



The VCA Standard

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1. Caring for our planet

Everywhere, life on Earth is under threat. Scientists think that the continuing loss of biodiversity is as serious as climate change. Ecosystems are being degraded, natural habitats and open spaces are disappearing, and many wild species are becoming more endangered.

Nature, however, can be conserved and used sustainably. Ecosystems can be restored, habitats and open spaces can be protected, species can be saved, and natural resources can be harvested sustainably. Everyone - individuals, local communities, private companies, non-profit organisations, and public agencies - can help to conserve nature where we live and work. Hectare by hectare, we can conserve our planet.

Verified Conservation Areas (VCAs) offer an inclusive approach to recognise and encourage area-based conservation action by communities, companies and individuals. VCAs can be managed publicly, privately or communally, and they may be managed by for-profit or not-for-profit organisations.

The online **VCA List** is open to any area that has or is planning to have a conservation management system as set out this Standard.

Once listed, a VCA can be publicly recognised for its management practices and its positive conservation outcomes. This can generate a range of direct and indirect benefits for the area, including assurance of its conservation management, strengthened relationships with key stakeholders, and new opportunities for impact investment and collective action.

The VCA approach enables innovative and entrepreneurial opportunities for all of us to become directly involved in caring for our planet, hectare by hectare.

2. What is a Verified Conservation Area?

A **Verified Conservation Area (VCA)** is a geographically-defined area which is listed on the VCA List and managed to conserve nature and use living natural resources sustainably in the context of sustainable development.

2.1 Specifying a conservation area

A VCA can be registered by any community, company, organisation, government authority, or individual who is able to implement a conservation management plan for a geographically-defined area. Potential area managers include the following:

- **Public sector area managers**
 - Local authorities - e.g. municipal and provincial parks
 - Natural-resource authorities - e.g. forests, lakes, coastal areas

- Central governments - e.g. national parks
- Intergovernmental organisations

- **Private sector area managers**
 - Local and indigenous communities
 - Cooperatives and land trusts
 - Green developers and property-management companies
 - Corporate and individual landowners

- **Non-profit area managers**
 - Community-based organisations
 - Conservation and development NGOs
 - Private foundations and academic institutions
 - Faith-based organisations

Local authorities, for example, may wish to attract residents and businesses to their towns by registering VCAs to make clear their commitment to conservation and sustainable development. Legally protected areas may want to register as VCAs to enhance their ability to secure additional financial support.

Intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN Development Programme, may partner with local community organisations to develop VCA-compliant management plans for specific areas that have clear conservation and development outcomes. International conservation NGOs may want to partner with local stakeholders to register VCAs for key biodiversity areas. Companies may wish to register VCAs to provide ongoing assurance of their biodiversity mitigation actions.

VCA registration requires that an area has a management authority, but this authority does not need to have actual ownership of the area. An indigenous community, for example, could register a VCA for which they have recognised traditional rights, but for which they may not have a registered title deed. A company could register an area for which they have a license concession with a set of rights and responsibilities. An NGO could register an area which they do not own, but for which they have a management agreement with its owners.

2.2 Conservation & sustainable development

The management objective for a VCA is sustained area-based conservation. The area should be managed to enhance the status of biodiversity or, at the very least, to prevent further biodiversity loss.

This objective is based on the seminal definition of conservation set out in the **IUCN World Conservation Strategy**:

Conservation is... the management of human use of the biosphere so that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations.

Thus conservation is positive, embracing preservation, maintenance, sustainable utilization, restoration, and enhancement of the natural environment.

Importantly, sustainable utilisation is an integral component of conservation. In this respect, In the context of international biodiversity policy, VCAs are aligned directly with the core objectives of the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** - “the conservation of biological diversity” and “the sustainable use of its components.”

Regarding the CBD’s **Strategic Plan for Biodiversity**, the VCA approach is an “effective area based conservation measure” supporting several of the **Aichi Targets** including:

- Target 4 on sustainable production;
- Targets 7 and 11 on areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry, and ecosystems that provide essential services;
- Targets 11 and 15 on conserving 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10% of coastal and marine areas and restoring 15% of degraded ecosystems; and
- Target 20 on resource mobilisation.

The VCA conservation objective is also aligned with the focus of the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** on “long-term integrated strategies that focus simultaneously... on improved productivity of land, and the rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level” and its commitment to land degradation neutrality.

In addition, the VCA conservation objective is supportive of the focus of the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** on “stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere... within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”

In terms of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, VCAs directly support Goal 14 to “conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” and Goal 15 to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”

2.3 Verifying conservation performance

VCA registration, as set out in this Standard, aims to enable transparent and accountable verification of the conservation management of an area. It does so through best practice standards and guidance, transparency, and independent audits.

IFC Performance Standards

The core standard and guidance for establishing and reporting on a conservation area management plan is based on best practice for biodiversity-responsible financing as set out in **International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards on Environmental and Social Sustainability**. The IFC Standards have been adopted by major investment banks worldwide - notably by the Export Credit Agencies of OECD member countries and by the Equator Principles Financial Institutions which are responsible for more than 70% of the international project finance in developing countries.

IFC PS1 sets out the overall framework for the assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts as follows:

- Identify and evaluate environmental and social risks and impacts;
- Adopt a mitigation hierarchy to anticipate and avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, minimise, and, where residual impacts remain, compensate/offset for risks and impacts; and
- Promote improved environmental and social performance through the effective use of management systems.

IFC PS6 sets out the specific objectives for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of living natural resources as follows:

- Protect and conserve biodiversity;
- Maintain the benefits from ecosystem services; and
- Promote the sustainable management of living natural resources through the adoption of practices that integrate conservation needs and development priorities.

In addition to the core guidance provided by the IFC Performance Standards and their associated Guidance Notes, the VCA approach also includes a Toolkit of recommended tools for effective conservation area management.

Transparency

The VCA approach promotes transparency by requiring that a VCA's conservation management plan is posted on the VCA List. For an area to remain on the VCA List, it must also post annual conservation performance reports on the VCA website. These requirements facilitate visibility and public accountability of the area's conservation management and its outcomes.

Independent Audit

To be listed on the VCA List, an area's management plan and annual performance reports must be audited by an independent auditor. The audit reports are published on the VCA website. They provide further assurance that the area is being managed to achieve positive conservation outcomes. Also, a VCA Auditor must be approved by the VCA Board.

3. Listing on the VCA website

This section set outs the registration process and details the specific actions that need to be undertaken for an area to be listed and remain listed on the VCA List.

The VCA List is at ConserveAreas.org/List.

3.1 The registration process

The VCA listing process consists of two straightforward steps:

Step 1: Register a VCA

To list your area as a Registered VCA, you will need to submit a **Conservation Management Plan** and an **Audit** of the plan.

These documents will be published on the area's webpage on the VCA website. The area manager also needs to provide text and photos for this webpage.

Note: You also have the option of initially listing your area as a Proposed VCA by submitting a VCA Proposal and a Letter of Support. A Proposed VCA needs to be registered within two years of listing.

Step 2: Remain registered as a VCA

To remain registered, annually submit a **Conservation Performance Report** and an **Audit** of the report.

These documents are published on the area's webpage on the VCA website.

3.2 Listing requirements

This page describes the specific actions required to propose, register and report on a VCA. Further details are provided in later sections of this Standard.

1. Propose (optional)	2. Register	3. Stay registered
<p>↓</p> <p>1.1 Draft a VCA Proposal including an overview of the area, its conservation status, and the plan to register within two years.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>2.1 Draft a Conservation Management Plan including an overview of the area, biodiversity baseline, impact assessment, and conservation actions and monitoring.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>3.1 Prepare a Conservation Performance Report including outcomes based on monitoring, updates on stakeholder engagement, and lessons learned.</p>
<p>↓</p> <p>1.2 Secure a Letter of Support from an independent biodiversity conservation expert.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>2.2 Secure a Management Plan Audit from an approved VCA Auditor who will review documents, visit the area, and conduct interviews.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>3.2 Secure a Performance Report Audit from an approved VCA Auditor, who will, at the minimum, review documents.</p>
<p>↓</p> <p>1.3 Complete the webpage template for the area’s VCA webpage.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>2.3 Complete or update the webpage template for the area’s VCA webpage.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>3.3 Update the VCA webpage, as needed, e.g. new text, links or photos.</p>
<p>↓</p> <p>1.4 Submit the Proposal, the Letter and the template for listing as a Proposed VCA.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>2.4 Submit the Plan, the Audit, and the template to register your VCA.</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>3.4 Submit the Report, the Audit and webpage updates to remain on the VCA List.</p>
<p>↓</p> <p>We will list your area in the online VCA List.</p> <p>Go to 2 within 2 years. ↗</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>We will list your area in the online VCA List.</p> <p>Go to 3. ↗</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>We will continue to list your VCA online.</p> <p>Repeat 3 annually. ↑</p>

4. Propose a VCA

Two documents are required be listed as a Proposed VCA:

- **VCA Proposal**
- **Letter of Support**

Text, photos and supporting materials also need to be provided for the area's webpage on the VCA website. See Section 7.

This section of the VCA Standard sets out the core information which needs to be included in these documents. The structure of these documents, however, can vary depending on the needs of the area manager. They need not exactly follow the outlines presented here.

Importantly, a Proposed VCA is expected to become a Registered VCA within two years of being listed.

4.1 VCA Proposal

The **VCA Proposal** should be clear and concise as it will be publicly available on the VCA website. It should contain the following information:

a. Overview of the conservation area

- **Executive summary** - Provide a concise description of the area and its conservation plans.
- **Area characteristics** - Provide a map of the area; locate a central/key point within the area with two decimal geographic coordinates; specify the area's size in hectares; and identify the predominant ecoregion. (See worldwildlife.org/biomes.)
- **Area manager** - Provide the name and contact details of the responsible management authority and supporting evidence of the manager's right to manage the area. Or describe the plans for establishing the area manager within the next two years.

b. Biodiversity baseline conditions

Present a preliminary- i.e. rapid or desktop - assessment of the biodiversity baseline conditions of the proposed VCA and the broader landscape in which it is located. This should include a description of the current status of ecosystems, habitats and species. If there is built or planned infrastructure, this should also be described.

c. Conservation impact assessment

Include an initial list of key stakeholders who should be consulted in the preparation of the conservation management plan and engaged in its implementation. (Note: Stakeholder consultations are not required at this stage.)

Present a preliminary - i.e. rapid or desktop - assessment of key potential impacts on nature - both negative and positive - within the proposed area and the broader landscape which should be considered in preparation of a conservation area management plan.

d. Next steps for registering the VCA

Set out the planned steps for registering the area as VCA within two years. If any external support is needed, this can also be presented.

4.2 Letter of Support

Along with the VCA Proposal, the area manager needs to secure a **Letter of Support** from a respectable, independent, conservation area expert. The expert can be from a government agency, university department, reputable NGO, or biodiversity consultancy; and the letter, if possible, should be on official letterhead.

The letter itself should clearly state that the expert has reviewed the Proposal and supports listing the area as a Proposed VCA. The letter will be published on the VCA website. (Note: An audit of the Proposal is not required.)

5. Register a VCA

Two documents are required be listed as a Registered VCA:

- **Conservation Management Plan**
- **Management Plan Audit**

Text, photos and supporting materials also need to be provided for the area's webpage on the VCA website. See Section 7.

This section of the VCA Standard sets out the core information which needs to be included in these documents. The structure of these documents, however, can vary depending on the needs of the area manager. They need not exactly follow the outlines presented here.

5.1 Conservation Management Plan

A VCA should be managed to have a positive impact on biodiversity or, at the very least, to prevent further loss of biodiversity.

The section sets out the key elements which need to be included in the **Conservation Management Plan** of an area to be listed as a Registered VCA. Though the Plan does not need to follow the outline presented in this section, it needs to include the following key components:

- a. **Overview of the conservation area**
- b. **Biodiversity baseline conditions**
- c. **Conservation impact assessment**
- d. **Conservation actions & monitoring**

The framework for an area-based conservation management plan presented here is based on the environmental assessment and management process set out in IFC PS1. The key conservation issues to be addressed are based on the requirements set out in IFC PS6. If the area manager chooses to adopt another approach rather than the IFC Performance Standards, the approach used and the reasons why should be made clear.

a. Overview of the conservation area

Provide core information on the area such as its geographical location, the manager, and conservation challenges and opportunities. This includes the following:

- **Executive summary** - Provide a concise description of the area and its conservation plans.
- **Area characteristics** - Provide a map of the area; locate a central/key point within the area with two decimal geographic coordinates; specify the area's size in hectares; and identify the predominant ecoregion. (See worldwildlife.org/biomes.)
- **Area manager** - Provide the name and contact details of the responsible management authority and supporting evidence of the manager's right to manage the area.

b. Biodiversity baseline conditions

The biodiversity baseline conditions set out the starting point against which conservation actions can be planned, managed and monitored. The area manager should aim to establish a robust understanding of the baseline conditions or set

out how baseline information will be generated through the conservation action plan.

In line with IFC PS6, the baseline conditions assessment, as appropriate to the area, should address the following topics:

- **Habitats** - Describe the current status of habitats in the proposed VCA and in the larger landscape - i.e., modified, natural or critical.
- **Legally protected areas** - Note any legally protected or internationally recognised areas within the proposed VCA and within the larger landscape and associated regulations regarding land use and conservation management.
- **Invasive alien species** - Identify any invasive alien species or threats of invasive species within the area and in the larger landscape.
- **Ecosystem services** - List key ecosystems services within the area and in the larger landscape, notably services of relevance to local neighbouring communities.
- **Production of living natural resources** - Identify existing or planned production of living natural resources in the area or in the broader landscape.

Further guidance on these topics is provided within PS6 and its associated Guidance Note 6 (GN6). These tools, along with other recommended tools are available in the online **VCA Toolkit** at ConserveAreas.org/Toolkit.

c. Conservation impact assessment

Attention potential impacts on nature within the conservation area and in the broader landscape from existing or planned land uses. These impacts can be negative or positive. The impact assessment should include the following key elements:

- **Stakeholder consultation** - Key stakeholders affected by or interested in the area's proposed conservation actions - particularly those living in the area or the nearby landscape - should be consulted. IFC PS1 explains the importance of engaging stakeholders as follows:

“Stakeholder engagement is the basis for building strong, constructive, and responsive relationships that are essential for the successful management of a project's environmental and social impacts. Stakeholder engagement is an ongoing process that may involve, in varying degrees, the following elements: stakeholder analysis and planning, disclosure and dissemination of information, consultation and participation, grievance mechanism, and ongoing reporting to affected Communities.”

- **Conservation ‘SWOT’ analysis** - For a VCA, the SWOT analysis should assess both ‘inside-the-fence’ Strengths & Weaknesses and ‘outside-the-fence’ Opportunities & Threats. In so doing, the VCA management plan can enhance area-based conservation in the context of broader sustainable landscape management.

For many VCAs, stakeholder consultation and a conservation SWOT analysis should be sufficient to decide on a set of actions to ensure a positive conservation performance. For some areas and some land uses, however, a more in-depth Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) may be required by regulators or by lenders. Where such an ESIA is required, documentation should be made accessible to the public through the area’s webpage on the VCA website.

d. Conservation actions & monitoring

Building on the biodiversity baseline assessment and the conservation impact assessment, the area manager needs to decide on a strategic set of conservation actions. These actions should aim to mitigate any potential negative impacts, weaknesses and threats, and enhance any potential positive impacts, strengths and opportunities.

The set of conservation actions should address conservation priorities within the area to be registered as a VCA. Where feasible, they should also address priorities within the broader landscape. Further, as appropriate, stakeholders should be engaged in their implementation.

In this regard, as appropriate, the conservation actions should adhere to the biodiversity mitigation strategy as set out in IFC PS6. This is shown in the table below alongside the IUCN definition of conservation.

Importantly, implementing conservation actions without monitoring actual performance is insufficient. As every VCA will have its own unique ecological, economic and social features, methodologies and metrics for monitoring will vary. Hence, the VCA Standard does not prescribe a monitoring procedure *per se*. However, quantitative and repeatable monitoring procedures are expected.

VCA framework for conservation actions

	IFC mitigation	IUCN conservation
Objectives	Protect and conserve biodiversity, maintain the benefits from ecosystem services, & promote the sustainable management of living natural resources	Management of human use of the biosphere to yield the greatest sustainable benefit while maintaining its potential to meet the needs & aspirations of future generations
Actions for habitats, legally protected areas, invasive alien species, and ecosystem services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avoid negative impacts 2. Minimise negative impacts 3. Restore biodiversity 4. Offset like-for-like or better 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation 2. Maintenance 3. Restoration 4. Enhancement of the natural environment
Actions for primary production of living natural resources	5. Implement sustainable management practices to credible standards as demonstrated by independent verification	5. Sustainable utilisation

5.2 Management Plan Audit

In order to be listed as a VCA, an independent **Management Plan Audit** must be submitted. The audit report must be prepared an approved VCA Auditor.

The VCA audit process is compatible with the IFC PS6 expectation that “credible globally, regionally, or nationally recognized standards for sustainable management of living natural resources” are adopted and that these “provide for independent verification or certification.”

It includes a review of key documents, a visit to the area, and interviews with key staff and stakeholders. The aim is to verify that the area’s conservation management plan is compliant with the VCA Standard.

The Management Plan Audit should address the following questions:

a. Overview of the conservation area

- Is there an Executive Summary providing a concise description of the area and its conservation plan?
- Is there a map of the area and is its location identified?
- Is the area's size in hectares stated and its ecoregion specified?
- Are the names and contact details of the management authority provided?
- Is there supporting evidence of the manager's right to manage the area?

b. Biodiversity baseline conditions

- Is there evidence of a science-based assessment of the area's biodiversity baseline conditions?
- As appropriate, does it include an assessment of habitats, legally protected areas, invasive alien species, ecosystem services, and the production of living natural resources?
- Are any significant recent changes to the biodiversity status of the area documented?

c. Conservation impact assessment

- Have key stakeholders been identified and consulted?
- Have the area's internal 'inside-the-fence' Strengths and Weaknesses with respect to maintaining or improving its biodiversity status been assessed?
- Have the 'outside-the-fence' broader landscape Opportunities and Threats to conserving biodiversity been assessed?

d. Conservation actions & monitoring

- As appropriate, does the plan include a set of conservation actions that aim to minimise negative impacts, weaknesses and threats, and enhance positive impacts, strengths, and opportunities?

Are these actions consistent with the IFC biodiversity mitigation strategy and the IUCN definition of conservation?

- Do these actions address conservation priorities within the area?
- As appropriate, do these actions also address conservation priorities within the broader landscape?
- Are robust procedures in place to monitoring implementation of the actions?

e. Overall audit assessment

- Was the area visited and, if so, when?
- Were staff and stakeholders interviewed and, if so, whom?
- Are the assessment of baseline conditions and potential impacts sufficient to establish an effective set of conservation actions?
- Are the planned actions coherent, strategic and realistic?
- Is the management plan likely to have a positive impact on biodiversity?
- Is the management plan compliant with the VCA Standard?
- Should the area be registered as a VCA?

6. Remain registered as a VCA

Two documents are required annually to remain listed as Registered VCA:

- **Conservation Performance Report**
- **Performance Report Audit**

Text, photos and supporting materials also need to be provided for the area's webpage on the VCA website. See Section 7.

This section of the VCA Standard sets out the core information which needs to be included in these documents. The structure of these documents, however, can vary depending on the needs of the area manager. They need not exactly follow the outlines presented here.

6.1 Conservation Performance Report

To remain listed as a VCA, the area manager is required to submit a **Conservation Performance Report** annually. The annual reports provide biodiversity management assurance to stakeholders including funders.

An annual VCA Performance Report is similar to an annual financial report except that it focuses on the outcomes of actions to conserve nature and use natural resources sustainably. It includes the following key elements:

a. Executive summary

- Include a concise summary of the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan over the last year.

b. VCA actions

- Present the monitoring results of the actions and indicate whether the biodiversity impact of the management plan is positive.

c. Stakeholder engagement

- As appropriate, report on the engagement of stakeholders over the last year in the implementation of the plan.

d. Adaptive Management

- Report on any lessons learned during the past year for improving conservation management and performance. The annual performance reports provide a basis for area managers to review the effectiveness of their management plans. At times, it may be necessary to adapt the plan to changing circumstances. Revisions of a management plan needs to be posted on the VCA website.

e. Additional information

- Highlight any additional information relevant to the area's performance such as monitoring reports, research papers, news articles, independent evaluations, video clips, and photo galleries. (Note: Links to key websites, video clips or reports can be posted on the area's webpage on the VCA website.

6.2 Performance Report Audit

Annually, in order to remain listed as a VCA, the area management authority must also submit a **Performance Report Audit** by an approved VCA Auditor. The Audit must review the Report and related documentation. As appropriate, the Auditor could also visit to the area and interview with stakeholders.

The Performance Report Audit should address the following questions:

a. Contents of the report

- Does the report include a concise summary of the implementation of the management plan over the past year?
- Does it report on the monitored outcomes of the conservation actions?
- Is there information on stakeholder engagement over the past year?
- If so, does it include stakeholder comments? (optional)
- Are lessons learned discussed and is the plan being adapted?
- Does the report highlight further relevant information?

b. Overall Assessment

- Were the report and associated documents reviewed?
- Was the area visited and were stakeholders interviewed?

- Do the monitored outcomes of the actions indicate conservation performance?
- Has implementation of the plan over the last year been effective?
- Is the performance report compliant with the VCA Standard?
- Should the VCA remain listed as a Registered VCA?

7. VCA webpage details

Once an area is listed as a Proposed VCA or Registered VCA, a unique page for the area will be set up on the VCA website.

This page needs to include the following information:

- **Area name** - *e.g. Jama-Coaque-Reserve*
- **Area url name** - *e.g. /jama-coaque*
- **Country** - *e.g. Ecuador*
- **Latitude** - decimal geographic coordinate - *e.g. -0.106806*
- **Longitude** - decimal geographic coordinate - *e.g. -80.117833*
- **Ecoregion** -predominant ecoregion of the area (worldwildlife.org/biomes)
- **Size** - number of hectares
- **Description text** - overview of the VCA (maximum 150 words)
- **Information hotlinks** - *e.g. area website, video clips, photos, or documents*
- **Support the Area text** -information on how to support the VCA including funding opportunities
- **Area photos & titles** - three (3) high quality digital photos of the VCA - a landscape, a native plant and a native animal - and one-line titles

8. Components of the VCA approach

The VCA approach is building an inclusive social movement for effective area-based conservation. It aims to make area-based conservation visible and publicly accountable. In so doing, it is establishing VCAs as a new asset class of natural capital.

8.1 Operational structures

The VCA approach includes the following operational components:

- **VCA Partners** - a growing coalition of public, private and non-profit organisation committed to scaling up the VCA approach.
- **VCA Board** - Governs the VCA programme including approving VCA Auditors and overseeing the evolution of the VCA approach.
- **VCA Auditors** - Authorised by the VCA Board to audit of VCA management plans and performance report. Also serve as a peer-review forum for the development of the VCA Standard and Toolkit.
- **VCA Team** - Manages and promotes the VCA approach and provides advisory services to VCAs on conservation planning, business planning and fundraising. Co-hosted by **Earthmind** (earthmind.org) at its office at the IUCN Conservation Centre in Switzerland.

More information about us is available at ConserveAreas.org/About.

8.2 VCA Toolkit

The online **VCA Toolkit** provides recommended guidance for planning, reporting, conservation and sustainable use. The core guidance provided in the Toolkit are the IFC Performance Standards 1 and 6. There is also a glossary of key terms.

See ConserveAreas.org/Guidance.

8.3 Becoming a VCA Auditor

VCA Auditors provide assurance of conservation performance through independent verification of VCA management plans and performance reports. VCA managers are welcome to propose independent, reputable auditors for their plans and reports.

A prospective Auditor needs to prepare an application letter which includes contact information, current employment details, academic qualifications and a summary of relevant professional experience and expertise.

The application letter must be dated and signed and include the following sentence:

'I hereby apply to become a VCA Auditor and agree to maintain a highest standard of professional integrity in verifying compliance of conservation area management plans and performance reports with the VCA Standard.'

The letter and a current CV should then be emailed to the VCA Office at register@ConserveAreas.org.

After approval by the VCA Board, the individual will be added to the roster of VCA Auditors listed at ConserveAreas.org/Auditors.