



**CENTER FOR PROTECTED  
AREA MANAGEMENT**  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

## **Environmental and Social Justice Statement**

### **Our Vision**

We envision a world where a robust global system of protected areas is sustainably funded and staffed, is representative of global ecosystems and biomes, and is governed and managed effectively and equitably for nature and all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, economic status, physical ability, or other potentially discriminating factors.

At the Center for Protected Area Management (CPAM), our specific role in achieving this vision is to develop individual and institutional technical capacity, leadership skills, and the confidence to take action in support of protected areas around the world, the organizations that manage them, and the communities whose livelihoods depend on them. Essentially, we seek to create a shared sense of hope for a more sustainable future. Protected areas are key to the long-term conservation of biodiversity, protection of environmental services, building resilience to climate change, economic development, education, human-health, and inspiration. And yet, protected areas have not always been developed with the best intentions in mind or in support of these diverse goals. In fact, it is important for us to recognize the harmful impacts that establishing protected areas and developing private lands outside or near protected areas, have sometimes had for people, especially Indigenous people and other local communities, around the world.

### **Acknowledging Protected Area Challenges**

To create a more equitable future, we must acknowledge the past. Many protected areas have been developed in a top-down, command and control way throughout the world. This approach has led to governments taking lands away from people, especially from Indigenous people and traditional communities, leading to exclusion, displacement, and inequitable distribution of benefits. In some cases, this has caused irreparable harm to communities that have been displaced or further marginalized or whose livelihood activities have been curtailed due to the creation of protected areas. Protected areas have also been established and then subsequently managed in a way where only certain people, often outsiders, have access. Bias and oppression have created substantial inequalities around the world and protected area work is no exception. Only by acknowledging this fact, will we be able to do better for nature and people. We also acknowledge that bias is present in every one of us and that we must all work to increase our awareness of these biases so that we can bring more consciousness and objectivity to our decision making.

## Protected Areas for Everyone

CPAM strives to create protected area capacity development programs that are equitable for all people regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, economic status, physical ability, or other potentially discriminating factors. By involving people with diverse perspectives and voices as protected area advocates, we will be contributing towards a more robust and sustainable support system for protected areas around the globe. Diverse perspectives will also influence and improve the way protected areas are designed, designated, planned, and managed. By ensuring that protected areas are managed with best practices for environmental and social justice in mind, we will be helping to ensure that protected areas serve their greatest purpose for nature and for all people.

## Our Commitment

CPAM commits to ensuring that our projects and programs are implemented with the highest level of integrity and a deep awareness of past mistakes committed in the process of establishing and managing protected areas. We recognize Indigenous people around the world as the original stewards of the land and water. This includes the land that now houses Colorado State University. We recognize that systemic racism continues to create an unjust and unequal world and that our activities should not contribute to the perpetuation of systemic racism. We will include best practices in diversity, equity, and inclusion as a guide for our work.

Below we outline key principles that will guide CPAM's activities:

- We commit to improve our own awareness of our biases, including an awareness of how our biases affect access to our programs.
- We believe that basic human rights include self-determination, a healthy environment, adequate food, shelter, education, medical care, and access to nature. We believe these basic human rights should be accessible for all people.
- We will develop projects that are specifically designed to build equity and inclusion for people of all walks of life. We especially want to make sure that our activities are inclusive of participants that identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and that our activities are inclusive of all genders.
- We strive to be anti-racist.
- We strive to develop a deeper understanding of our individual and collective intersectionality and work to understand and amplify the voices of diverse groups.
- We will respect and support the rights of Indigenous people and communities that have traditionally depended on protected areas for their livelihoods in our projects around the world. We will engage in projects on Indigenous lands only when we are invited to do so.
- We will build partnerships for our work that seeks to represent the diversity of voices in the places we are working.
- We commit to offering a safe collaboration environment, free of discrimination, for our staff and the participants in our programs where diverse perspectives will be encouraged, respected, and honored. We want all people we work with to feel open to expressing diverse thoughts, beliefs, and values.
- We will continue to build our institutional and staff cultural awareness and humility and support our team in developing a deeper understanding of environmental and social justice issues.
- We welcome feedback and input into our programs that will make them more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.