

AFRICAN  
CONSERVATION  
CENTRE

# Amboseli Ecosystem Partners

Rangelands Division meeting

Oltukai Lodge, Amboseli  
September 28<sup>th</sup> 2022



This is a report of the workshop proceedings of the meeting OF the Rangelands Division of AET held on September 28th, 2022. The list of participants is attached in the *Annex*.

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW AND WELCOMING REMARKS

The rangelands division of the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust (AET) brings together all players to reflect on the state of the rangelands, the threats they face and the impacts on wildlife, livestock and livelihoods. The aim is to share data and information from the research agencies on the trends and status of wildlife, livestock, habitats and rangeland productivity.

In response to the current drought, the meeting took stock of the information available and the range of actions possible to secure the future of the ecosystem and its value to the local communities.

The **Noongotiak Resource Centre (NRC)** was set aside by the community to serve as AET's central offices, a place for sharing and exchanging information and knowledge, and for promoting research on the ecosystem. The meeting highlighted the functions and values of the NRC and discussed plans for its development.

The participants were drawn from the leadership of the Amboseli group ranches, the conservation actors in the landscape, government agencies and the Kajiado County government.

AET Executive Director Jackson Mwato welcomed the thirty-one participants to the daylong meeting of the Rangeland Division set up under AET, The Amboseli Conservation Program and (ACP) and The African Conservation Centre (ACC) gave opening remarks and an overview of the agenda.

Dr. Western explained the reasons for setting up the Rangelands Division was to address the emerging issues affecting the future of the rangelands. Southern Kenya and northern Tanzania include the richest conservation areas on earth. Historically, communities have moved seasonally with wildlife and reserved areas like Amboseli for dry season foraging. Today, wildlife and livestock confront shrinking and degrading pasture lands and, more recently, subdivision. He cautioned that sedentarization even without subdivision degrades the rangelands. The main purpose of the NRC is to consolidate the relevant information for monitoring livestock and wildlife, anticipating the threats and taking aversive action.

Amboseli has been a leader in developing the first ever ecosystem plan in Kenya, and AET and its partners Amboseli Ecosystem Management Plans since 2008. The current drought and subdivision plans threaten to undermine the viability of the ecosystem plans, and livestock and wildlife populations which both depend on seasonal mobility across the open rangelands. The workshop brings together AET partners together to take stock of the threats and agree on the steps for designing and setting up the NRC.

## SUB-DIVISION AND LANDSCAPE CHALLENGES

Jackson Mwato gave an overview of the current landscape challenges raised by sub-division. Land sales, land conversion and fencing are already underway and blocking wildlife access to water and pasture.

The Project Implementation Committee (PIC) under AET, together with the county NEMA office and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), visited the ecosystem and found massive land conversion and new developments including lodges, fences and unauthorized structures. The PIC report will include actions NEMA needs to take to stem the illegal developments.

The field report calls for action and the support of AET partners (*Below photos of Jackson Mwato showing some of the developments of fences blocking wildlife movement*).



Effects of fences and infrastructure – Giraffes blocked by wire and road from crossing.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM WILDLIFE CENSUS REPORT

Christine Mwinzi from the Wildlife Research Training Institute (WTRI) gave a report of the Amboseli ecosystem wildlife census conducted in 2020. The count was done over 26 counting blocks and compared wildlife numbers and trends since 2010, which indicate slow recovery of some species. It was recommended that WRTI survey results be integrated with the ACP and DRSRS wildlife counts to give a more comprehensive picture of the long-term changes.

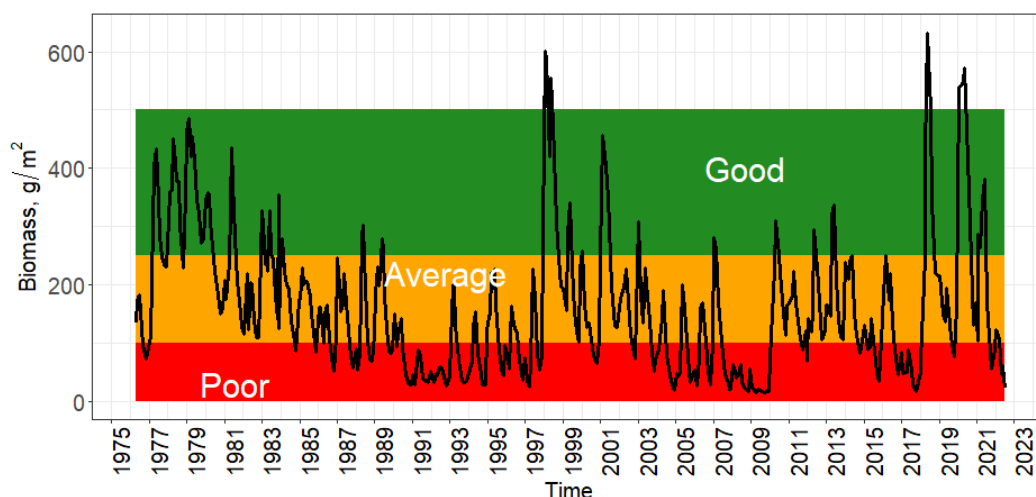
## HIGHLIGHTS FROM AMBOSELI CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Dr. Western gave a presentation of ACP's monitoring results since the 1970s. He showed how the wildlife distribution had defined the minimum viable area used as the basis of AEMP 2020-2030.

He also highlighted the key points emerging from the long-term monitoring data:

- Sedenterization has increased since the 1980s, causing extensive pasture degradation and a loss of fodder production
- Coupled with a loss of rangeland areas to farming and settlement, livestock production has fallen and the frequency of extreme pasture shortages has increased
- The economic losses of livestock production have grown steeply due to droughts intensified by heavy grazing
- However, there is more wildlife in Amboseli now than in the 1960s due to the expansion of the swamps in Amboseli National Park.
- The mobility of livestock and wildlife reduces the impact of drought and also human-wildlife conflict

Dr. Western said he could no longer keep up the effort and cost of continuing the 55-year long-term ecosystem monitoring and hoped that NRC would become the work place for all AET partners to share the cost and responsibility for sustaining and expanding the monitoring program. The aerial and ground monitoring deploying community resource assessors would be in the range of \$30,000-\$40,000 a year and he invited the partners to come together in supporting the long term ecological monitoring.



*Amboseli long-term pasture barometer measuring vegetation biomass in the ecosystem. The barometer remains deep in the red zone. Source: Amboseli Conservation Program*

Participants identified the critical areas is need of monitoring as under the current AEMP as the Selenkei conservancy connection to Lengarunyoni conservancy and the Motikanju to the Chyulus connection

The gazettement of the Ololorashi Ogulului Group Ranch (OGR) subdivision plan presently being subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment to ensure there is a guiding legal framework for sustaining livestock and wildlife grazing areas within the implementation plans.

## INFORMATION DATA PORTALS PRESENTATION

- Dr. Mose presented highlights from the ACP online data portal capturing all sources of data and information collected and produced in regular state-of-ecosystem reports. He shared links accessing various data products from the ACP portal, including recent extreme drought alerts which were presented to a specially-convened drought response meeting by the governor of Kajiado in August.

Dr. Mose urged that we reach agreement on identifying the common information needs, methods and inform platforms needed for decision-making. Researchers with relevant information should be included in the processes.

- Dr. Tobias Nyumba of University of York presented a briefing on the modelling tool ‘Kesho, which incorporates data from a wide range of sources to project future scenarios as a basis for collective planning and action. Kesho focuses on land uses practices and developments needed to find space for elephants and minimize conflict with human activities. The project will convene stakeholder feedback and planning meetings from November 2022 onwards.

## NOONGOTIAK RESOURCE CENTRE

Lucy Waruingi gave a brief of the Noonkotiak Resource Centre and its history. The OGR community in 2014 donated 150 acres of public land to be set aside as a community resource and information centre where the AET foundation stone was laid by the Dutch Ambassador and the Kajiado County Governor, Dr. Nkadienye in 2015, launching the construction of the office buildings.

## **PURPOSE**

The office buildings at NRC serves as AET's centre of operations linking community and partners in information gathering and communications across the ecosystem.

It is envisaged the planned expansion of NRC will serve the following functions of AET and partners:

- Within the framework of AEMP 2020-2030, track the trends, anticipate the key issues facing the Amboseli ecosystem, plan responses and take timely action to address the threats and new opportunities arising
- Provide regular information on rangeland conditions to guide grazing plans and conservation management
- Produce drought alerts, seasonal outlooks for livestock and wildlife condition, and likely threats and conflicts in formats able to reach landowners and AET partners
- Establish an information portal to integrate data sources and provide monthly updates and projections
- Set up a communications outreach program to transmit key information and encourage dialogue

## **INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

Currently, only the initially constructed offices and meeting rooms are in place. The meeting discussed the next steps for expanding NRC in line with the vision of AEMP 2020-2030. ACC has commissioned a world re-known architect and landscape architect, Mr. Hitesh Mehta, to develop a site and master plan for the various utilities envisaged, including the resource and education centre, community hall and cultural centre, as well as a visitor centre and support facilities. Because each structure may be funded by different donors, the site and master plans lay out the location of each facility and proposes harmonized building design

The various functions anticipated for AET partners in the development and operations of the NRC are as follows:

- Digital distribution of information and knowledge
  - Tented camping for income generation
  - An Information centre for visiting groups and tourists
  - "Research tourism" paying fees to research on topical issues
  - An outreach program with space for community group deliberations, including those of grazing committees and land use planning and management groups
  - Outreach programs to schools covering environmental and wildlife issues and field visits
  - Links with local Maa radio stations on key messages
  - The incorporation of traditional knowledge through respected rangeland ambassadors and leaders
  - Overseeing the resource assessors in the collection, production and disseminate of information on a quarterly basis
  - Selecting themes for information production and sharing on pastoralism and rangeland management
- Advising communities on opportunities for linking them to investors and to benefit from the conservancies and other rangeland enterprises

Some key considerations raised were:

1. How do we get people and children to the NRC? There will need to be a good all-season road directly to the centre
2. We need to be clear about the NRC products and target audiences
3. How will the centre coordinate with other research opportunities?

The meeting suggested on the following as areas to address in establishing the NRC:

- The current cultural centre should be converted to a community centre focused on women and Masai culture
- Learn lessons from past resource centres and challenges they have faced
- Undertake a risk assessment. Who will use and visit the centre? Why and How?
- Define the audiences clearly
- Have a common resource database with building blocks that bring the scattered data sources together
- NRCs database should include descriptions of the data collected and stored by each partnering institution, methods used and the protocols and standards needed to produce and access common shapefiles
- A management framework of the key human resources required with a passionate skilled team to run it

A space to hold community meetings for outreach and sharing information on land subdivision, fragmentation and other plans, and decisions affecting the Amboseli ecosystem. It was agreed that key partners should be identified to act on these proposals and further refine the proposed functions and role of NRC.

## WAY FORWARD:

The discussions agreed on the following Quick Wins for immediate follow-up:

1. Noonkotiak Resource Centre
  - a. Identify the audiences for NRC and the needs we must address
  - b. Use NRC to coordinate the conservancies through exchange learning and information sharing.
2. Data integration, collaboration and communication
  - a. Share existing key data gathered by researchers and field rangers, including conflict and poaching
  - b. Communicate and disseminate key information and findings
  - c. Establish rural communication and outreach techniques and programs among various partners
3. Rangeland Division
  - a. Use shared data and information to produce drought alerts and elicit responses through grazing, pasture management and restoration options and plans
  - b. Mitigate the floodings damaging roads and infrastructure in Amboseli National Park
  - c. Communicate and enforce land zoning and use regulations on all adverse developments

The meeting assigned ATE, ACC, ACP, IFAW and AET/OOGR as an ad-hoc team to advance the recommendations and report back to the Rangelands Division.

The following action points were agreed on:

- The ad-hoc committee should rapidly produce a framework for setting up a common database as a tool for information collation and communication to AET and partners
- The rangeland Division should meet with the relevant bodies at the onset of each dry season to review all available information out the outlook and determine appropriate plans and actions

The meeting then adjourned at 5:30pm with a word of prayer.

## ANNEX – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants of Rangeland Division committee Meeting, Held on 28/9/22 at Oltukai Lodge.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Adriaan Kauffman	Justdiggit
Christine Mwinzi	Wildlife Research Training Institute
Purity Mwende	Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
Lucy Waruingi	African Conservation Centre
Melton Melita	Kuku B
Josphant Naanyu	Committee Eselenkei Group Ranch
Daniel Kipkosgei	Kenya Wildlife Service
Benard Tulito	IFAW
Joshua Suyianga	Mbirikani Group Ranch
Samuel Kaanki	ALOCA
David Maitumo	Amboseli Conservation Centre
Jermy goss	Big life
David Manoa	Born Free
Victor Mose	Amboseli Conservation Program
Lenkai Leyian	Olgulului Olorashi Group Ranch
George Lupempe	Chief
Benson Leyian	Big Life Foundation
Kirapash Lepau	Kimana sactuary
Daniel Mapi	imbirikani
Johnson Sipitiek	African Conservation Centre
Dickson Oloiptip	ORT
Daniel Kitipai	Kuku A
Koikai Oloiptip	Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
Kenneth Sokoine	Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
David Western	Amboseli Conservation Program
Jackson Mwato	Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
Tobias Nyumba	University of York/ACC
Anne Nashipae	County Govt of Kajiado