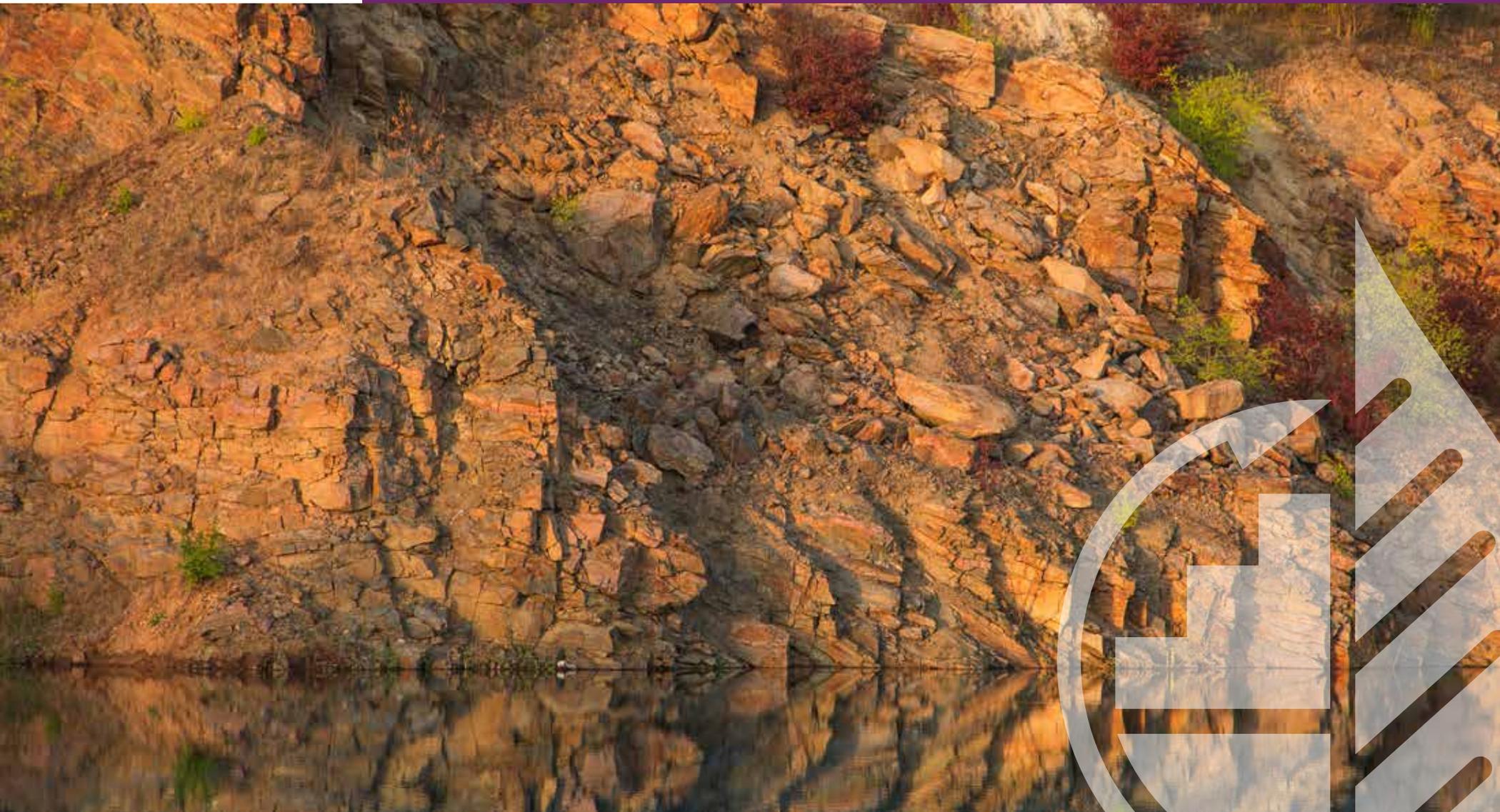




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Rocky Areas Project Guidance



Introduction

Rocky habitats are surface areas dominated by exposed rock, such as mountain peaks, inland cliffs, buttes and rocky outcrops. In many cases, rocky areas consist of some of the least disturbed habitats on earth. The plant and animal communities they support are very diverse. In addition, many cliff areas provide recreational opportunities such as hiking, climbing, trail riding, mountain biking and camping.

Rocky areas are highly susceptible to degradation from accelerated erosion, landslides and climate change, as well as loss of habitat caused by human activities like logging, mining, agriculture and recreation.

In addition to naturally-occurring rocky habitats like inland cliffs, outcrops and mountain peaks, WHC Conservation Certification recognizes man-made rocky habitats involving quarries and open pit mines. Quarries are typically large areas from which stone or other rocky materials have been extracted. Depending on the location of the quarry, these areas can be rich with wildlife and associated habitats, or can be restored to provide important habitat. By their nature, quarry operations result in disturbance to the natural environment; however, with proper assessment and planning, negative impacts from quarry operations can be reduced or even avoided in some areas. In areas where harm cannot be avoided, biodiversity can be recovered and enhanced as part of reclamation activities.

Building Your Program

Projects are divided into four categories: **Habitat**, **Species Management**, **Education and Awareness** and **Other Options**. You can build a program with more than one of each category but you must associate your program with at least one habitat. This Rocky Areas Project Guidance is in the **Habitat** category. You will be able to associate your rocky areas project with **Education and Awareness** projects, as well as with **Species Management** projects like those focused on mammals or birds.



Habitat – Projects that focus on conservation actions to protect, restore and manage different habitats.



Species Management – Projects addressing the conservation needs of targeted wildlife species or groups of species.



Education and Awareness – Projects to improve awareness, understanding and skills relating to conservation and the environment.



Other Options – Specialized projects that add value to your conservation efforts.

Browse the Project Guidance library at wildlifehc.org/pg.

What Do Rocky Areas Projects Look Like?

In general, rocky habitats cannot be created, but can be protected, managed or restored. Depending on the location, projects implemented on inland cliff, mountain peak, quarry and open pit mine areas can involve management or enhancement of existing rocky areas, restoration of a degraded site with appropriate local plantings, or monitoring of a minimally-disturbed or undisturbed area.

Quarry and open pit mine projects can also create or restore habitat as a part of a rehabilitation plan connected to the quarry or mine operations.

Considerations for Corporate Lands

Projects implemented on corporate-owned lands have different circumstances and challenges to those on public lands, protected lands or wild lands.

Which types of corporate lands are best suited for rocky areas projects?

Mid- to large-sized properties that seek to manage or restore existing habitat or create new habitats will increase the opportunities for a broader array of wildlife and plants that will benefit from appropriate management. Smaller properties can provide more limited opportunities to enhance habitats, but still be important to general wildlife or targeted niche species.

Corporate lands of all sizes can provide important educational and outreach opportunities involving rocky areas. Project locations can serve as small-scale demonstration sites, while a variety of areas can promote wildlife viewing, outdoor classroom activities or recreation.

Addressing challenges

The corporate context presents certain challenges for implementing rocky areas projects. Understanding these concerns and potential ways to overcome them can help your project succeed in the long term.

Concern	Response
Teams and community volunteers will likely have knowledge gaps about rocky areas, wildlife that use rocky areas and appropriate activities for management and monitoring of rocky areas.	<i>Knowledgeable staff or local experts from resource agencies can provide volunteers with workshops and information that will equip them with the knowledge needed for successful project implementation.</i>
Activities conducted on steep/extreme terrain might be prohibitive due to safety concerns.	<i>Experienced rock climbers may assist with project implementation, maintenance, and monitoring.</i> <i>Teams should design a monitoring plan that includes remote monitoring techniques, such as game cameras and spotting scopes, and that accommodates safety concerns.</i>
Public access to the project site might be limited due to safety concerns or regulatory requirements.	<i>Teams should design the project so that employees can easily manage and monitor it.</i> <i>Teams can engage the community or technical experts by using remote sensing techniques and other alternative presentation media to show relevant site features to audiences.</i>

Getting Started with Rocky Areas Projects

For a project to qualify toward Conservation Certification, you must be able to answer “yes” to five questions.

1. Is the project locally appropriate?
2. Does it have a stated conservation or education objective?
3. Does it provide value or benefit to the natural community?
4. Have outcomes been measured and is there supporting documentation?
5. Does it exceed any pertinent regulatory requirements?

Conservation and education objectives

It is a requirement of Conservation Certification that rock areas projects be designed to meet one or more conservation objectives. Objectives can guide the direction of the project, help motivate others to participate, and provide a basis for evaluation.

The following are suggested objectives for rocky areas projects. Your team may choose one or more of these objectives, or develop your own relevant objectives.

- Managing a rocky area to benefit rocky area-associated plants and wildlife in general
- Managing a rocky area to benefit a specific species or suite of species
- Restoring or managing a rocky area to create an ecosystem that is self-perpetuating over the long term
- Restoring or managing a rocky area to provide the same ecosystem functions as natural, undisturbed rocky area ecosystems
- Monitoring a rocky area and appropriately controlling/managing factors to reduce the establishment and spread of invasive species
- Providing examples and education for employees or community members on certain features or functions of restored rocky areas and their values to native plants, wildlife, water quality and recreation

The following strategies are recommended to strengthen the conservation impact of your project:

- Plant or manage for locally-appropriate native plants so that the rocky area contains or exceeds a minimum level of diversity appropriate to the region
- Demonstrate an understanding of why each species was chosen for the planting list, including wildlife benefit, substrate and light requirements, or its role in the natural community
- Integrate biodiversity goals into the quarry/ open pit rehabilitation plan or develop a biodiversity management plan, with goals such as biodiversity targets, revegetation with native species and active control of invasive species, long-term post closure management for biodiversity-related land use, active monitoring, and biodiversity-related end-use
- Establish a baseline of plant and wildlife species in the rocky area, upon which desired outcomes can be based and evaluated
- Include regular, credible monitoring of the rocky area and its species
- Include credible monitoring that contributes to a citizen science program or the database of an established rocky area conservation organization and that is used to inform the project
- Control invasive species by appropriately monitoring for invasive plant presence, and when necessary, safely and appropriately remove the invasive species from the rocky area
- Be located adjacent to or near an existing protected rocky area and managed in alignment with that rocky area
- Provide multiple ecological functions
- Incorporate ongoing cooperation with an existing rocky area conservation initiative, either public or non-profit
- Connect to larger local, regional and landscape-scale initiatives for rocky area conservation
- Use the habitat in a learning context to educate relevant learners about topics related to rocky areas, either through visits to the rocky area or through its use in off-site presentations or educational activities

- Provide opportunities for university students, professors and other scientific professionals to conduct research in the rocky area that is used to inform the project
- Maintain or commit to maintain the project over the long term

Partnerships

Rocky area projects implemented on corporate lands or nearby public lands can benefit from partnerships with groups that have established relevant conservation or education objectives. A team can use such a partnership to help design, create or monitor its rocky areas project and provide educational opportunities for employees and community members. Partners may also be able to assist the team with leveraging funds for implementing and maintaining the project, and can help create links between the on-site project and other rocky areas projects or conservation priorities in the region.

Resources

Your project may benefit from online or printed resources available for your region to support the design, delivery, maintenance and monitoring of rocky areas projects.

A search for “rocky” in the Conservation Registry returns several projects implemented through WHC’s certification program. This is a great place to find inspiration for your project and see what others are doing in and around your location.

The following terms, in any combination, may be useful when searching online for items related to this theme:

rocky	open pit
cliff	quarry
mountain	fjords
rocky outcrops	lichen
canyon	mosses
rocky ledges	cliff-nesting birds
buttes	surface rock
bedrock	

Understanding the Application Process

Documentation

When applying for Conservation Certification, you will provide documentation of the planning, implementation, maintenance and monitoring of your rocky areas project. The following is required documentation for rocky areas projects; however, you may also submit additional supporting materials.

Map/image of the project area, showing the relative size and approximate location of the project

Photographs or videos that depict the progress of the project implementation and management.

Monitoring logs that show the frequency, type, and results of monitoring of the project, whether in an informal manner or a scientifically rigorous manner.

Maintenance plans that demonstrate appropriate activities that meet the needs of the habitat to fully support the target species and support the conservation and education objectives.

Updated survey of plants and/or animals that are currently known to occur in the rocky habitat, including common and scientific names and whether the plant is native.

Project design or plan that shows how the project was designed for success and local appropriateness. This can include descriptions of:

- Appropriate siting of the project
- Site and regional appropriateness – what is the reference system, soil information, and/or local expertise used to choose the species list?
- Intended or actual planting list that includes the name of plant (genus and species), bloom time, which species it attracts and what habitat function it provides
- Technological intervention where appropriate for irrigation or other habitat improvements
- Educational features such as signage and trails
- Any additional steps taken to ensure success of the implementation, such as soil tests, soil prep, revision of the plant list by a technical expert, etc.
- The mining plan or rehabilitation plan for quarry or open pit operations that incorporates biodiversity targets for rocky habitats, or the separate Biodiversity Management Plan if one is in place for quarry or open pit operations.

Application questions

As you complete the application online, you will be asked the following questions about your rocky areas project. These questions will help us understand and evaluate your project.

	Question	Why this question is important
Overview	What is the total size of the rocky area managed for this project?	<i>This provides us with a description of your project to allow us to assess it.</i>
	Describe the habitat in general including plants and structures.	
	Give a brief description of the vegetation types found in the habitat and list several of the common plant species.	
	Briefly summarize activities taking place to manage the targeted habitat.	
	Upload a map showing the location and photos showing the rocky area habitat.	
	When did work on the ground begin?	
Objective	What are the project's conservation objectives?	<i>Having a conservation objective is a requirement for certification.</i>

	Question	Why this question is important
Habitat Creation or Expansion	Give a brief description of the vegetation types found in the habitat and list several of the common plant species.	<i>For rocky habitats, size and location are important factors that determine success and ecological benefit.</i>
	Upload a dated list of current plant and/or animal species in the rocky area habitat including common and scientific names and whether the species is native to the region.	
	Is this a new project not presented in previous applications?	
	Does it replace a habitat with less ecological value?	
	Describe the habitat prior to your project.	
	Describe any design or plant selection considerations that were part of this new project.	
	Upload documentation of the specific considerations.	
	Since the last application, have you expanded the size of your habitat or the area being managed?	
	What is the size of the habitat that has been added since the last application?	
	Does the habitat expansion replace a habitat with less ecological value?	
	Describe the habitat present prior to your project.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Habitat Creation or Expansion (cont.)	Describe any design or plant selection considerations that were part of this project expansion.	<i>For rocky habitats, size and location are important factors that determine success and ecological benefit.</i>
	Upload documentation of the specific considerations.	
	What is the size of the area that is being newly managed since the last application?	
Management	Describe the steps taken to maintain the rocky area habitat.	<i>Appropriate management policies and practices are also important to the species that use rocky habitats.</i>
	Provide a timeline of maintenance and other completed activities.	
	Upload documentation of these activities.	
	Is water conservation a concern in the project region?	
	Describe any water conservation measures that are incorporated in the project.	
	Please upload documentation of the system.	
	Does the area include any recreational areas, structures or disturbed areas?	
	Describe steps to minimize disturbance and fragmentation of the rocky area habitat by the structures or activities.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Monitoring	Was baseline data collected for this project?	<i>Monitoring is essential to understand the impact of the project and to be able to adapt the project develops.</i>
	Describe the types of baseline data collected.	
	Upload the baseline data.	
	Select each type of monitoring that is being carried out.	
	List each type of monitoring, including the frequency and list any plans or protocols used.	
	Upload the monitoring protocols, if applicable.	
	Upload the monitoring data and any analysis, if applicable.	
	Provide a brief summary of results from monitoring.	
	Evaluate the success of the project. If there were any concerns, what are the plans to address them in the future?	
Employee Participation	Do employees actively contribute to the rocky area project?	<i>Employee participation can strengthen a project and secure its future.</i>
	How many employees participate in the project on a regular basis?	
	Describe how employees are involved in this project.	
	How many employee hours were spent on the following activities each year?	

	Question	Why this question is important
Other Participants	Do any groups or individuals outside of your company actively contribute to the project on a regular basis?	<i>It is not always possible to recruit outside groups to a project. Conservation and education partners can strengthen a project and provide different audiences to use it for lessons or recreation, thus broadening its reach.</i>
	Select the types of groups.	
	List the names of the groups you work with.	
	Describe their involvement in this project.	
	How many hours were spent by the groups on the following activities each year?	
	If you work with a rocky area specialist and have a current letter of support from them, upload it here.	
	List additional sources of technical advice (e.g. website, guidebook, etc.) and describe how they were used.	
Regulatory Requirements	Are any aspects of the project done in relation to regulatory requirements?	<i>Going beyond compliance is a requirement for certification.</i>
	Explain how the project exceeds requirements.	
Connectivity	Does the project connect with other rocky area habitats on neighboring land?	<i>Connectivity on-site and across fence lines helps to decrease fragmentation, one of the leading causes of habitat loss.</i>
	Describe how the project connects with the other rocky area habitats.	
	Describe any coordinated management efforts with other rocky area habitats.	

	Question	Why this question is important
Alignment	Does the project align with any larger scale initiatives? (e.g. corporate strategy, regional conservation plan, migratory pathway, watershed plan, etc.)	<i>Aligning conservation efforts with large-scale conservation plans and other regional conservation initiatives allows a site-based activity to support a landscape-scale objective.</i>
	Is the project part of a corporate level commitment to rocky area habitat?	
	Upload documentation of your corporate commitment to rocky area habitat.	
	Does the project align with an existing conservation plan or other large-scale initiative?	
	List the conservation plans or other large-scale initiatives the project aligns with and provide website links, if available.	
	How does your project align with these large-scale initiatives?	
Existing Certifications	Does this project have third party rocky area habitat related certification?	<i>Other certifications or recognitions illustrate strong efforts and commitments.</i>
	List the certifications and provide a website link if available.	

Content development for Conservation Certification

To inform the development of Conservation Certification, WHC analyzed the projects it was recognizing through its certification program to assess whether they were aligned with contemporary conservation and education priorities.

Following this assessment and using information from it, WHC convened Advisory Committees around many of the conservation and education themes to develop the content that would guide practitioners and applicants in the future. Some themes, including rocky area habitat projects, that have not yet been informed by external stakeholders, are presented to allow applicants to receive recognition. WHC plans to have all themes informed by stakeholders.

More information can be found about this process in the “Our Impact” section of wildlifehc.org, under “Commitment to Transparency.”



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The WHC Strategy and Planning team can help you build a successful project by identifying needs, making connections with partners and resources, and providing strategies that meet business and conservation goals. Contact us today.

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Every act of conservation matters.

