

THEMATIC TRACK 5 · ISAP2026 · 5 OCTOBER 2026

# Applying SEPLS to OECMs

*From concept to real-world impact*

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## WHERE THIS SESSION GOES NEXT

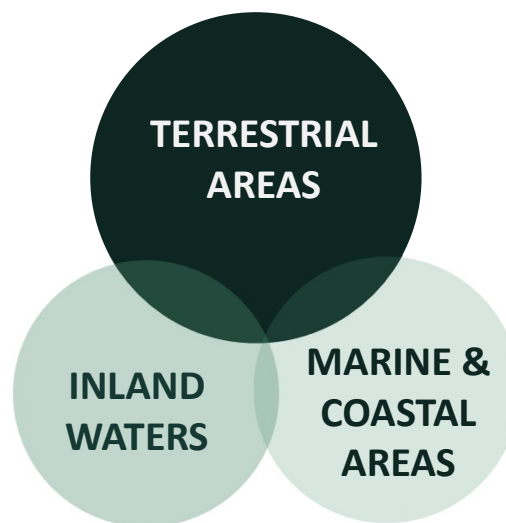
1. How do we deliver Target 3?
  2. What exactly is an OECM?
  3. How is an OECM identified?
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4. How can SEPLS contribute to Target 3?
  5. Can a SEPLS be OECMs?
  6. Why pursue OECM recognition in SEPLS?



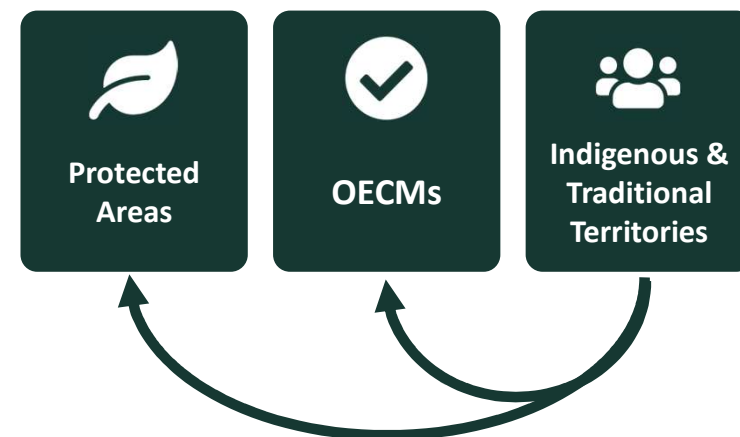
## QUESTION 1 · DELIVERING THE FRAMEWORK

### GBF Target 3 - the '30x30' target

*“Ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of **terrestrial, inland water, and of coastal and marine areas**, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are effectively conserved and managed through ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably governed **systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures**, recognizing indigenous and traditional territories traditional territories...”*



Three mechanisms deliver Target 3:



The target asks for **effectively managed, well-connected, equitably governed** systems - not just a coverage number. Reaching it depends on more than expanding protected areas top-down.



## QUESTION 2 – KEY DISTINCTION

### What is an OECM?

*“A geographically defined **area other than a Protected Area**, which is governed and managed in ways **that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in-situ conservation of biodiversity**, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.”*

Adopted by the Parties to the CBD in 2018, Decision 14/8

An OECM is a site that often **already delivers** effective, long-term in-situ conservation of biodiversity -  
- complementing protected areas within wider conservation networks.



## QUESTION 2 · KEY DISTINCTION

# OECM vs. Protected Area



### Protected Area

- Recognised, dedicated and managed FOR conservation
- Conservation is the primary objective
- The management objective is the defining feature



### OECM

- A site that already delivers effective in-situ biodiversity conservation
- The biodiversity outcome is the defining characteristic
- The primary management objective does not have to be conservation

*The defining question for an OECM is not “why was this area set aside?” but “what is this area achieving for biodiversity conservation?”*



QUESTION 3 · MAKING IT OPERATIONAL

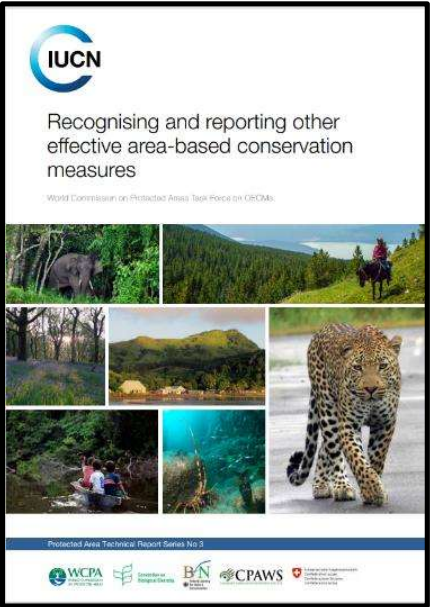
# Identifying, recognising and reporting OECMs

IUCN invited by CBD Parties (Decision 14/8)

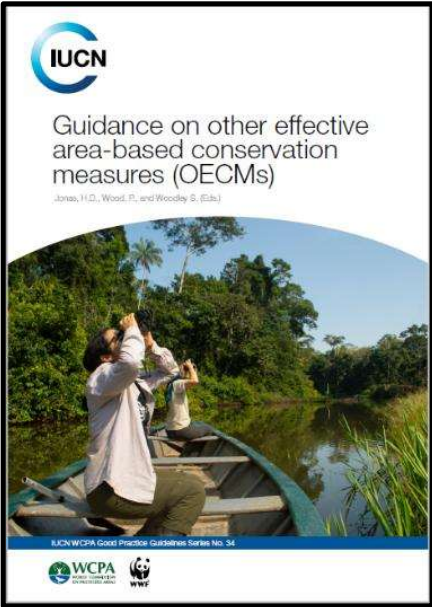
OP9. Invites the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and other expert bodies to **continue to assist Parties** in identifying other effective area-based conservation measures and in applying the **scientific and technical advice**;

Tools and  
guidance  
available:

2019



2024



2023





### QUESTION 3 · MAKING IT OPERATIONAL

## The four CBD criteria for OECMs

#### **A** Not a protected area

The area is not currently recognised or reported as a protected area.

#### **B** Governed and managed

Geographically defined, with legitimate governance authority and active management in place.

#### **C** Achieves sustained, effective in-situ conservation

The core test: demonstrable, long-term positive outcomes for biodiversity, not just an absence of harm.

#### **D** Associated values are conserved

Ecosystem functions and services and, where applicable, cultural, spiritual and socio-economic values.

*Set out in CBD Decision 14/8, Annex III*

#### QUESTION 4

# Can a SEPLS be an OECM?

*Comparing the two concepts and how IUCN and IPSI are helping answer this*





## QUESTION 4 · THE SEPLS CONTRIBUTION

### Why SEPLS matters for Target 3

*, “... and integrated into wider landscapes, seascapes and the ocean, while ensuring that any sustainable use, where appropriate in such areas, is fully consistent with conservation outcomes, recognizing and respecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their traditional territories.”*

#### Landscape-scale by design

SEPLS already work at the scale Target 3 calls for - integrated into wider landscapes and seascapes, not isolated sites.

#### Biodiversity through livelihoods

SEPLS biodiversity is maintained through people-nature interaction, and all or parts of these landscapes may already meet OECM criteria.

#### A whole-of-society shift

Target 3 depends on moving beyond government-led conservation. SEPLS are built on local initiative, traditional knowledge and community stewardship.

#### Never automatic

SEPLS should not be assumed to be OECMs. Each area, or part of an area, must be assessed individually against the criteria.

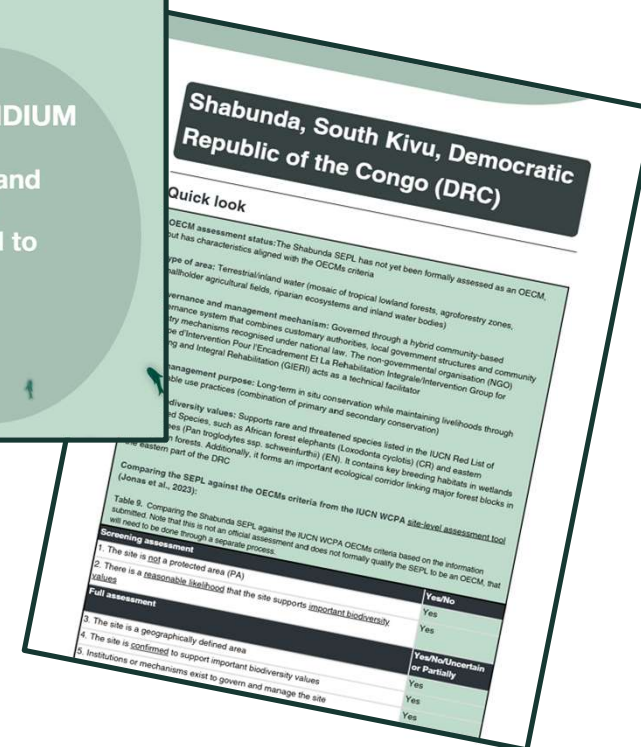
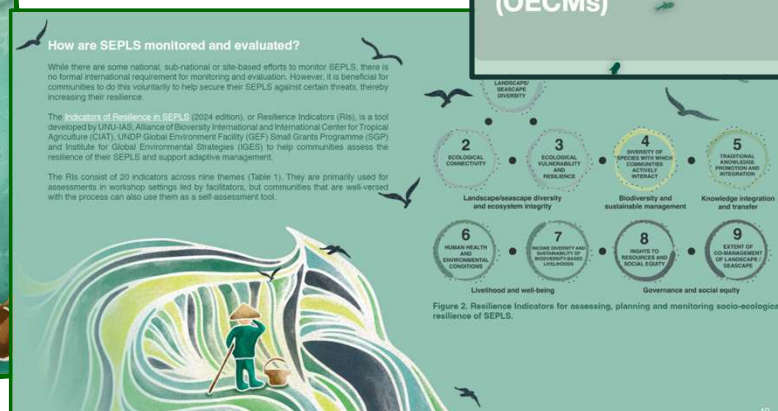
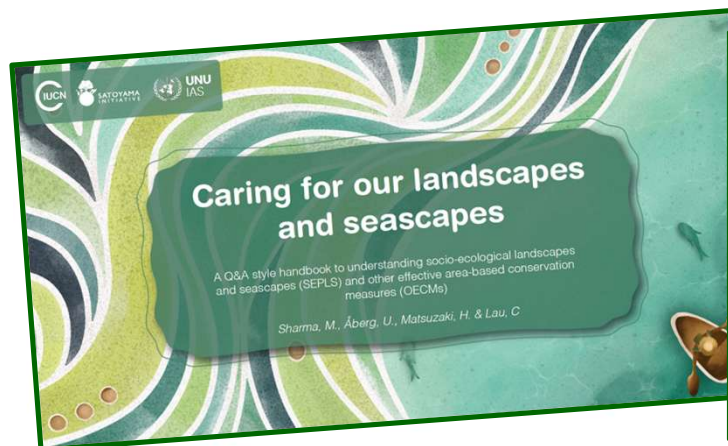
OECMs and landscape approaches like SEPLS are essential, not optional



## QUESTION 5 · TWO RELATED CONCEPTS

### Development of learning materials

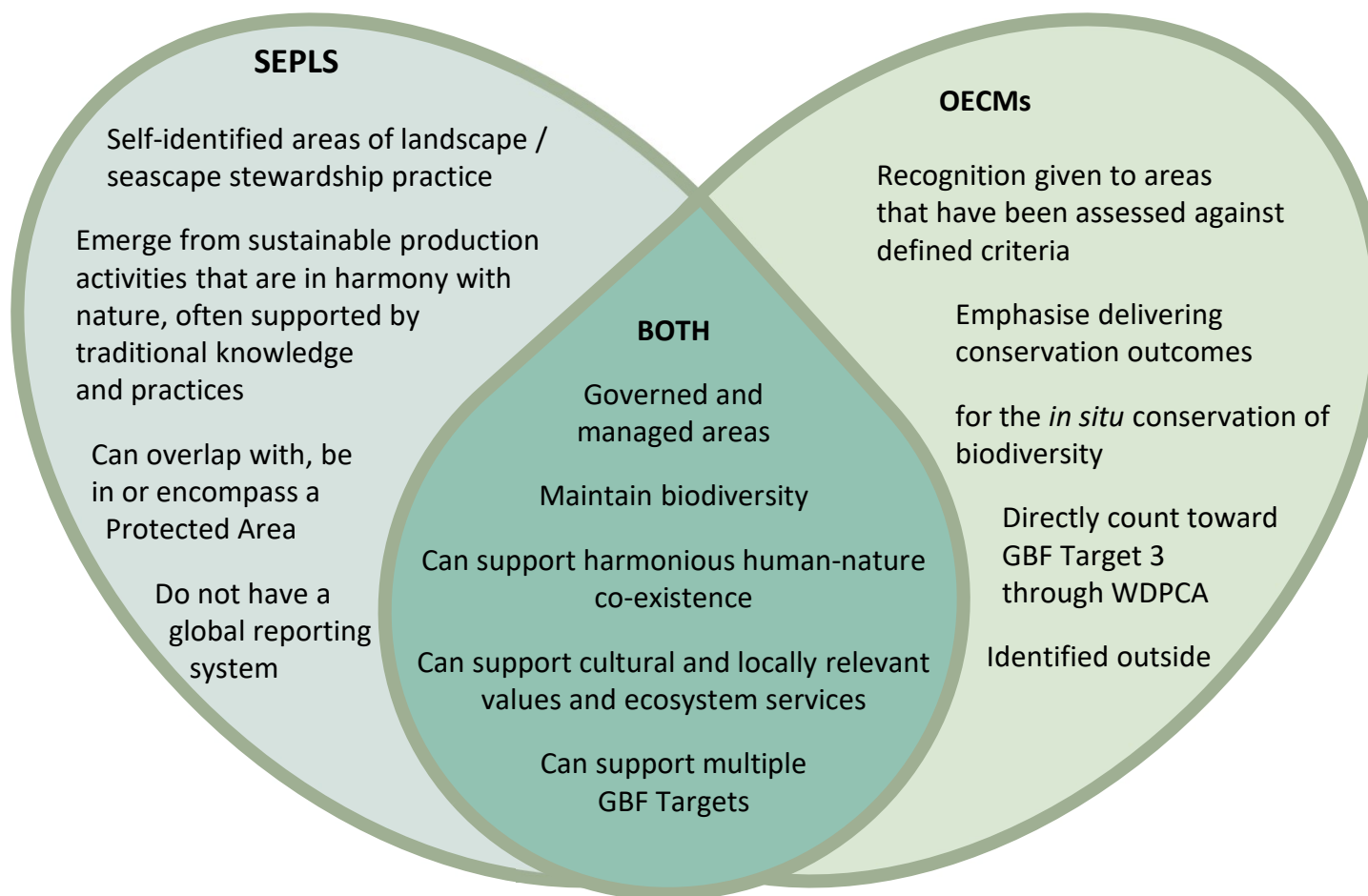
- Interlinkages between SEPLS and OECMs
- Background of the two concepts, definitions, incentives, reporting etc.
- OECM screening, assessment, monitoring and the SEPLS Resilience indicators
- Annex with selected case studies
- Separate case study compendium



<https://iucn.org/our-work/topic/effective-protected-areas/iucns-work-30x30/oecms/understanding-socio-ecological>

## QUESTION 5 · TWO RELATED CONCEPTS

# How SEPLS and OECMs relate



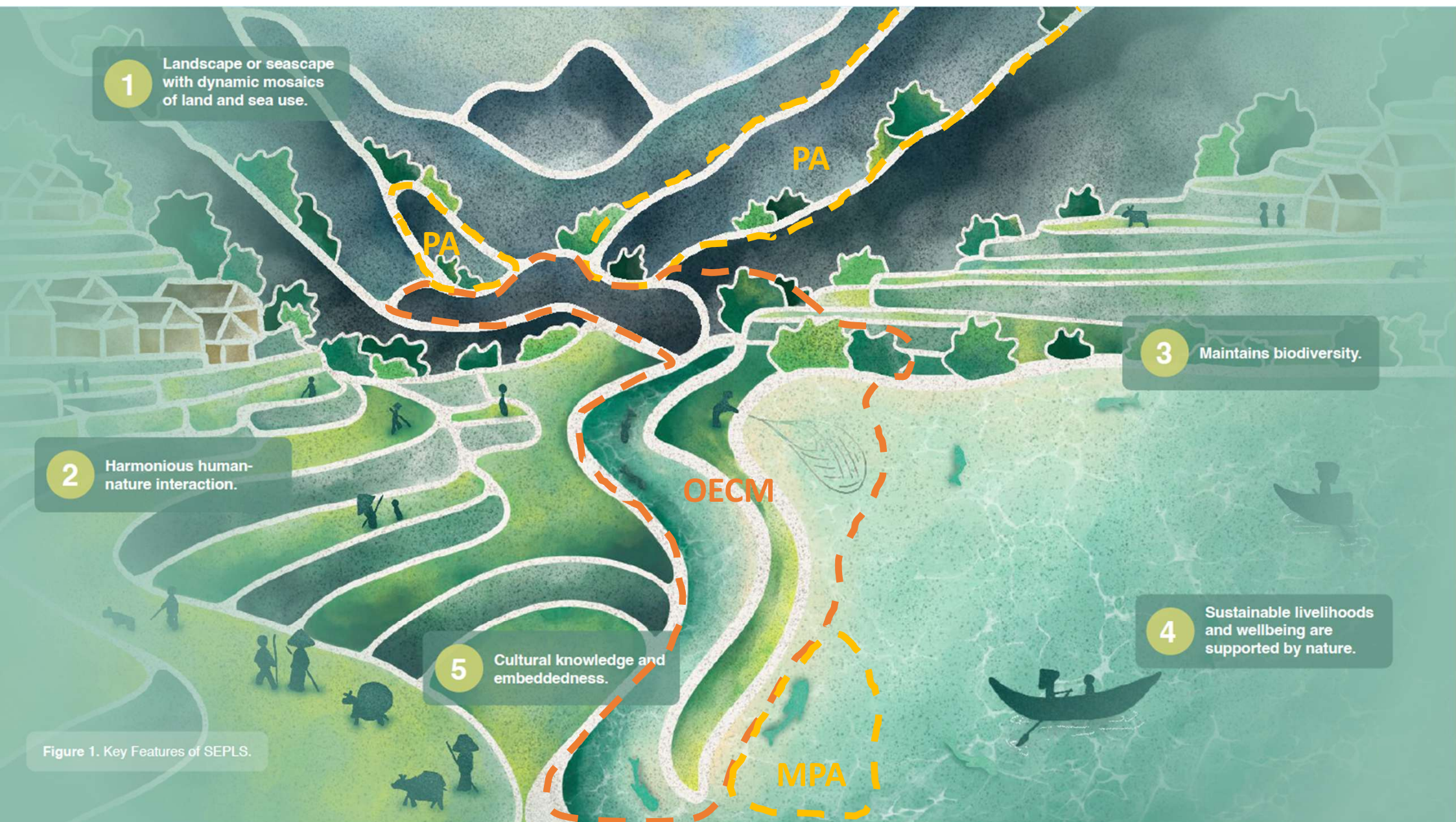


Figure 1. Key Features of SEPLS.



## QUESTION 5 · THE HONEST ANSWER

# Not automatically, but often, yes



### Case-by-case, always

Some SEPLS, or parts of them, may meet all OECM requirements. Others won't. Each area must be assessed individually against the criteria, never assumed.



### Prioritise what matters most for biodiversity

Focus assessment on the areas within a SEPLS that are particularly important for biodiversity conservation and connectivity.



### Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Any recognition process must be built on FPIC with the communities and rights-holders governing the area.



### Backed by tools and guidance

Tools, guidance, learning materials and a growing collection of case studies now help practitioners work through this assessment step by step.



## QUESTION 6 · WHY IT'S WORTH PURSUING

# Potential benefits of OECM recognition



### Recognition & legitimacy

Scaling conservation; national and international recognition for conservation efforts already underway; increasing visibility and standing for local actors.



### Financial opportunities

Eligibility for national OECM incentives, stronger access to conservation finance, and potential added value for sustainably produced goods.



### Partnerships & support

Recognised sites attract more interest from organisations offering technical, financial or on-the-ground support.



### Security & rights

Stronger safeguard against competing land uses, and a way to strengthen, not replace, customary governance and resource rights.

## BRINGING IT TOGETHER

# Key takeaways

- 1 There are clear synergies between SEPLS and OECMs, in valuing local stewardship, conservation and landscape/seascape-scale thinking.
- 2 High potential exists for parts of SEPLS to be recognised as OECMs but should always be on case-by-case basis.
- 3 IUCN and IPSI/UNU-IAS have built joint guidance and case studies specifically to support OECMs identification in SEPLS.
- 4 This is a real opportunity to recognise what local actors are already achieving, and help scale conservation toward Target 3.

*Next: hear exactly how this plays out on the ground from across the globe.*



# Thank you

*Questions welcome*

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