

Changes to the WDPA and WD-OECM

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

There are some important associated changes that will affect how data users interpret and analyze 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 update of the field names reflects the fact that the database will no longer exclusively store 'PAs'. The format of the **SITE_PID** field will also change so that different zones are denoted by an underscore followed by a number, rather than an underscore followed by a letter (e.g., 1234_A will become 1234_1).
2. The **PA_DEF** field will be renamed **SITE_TYPE** to reflect the fact that the database will no longer exclusively store 'PAs'. [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 with UNEP-WCMC's coastline dataset.
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 **PARENT_ISO3** field will be renamed **PRNT_ISO3**. This is to enable compatibility with character limits associated with commonly used file formats.
6. 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.
7. The following new fields will be added:
 - a. **GOVSUBTYPE**: 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', **GOVSUBTYPE** may be 'Local communities;Non-profit organisations'. Where **GOV_TYPE** does not = 'Joint governance' or 'Collaborative governance', 'Not Applicable' will be entered.
 - b. **OWNSUBTYPE**: 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', **OWNSUBTYPE** 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. Where **SITE_TYPE** = 'PA', 'Not Applicable' will be entered.

These changes are summarised in Table 1. Some of the new fields will initially have no (or very limited) data but will be populated over time in collaboration with data providers.

Table 1: Changes to fields and field names

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
Field name change	PARENT_ISO3	PRNT_ISO3
Deleted field	SUB_LOC	N/A
Added field	N/A	GOVSUBTYPE
Added field	N/A	OWNSUBTYPE
Added field	N/A	OECM_ASMT

Full details of the new schema, including changes to accepted values for certain fields, are provided in Annex 1. 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 Protected Planet and Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) websites over the coming months.

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

Annex 1: Updated Schema

Accepted values are shown in italics. Major changes to accepted values or field purpose are highlighted in yellow.

Requirement	Provided by	Field Name	Type	Length	Accepted values
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	SITE_ID	Number (Double)	N/A	Assigned by UNEP-WCMC. Unique identifier for a protected area or OECM.
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	SITE_PID	Text (String)	52	Assigned by UNEP-WCMC. Unique identifier for parcels within a protected area or OECM. Different parcels are denoted with an underscore followed by a number.
Mandatory	Data provider	SITE_TYPE	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: <i>PA</i> (meets IUCN or CBD protected area definition), <i>OECM</i> (meets CBD OECM definition)
Mandatory	Data provider	NAME_ENG	Text (String)	254	Name of the protected area or OECM in English.
Mandatory	Data provider	NAME	Text (String)	254	Name of the protected area or OECM in original language.
Mandatory	Data provider	DESIG	Text (String)	254	Designation in original language.
Optional	Data provider	DESIG_ENG	Text (String)	254	Designation in English. Accepted values for international-level designations: <i>Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)</i> , <i>UNESCO-MAB Biosphere Reserve</i> , <i>World Heritage Site (natural or mixed)</i> . Accepted values for regional-level designations: <i>Baltic Sea Protected Area (HELCOM)</i> , <i>Specially Protected Area (Cartagena Convention)</i> , <i>Marine Protected Area (CCAMLR)</i> , <i>Marine Protected Area (OSPAR)</i> , <i>Site of Community Importance (Habitats Directive)</i> , <i>Special Protection Area (Birds Directive)</i> , <i>Specially Protected Areas of Mediterranean Importance (Barcelona Convention)</i> , <i>ASEAN Heritage Park</i> , <i>NEAFC Area Closed to Bottom Fisheries for the protection of VMEs</i> , <i>OECM</i> . No fixed values for protected areas or OECMs designated at national level.
Mandatory	Data provider	DESIG_TYPE	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: <i>National</i> , <i>Regional</i> , <i>International</i> , <i>Not Applicable</i> .
Optional	Data provider	IUCN_CAT	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: <i>Ia</i> , <i>Ib</i> , <i>II</i> , <i>III</i> , <i>IV</i> , <i>V</i> , <i>VI</i> , <i>Not Applicable</i> , <i>Not Assigned</i> , <i>Not Reported</i> .
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	INT_CRIT	Text (String)	100	Assigned by UNEP-WCMC. For World Heritage and Ramsar sites only.
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	REALM	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: <i>Terrestrial</i> (predominantly or entirely terrestrial), <i>Coastal</i> (partly marine and partly terrestrial), <i>Marine</i> (predominantly or entirely marine). The value 'Coastal' is only used for polygons.
Mandatory	Data provider	REP_M_AREA	Number (Double)	N/A	Marine area in square kilometres as reported by data provider.
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	GIS_M_AREA	Number (Double)	N/A	Marine area in square kilometres calculated in GIS. Assigned by UNEP-WCMC.
Mandatory	Data provider	REP_AREA	Number (Double)	N/A	Area in square kilometres as reported by data provider.
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	GIS_AREA	Number (Double)	N/A	Area in square kilometres calculated in GIS. Assigned by UNEP-WCMC.
Optional	Data provider	NO_TAKE	Text (String)	50	Accepted values: <i>All</i> , <i>Part</i> , <i>None</i> , <i>Not Reported</i> , <i>Not Applicable</i> (if no marine component).
Optional	Data provider	NO_TK_AREA	Number (Double)	N/A	Area of the no-take area in square kilometres.
Mandatory	Data provider	STATUS	Text (String)	100	Accepted values: <i>Proposed</i> , <i>Inscribed</i> , <i>Adopted</i> , <i>Designated</i> , <i>Established</i> .

Requirement	Provided by	Field Name	Type	Length	Accepted values
Mandatory	Data provider	STATUS_YR	Number (Long Integer)	12	Year of enactment of status (STATUS field).
Optional	Data provider	GOV_TYPE	Text (String)	254	Governance type. Accepted values: <i>Federal or national ministry or agency, Sub-national ministry or agency, Government-delegated management, Transboundary governance, Collaborative governance, Joint governance, Individual landowners, Non-profit organisations, For-profit organisations, Indigenous peoples, Local communities, Not Reported.</i>
Optional	Data provider	GOVSUBTYPE	Text (String)	254	Governance actors involved in shared governance. Accepted values: <i>Federal or national ministry or agency, Sub-national ministry or agency, Government-delegated management, Individual landowners, Non-profit organisations, For-profit organisations, Indigenous peoples, Local communities, Not Reported, Not Applicable.</i>
Optional	Data provider	OWN_TYPE	Text (String)	254	Ownership type. Accepted values: <i>State, Indigenous Peoples, Communal, Individual landowners, For-profit organisations, Non-profit organisations, Joint ownership, Multiple ownership, Contested, Not Reported.</i>
Optional	Data provider	OWNSUBTYPE	Text (String)	254	Actors involved in shared ownership. Accepted values: <i>State, Indigenous Peoples, Communal, Individual landowners, For-profit organisations, Non-profit organisations, Not Reported, Not Applicable.</i>
Optional	Data provider	MANG_AUTH	Text (String)	254	Individual or group that manages the protected area or OECM.
Optional	Data provider	MANG_PLAN	Text (String)	254	Link or reference to the protected area or OECM's management plan.
Optional	Data provider	CONS_OBJ	Text (String)	100	Specifies whether biodiversity conservation is a primary objective, secondary objective, or not a stated objective. Accepted values: <i>Primary, Secondary, Ancillary, Not Reported, Not Applicable</i> (protected areas only)
Optional	Data provider	SUPP_INFO	Text (String)	254	Link or reference to supporting information on an OECM, such as details of how it fulfils each element of the OECM definition. May also be used to provide additional details on protected areas.
Optional	Data provider	OECM_ASMT	Text (String)	100	Tool or approach used to determine that the site meets the OECM definition. Accepted values: <i>IUCN WCPA Tool 2023, IUCN WCPA Tool 2022, Draft IUCN WCPA Tool (Pre-2022), FAO Handbook 2022, CBD Criteria 2018, National Approach, Other Approach, Combined Approaches, Not Assessed, Not Reported, Not Applicable.</i>
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	VERIF	Text (String)	20	Assigned by UNEP-WCMC. Accepted values: <i>State Verified, Expert Verified, Not Reported</i> (for unverified data that was already in the WDPA prior to the inclusion of the 'Verification' field).
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	RESTRICT	Text (String)	20	Not publicly available, for UNEP-WCMC use only.
Mandatory	UNEP-WCMC	METADATAID	Number (Long Integer)	12	Assigned by UNEP-WCMC. Link to source table.

Requirement	Provided by	Field Name	Type	Length	Accepted values
Optional	Data provider	SUB_LOC	Text (String)	100	Accepted values: ISO 3166-2 sub-national code where the protected area or OECM is located. Separated by a semi-colon if multiple.
Mandatory	Data provider	PRNT_ISO3	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 character code of country where the protected area or OECM is located. Separated by a semi-colon if multiple.
Mandatory	Data provider	ISO3	Text (String)	20	Accepted values: ISO 3166-1 Alpha-3 character code of country or territory where the protected area or OECM is located. Separated by a semi-colon if multiple.