



The Precautionary Principle Project

sustainable development, biodiversity conservation
and natural resource management
www.pprinciple.net

GUIDELINES FOR APPLYING THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

******Please forward to your colleagues, networks and offices******

We are pleased to announce the issue of **Guidelines for Applying the Precautionary Principle to Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management (NRM)**. It is hoped that they will be widely adopted and used in a broad range of biodiversity conservation and NRM contexts.

These Guidelines represent the first set of guidance for the precautionary principle in biodiversity conservation and NRM. They aim to inform and assist decision-makers, policy-makers and managers in interpreting and applying the precautionary principle across a wide range of contexts. The Guidelines have been developed by The Precautionary Principle Project – a joint initiative of Fauna & Flora International, IUCN-The World Conservation Union, ResourceAfrica and TRAFFIC, and were finalised at an international workshop in Florida in July 2005, after three years of work and consultation involving a wide range of experts and stakeholders from different regions, sectors, disciplines and perspectives. They form part of a forthcoming book *Biodiversity and the Precautionary Principle: Risk and Uncertainty in Conservation and Sustainable Use*, to be published next month by Earthscan, London, and will be presented at meetings at the Ramsar COP, CBD SBSTTA, and elsewhere. Please note that they should not be taken as necessarily representing the view of IUCN or other collaborating organisations.

These Guidelines are necessary because conservation and NRM virtually never have consistent, high quality information about the threats with which they deal. Whether the context is protected areas, ecosystem services, trade in wildlife, invasive species or fisheries, decision-makers must grapple with poor or incomplete data, inherent unpredictability, and ignorance. How decision-making responds to this uncertainty has a major impact on its success in achieving environmental and sustainable development objectives. Waiting until evidence of impending harm or damage is clear and unambiguous will often mean it is too late to prevent serious, costly or irreversible environmental harm. The precautionary principle urges action *in advance* of certainty about threats, supporting anticipatory, preventative action against *potential* harm. While the precautionary principle has been widely adopted in international and national environmental law and policy, its translation into practice has been marked with confusion and controversy, including within the World Trade Organisation, the CBD and the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), and many national court cases. Despite widespread obligations to apply the precautionary principle, there often appears little evidence that it is being applied, and in some cases evidence that it is being applied in a counter-productive or inequitable manner.

These Guidelines seek to provide clear, coherent guidance to address this situation. We trust they will be helpful to you and we would be keen to have your comments and feedback.

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