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GUIDELINES

Zonation Guidelines

SUMMARY

This document presents a comprehensive set of guidelines to support Developers in carrying out zonation and identifying intervention zones within a Project Area. It outlines the best practices, the step-by-step process ERS requires Developers to follow, and the expected outcomes.



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NORMATIVE REFERENCES

This document must be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- [ERS Programme](#)
- [Community Consultation Guidelines](#)

TEMPLATES

This document is linked with the following templates:

- [Restoration Plan](#)
- [Ecological Recovery Assessment](#)



General *Guidelines*

- **If IPLCs** are part of the Project's Stakeholders, Developers **must ensure** the Project Area selection and its zonation follow Free, Prior and Informed Consent requirements as defined in the [ERS Programme](#).
- Given their distinct characteristics, such as vegetation biomass, current and historical land use, levels of conservation and degradation, each of the Project's zones may require different interventions to drive ecological restoration.
- Given the diversity of ecosystems and landscapes, these guidelines provide general instructions. Developers are encouraged to read and understand the outlined steps and adapt them to their specific circumstances. Developers should review and implement these processes under the guidance of an ecologist, rangeland expert, forest engineer or related technical expert and communicate their decisions within the [Restoration Plan](#).



Project Feasibility *Phase*

STEP 1: PROJECT AREA ASSESSMENT

1. Developers must perform research to better understand the Project Area's history, land use, social occupation, administrative status, land cover, biome(s) and ecosystem(s). Information sources can be:
 - 1.1. Desktop-data:
 - 1.1.1. Ground-truthed maps from satellite imagery;
 - 1.1.2. Aerial photos;
 - 1.1.3. Maps of vegetation, soils, and topography that can provide an understanding of the landscape;
 - 1.1.4. Past Project reports.
 - 1.2. Project's Stakeholders:
 - 1.2.1. Via Stakeholder engagement interactions;
 - 1.2.2. Via IPLCs interviews.
 - 1.3. Field assessment.
2. If the Project encompasses multiple ecosystems and/or biomes, Developers must indicate each of them as a separate zone in the submitted shapefile.

STEP 2: PRELIMINARY ZONATION

1. Based on the data and the land cover analysis, Developers must determine the Project's **Preliminary Zonation**.
2. Every zone must be characterised by distinct characteristics such as vegetation biomass, land use, levels of conservation and degradation, and



accessibility that require different interventions. Refer to the *Examples* section for more details.

3. If certain zones are populated by invasive species that will be removed as part of the Restoration Plan, Developers must clearly identify them in the Project Shapefile.
4. If an area is to be excluded from restoration work, Developers must clearly indicate it as an “exclusion zone” in the Project Shapefile.
5. If the zones assigned for restoration are isolated from each other, Developers should increase their connectivity through biological corridors. This applies also to enabling connectivity to the Project’s Reference Site.

💡 It is possible to have a Restoration Site that is one homogenous block, not needing to be zoned; Developers must treat such area as a single zone. If non-contiguous land patches with very similar characteristics are found across the site, they can be considered as a single zone.

Delineation of Areas Impacted by Pre-Submission Activities

For Projects that have undertaken pre-submission activities, Developers must clearly delineate and indicate in which areas the interventions have been performed.

Developers must also include the date of planting in the zone’s description in the shapefile, and associate a Reference Site in case it is not the same used for other Restoration Sites of the Project.

STEP 3: PARTICIPATORY MAPPING

1. If IPLCs are part of the Project’s Stakeholders, the Developer must follow the Free, Prior and Informed Consent requirements as laid out in the [ERS Programme](#), and present to IPLCs the Preliminary Zonation.



- 1.1. The IPLCs engagement must inform the “Participatory Mapping” tab in the [Ecological Recovery Assessment](#). By the end of the process, the Developer must have the tab completed.
2. Inputs must be incorporated so the Zonation represents IPLCs needs, approvals and aspirations. Developers can then define the zonation’s final design.

STEP 4: SHAPEFILE & FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

1. Developers must submit in the ERS App a Project Shapefile. The shapefile can be imported or directly designed in the ERS Web App and should contain:
 - 1.1. The Project Area;
 - 1.2. The Project’s zonation
 - 1.3. The Reference Site(s)
 - 1.4. Leakage Area.
2. Based on the Zonation process, the Developer must inform the following fields of the Feasibility Study Report:
 - 2.1. PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT > 3. Stakeholder Engagement Results (and all its sub-items).
 - 2.2. PROJECT SITES > 1. Project Area and sub-items 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4; and 2. Reference Ecosystem and all its sub-items.

💡 ERS acknowledges that at the early stage of a Project Developers might not have a defined zonation, and that the zonation provided during Project Feasibility will most likely change once the Project Design phase is concluded. The goal of performing the zonation this early onset is to allow Developers and ERS to understand if the Project is feasible in general lines.



Project Design *Phase*

STEP 5: FINAL ZONATION

- The Final Zonation must be validated by the Stakeholders during the Community Consultation on Ecological Recovery, as outlined in the [Community Consultation Guidelines](#).
- After Stakeholder validation, the zonation map is eligible for certification.



Appendix 1

EXAMPLE

Here are some examples of how zonation works to define the Project Area. In each intervention zone, the strategies and actions must be tailored to the specific challenges and needs identified through baseline assessments and the reference site(s) conditions.

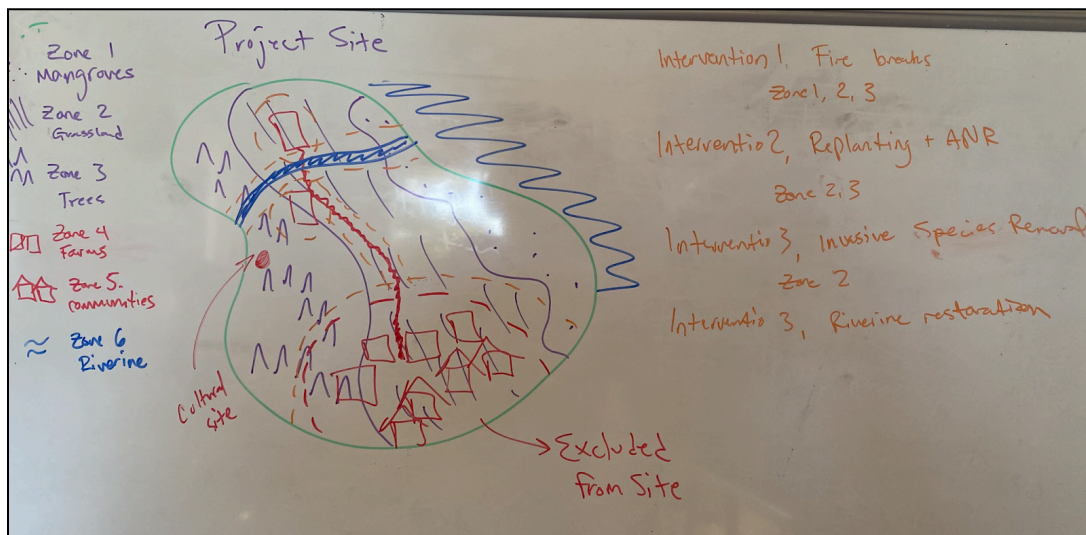


Figure 1. Hand drawn community map

Example: Montane Forest Project Area

Zones:

1. **Lower Forest Zone (Zone 1):** This zone is at the lower elevations of the mountains and typically has a mix of montane and sub-montane vegetation. Trees in this zone are typically shorter, and more spread out than those in higher elevations. This zone has been depleted due to logging. Restoration



here could involve replanting native tree species, controlling invasive species, and possibly improving soil conditions.

2. **Upper Forest Zone (Zone 2):** The forest becomes denser with a more closed canopy. There is often a more diverse understory with a higher abundance of epiphytes and mosses. Soil erosion is a common problem in this zone. Restoration could involve contour planting, terracing, and planting of grasses and shrubs that are effective in holding the soil together.
3. **Riverine Zone (Zone 3):** This zone comprises the areas surrounding rivers and streams flowing through the forest. It is characterised by high levels of biodiversity and is crucial for water retention. Restoration in this zone could aim at protecting the riverbanks and favouring natural regeneration into riparian forests.

REFERENCES

Gann, G. D., McDonald, T., Walder, B., Aronson, J., Nelson, C. R., Jonson, J., ... & Dixon, K. (2019). International principles and standards for the practice of ecological restoration. *Restoration Ecology*, 27(S1), S1-S46.



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