individuals	Project duration	Brief description of Active Projects
3	Fundación Natura, TNC		The FIDECO Fund (Fideicomiso Ecológico de Panamá) was established in 1995 based on a a contract between the Government of Panama and non-governmental conservation organization TNC. The fund has been a longstanding and major funding source for conservation projects across Panama, including several in Darién National Park.

Compilation of potential site needs

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
1	Enhanced communication, coordination and cooperation with neighboring Colombia	The Darién Gap is an irreplaceable, still largely intact ecosystem shared by Panama and Colombia. The indigenous peoples of the area have been using both sides of what today constitutes the international border. The major threats to the extraordinary conservation values of the forests and wetlands on both sides of the border stem from proposed infrastructure projects which would link the road and energy infrastructure of the two neighboring countries. In other words, the human history, the conservation values and threats to them are in essence shared by two countries and States Parties to the Convention. It deserves to be noted that Darién National Park is contiguous with Los Katíos National Park in Colombia, which is likewise a World Heritage property. Even though the two properties are not formally inscribed as a transboundary property there is major and largely untapped potential to increase communication, coordination and cooperation. Colombia recently reported promising efforts in this regard (State Party of Colombia, 2016).	

№	Site need title	Brief description of potential site needs	Support needed for following years
2	Refining the boundaries	The property was inscribed in 1981, more than 35 years ago. Conservation planning and the information about the Darién Gap have much advanced since. There are opportunities to refine the boundaries of the property. The State Party of Panama (2015, 2014) has twice proposed Minor Boundary Modifications, which were in principle fully supported by IUCN it its capacity as an official Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee (IUCN, 2015, 2014). The IUCN evaluations confirm the usefulness of the proposed refining of the boundaries and emphasize that limited additional effort is needed to comply with formal requirements. Further investment to complete the existing efforts is highly desirable from a technical perspective.	

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