

*These policies were prepared for use by World Bank staff and are not necessarily a complete treatment of the subject.*

## Definitions

The following definitions apply in this policy:

a) *Forest* is as an area of land of not less than 1.0 hectare with tree crown cover (or equivalent stocking level) of more than 10 percent that have trees with the potential to reach a minimum height of 2 meters at maturity *in situ*. A forest may consist of either closed forest formations, where trees of various stories and undergrowth cover a high proportion of the ground, or open forest. Young natural stands and all plantations that have yet to reach a crown density of 10 per cent or tree height of 2 meters are included under forest, as are areas normally forming part of the forest area that are temporarily unstocked as a result of human intervention such as harvesting or natural causes but that are expected to revert to forest. The definition *includes* forests dedicated to forest production, protection, multiple uses, or conservation, whether formally recognized or not. The definition *excludes* areas where other land uses not dependent on tree cover predominate, such as agriculture, grazing or settlements. In countries with low forest cover, the definition may be expanded to include areas covered by trees that fall below the 10 percent threshold for canopy density, but are considered forest under local conditions.

b) *Natural forests* are forest lands and associated waterways where the ecosystem's biological communities are formed largely by native plant and animal species and where human activity has not essentially modified the area's primary ecological functions.

c) *Critical forest areas* are the forest areas that qualify as critical natural habitats under OP 4.04. Critical forest areas are the subset of natural forest lands that cover:

(i) existing protected areas and areas officially proposed by governments as protected areas (e.g., reserves that meet the criteria of The World Conservation Union (IUCN) classifications<sup>1</sup>), areas initially recognized as protected by traditional local communities (e.g., sacred groves), and sites that maintain conditions vital for the viability of these protected areas (as determined by the environmental assessment process<sup>2</sup>); or

(ii) sites identified on supplementary lists prepared by the Bank or an authoritative source determined by the Regional environment sector unit. Such sites may include areas recognized by traditional local communities (e.g., sacred groves); areas with known high suitability for biodiversity conservation; and sites that are critical for rare, vulnerable, migratory, or endangered species.<sup>3</sup> Listings are based on systematic evaluations of such factors as species richness; the degree of endemism, rarity, and vulnerability of component species; representativeness; and integrity of ecosystem processes.

d) *Local community* describes the group of people living in or near a forest, who are considered to have some significant level of dependence upon or interaction with the forest.

e) *Forests operating under joint forest or community management* are those where local communities are the principal participants in production and other activities in these forests, and the major beneficiaries in the proceeds.

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1 IUCN categories are as follows: I - Strict Nature Reserve/Wilderness Area: protected area managed for science or wilderness protection; II - National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation; III - Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features; IV - Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention; V - Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation; and VI - Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural

ecosystems.

2 See [OP/BP](#) 4.01, Environmental Assessment

3 Rare, vulnerable, endangered, or similarly threatened, as indicated in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals, BirdLife World List of Threatened Birds, IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants, or other credible international or national lists accepted by the Regional environmental sector units.