

Changes to the WDPA and WD-OECM

As of 1st August 2025, the World Database on [Protected Areas](#) (WDPA) and World Database on [Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures](#) (WD-OECM) will be merged into one database. This is to streamline data management processes and simplify how external users access the two datasets, allowing users to identify all protected and conserved areas with one dataset. Users will be able to easily differentiate between protected area and OECM data and filter based on types of sites relevant to them.

As a result, there are some important associated changes that will affect how data users interpret and analyse the data. UNEP-WCMC has also taken the opportunity to change some field names for clarity and to improve the data by adding and removing some fields. The upcoming changes are:

1. The **WDPAID** and **WDPA_PID** fields will be renamed to **SITE_ID** and **SITE_PID** respectively. The data stored in these fields will not change, but the update of the name reflects the fact that the database will no longer exclusively store 'protected areas'.
2. The **PA_DEF** field will be renamed **SITE_TYPE** for the same reason. [Protected areas](#) will have the value PA and [OECMs](#) will have the value OECM to meet IUCN and CBD definitions.
3. The **MARINE** field will be renamed to **REALM** for clarity. The values stored in this field will also be changed for added clarity. Sites with over 10% of their extent on land will have the value 'Terrestrial'. Sites with between 10% and 90% of their area on land will have the value 'Coastal'. Sites with over 90% of their area in the marine realm will have the value 'Marine'. These values will be assigned based on an overlay of the spatial data based on [Global Islands \(version 3\) dataset](#) (USGS, ESRI, UNEP-WCMC).
4. The **NAME** and **ORIG_NAME** fields will be renamed **NAME_ENG** and **NAME** respectively. **NAME_ENG** will be the name of the site in Latin characters, and **NAME** will be the name of the site in the original language. This is to align with the naming of the **DESIG_ENG** and **DESIG** fields.
5. The **SUB_LOC** field will be removed. This field stores data on the sub-national location of a site. It is not widely used and can be determined by overlaying the spatial data with a dataset of sub-national administrative boundaries where needed.
6. The following new fields will be added:
 - a. **GOV_SUBTYPE**: This field will store data on the actors involved in shared ownership. It will only be used where **GOV_TYPE** = 'Joint governance' or 'Collaborative governance'. For example, if **GOV_TYPE** = 'Joint governance', **GOV_SUBTYPE** may be 'Local communities; Non-profit organisations'. Where **GOV_TYPE** does not = 'Joint governance' or 'Collaborative governance', 'Not Applicable' will be entered.
 - b. **OWN_SUBTYPE**: This field will store data on the actors involved in shared ownership. It will only be used where **OWN_TYPE** = 'Joint ownership', 'Multiple ownership' or 'Contested'. For example, if **OWN_TYPE** = 'Multiple ownership', **OWN_SUBTYPE** may be 'State; Individual landowners'. Where **OWN_TYPE** does not = 'Joint ownership', 'Multiple ownership' or 'Contested', 'Not Applicable' will be entered.
 - c. **OECM_ASMT**: This field will store data on the type of assessment used to identify a site as meeting the OECM definition. This will provide additional transparency around the basis for categorising sites as OECMs.

These changes are summarised in the table below. Some of the new fields will initially have no (or very limited) data but will be populated over time in collaboration with data providers.

Change type	Old field name	New field name
Field name change	WDPAID	SITE_ID
Field name change	WDPA_PID	SITE_PID
Field name change	PA_DEF	SITE_TYPE
Field name change	MARINE	REALM
Field name change	NAME	NAME_ENG
Field name change	ORIG_NAME	NAME
Deleted field	SUB_LOC	N/A
Added field	N/A	GOV_SUBTYPE
Added field	N/A	OWN_SUBTYPE
Added field	N/A	OECM_ASMT

While the name of the merged database will remain 'WDPA' in the short term, UNEP-WCMC is exploring renaming the database in the longer term to reflect its expansion to include OECMs. Changes to the schema will be reflected in updates to how data is displayed on the Integrated Biodiversity Assessment website over the coming months.

If you have any questions or concerns about these upcoming changes, please contact alfred.muge@unep-wcmc.org, alex.ross@unep-wcmc.org or proteus@unep-wcmc.org.