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Ecosystem Restoration

Validation

Report for:

**Cottars Wildlife Conservation Trust
(CWCT)**

in

Narok County, Kenya

Report Finalised: 2/ September/2022.
Audit Dates: 26-28 April 2022
Audit Team: Mateo Cariño – Lead Auditor
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Validation expiry: 2/September/2024
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent audit conducted by a team of specialists representing Preferred by Nature. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of Cottars Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) restoration initiative as defined by the established Ecosystem Restoration Standard Version 3.0 by Preferred by Nature.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy (OWC) aims to build a World-class tourism destination that is diverse, accessible and safe and will develop to its full potential, without damaging the tourism products such as wildlife and the Maasai culture, which are regarded as the main assets on which the tourism industry is based. The OWC aims to become a leading community conservation areas in the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem and in Kenya at large, to demonstrate a successful protection of fauna and flora species by protecting wildlife corridors and providing safe wildlife dispersal area while connecting the greater protected areas of the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya and the Serengeti national Park in Tanzania. These two protected areas are home to the Great Wildebeest migration, which is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

OWC sets out to preserve the healthy ecological function of the Greater Maasai Mara/Serengeti ecosystem as well as ensuring that the livelihoods and wellbeing of the Olderkesi-Maasai landowners and community at large are improved and sustainably secured. The Conservancy management intends to balance wildlife conservation with sustainable development. The Olderkesi Community Wildlife Trust (OCWT), representing 6.650 community members (the owners), has convened to have Cottar's Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) to support implement the Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy pilot project in 3.080 ha on the boundary¹ of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the Serengeti National Park.

The mission of the Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy is:

- To protect the delicate ecosystem by integrating a diversity of sustainable land uses and economic and social development activities, including wildlife conservation, tourism, pastoralism, culture preservation and other enterprises which are conservation-friendly and mutually beneficial to the community and OWC management.
- To develop strong and participatory governance structures which will oversee all issues of good governance including transparency and accountability practices. It will also act as an advisory body to the community in regard to establishment of community livelihoods projects, social services and ensure equitable benefit sharing particularly to poor and marginalised community members.
- To trigger the participation and collaboration with other conservation institutions working in the Greater Maasai Mara ecosystem for the longer-term sustainability of the area.

Preferred by Nature carried-out a validation audit at the Conservancy, which means that the focus was rather on the planning and set up of the project than on the actual full implementation. While a number of important NCRs have been issued, the audit team was sensitive to the fact that this is a community-based operation, with inherent challenges but also great benefits. Thus, in line with the Preferred by Nature overall approach, the team maintained a more flexible approach to the evaluation outcome to balance it with a continuous improvement perspective.

The main issues identified to be dealt with by the Organisation, as developed in the Non-Conformity Reports (NCR) are:

1. The Governance of the project is well set but as the project evolves it needs to be strengthened around participation, transparency, inclusivity, access to information, and benefit sharing, which are instrumental in a community-based project to last.

¹ 3083.5 ha within the conservancy boundary (Conservancy), of which 2226.39 ha are under, future, single title (OCWT), and 857.11 ha are under separate individual lease/use agreements (future separate title deeds)

2. Traditional knowledge related to restoration needs to be accounted for.
3. Reference sites to provide target values for establishing recovery metrics in restoration sites need to be clearly defined.
4. The plant selection process needs to be defined.
5. The expected environmental and social impacts of the project and how the restoration effort is addressing them need to be further described.
6. The financial resources to ensure implementation of the Restoration Plan need to be clarified.
7. Restoration techniques need to be further described.
8. The monitoring plan should be expanded beyond wildlife and vegetation to cover social, economic, and environmental targets, goals and objectives.
9. Working conditions need to be improved in some instances.
10. Working equipment need to be improved in some instances.
11. Monitoring of the implementation needs to be expanded to cover the full range of aspects of the project.

1 AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

1.1 Audit Recommendation and Decision

Based on Organisation's conformance with verification requirements, the following recommendation is made:

- Validation approved:
 - Upon acceptance of NCR(s) issued below
- Validation not approved:

Additional comments, including issues identified as controversial or hard to evaluate and explanation of the conclusion reached: While a number of important NCRs have been issued, the audit team was sensitive to the fact that this is a community-based operation, with inherent challenges but also great benefits. Thus, in line with the Preferred by Nature overall approach, the team maintained a more flexible approach to the evaluation outcome to balance it with a continuous improvement perspective. Also, it is to be noted that this is a validation audit, meaning that it's more focussed on the planning and set up of the project that expecting actual full implementation.

1.2 Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

Note: NCRs refer to non-fulfilment of a requirement. In simpler terms this means that some part of the standard has not been correctly fulfilled and need to be corrected in order to maintain the verified/validated status.

- Check if no NCR(s) have been issued

NCR: 01/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.2, 2.4.1
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>The organisation has a clear governance structure with different entities being well coordinated in the organigram. Olderkesi Wildlife Conservation Trust (OWCT) is a landowners registered Trust, an entity that brings all the 6.650 landowners together. Cottars Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) is also a registered Trust and has been contracted by OWCT to manage the Conservancy. There exists an agreement between the two entities, which has been reviewed by the audit team.</p> <p>The audit team met with different groups, including women, youth, and Conservancy board members and interviewed other stakeholders, including government officials and NGOs that have been interacting with the community for different purposes and projects. The audit team found that transparency is to be improved, together with the information flow on how the decisions are made and some of the funds spent, and under-representation of the community diversity as the main governance issues that require</p>	

Conservancy attention. The lack of full information limits the community to effectively negotiate and make decisions.

The audit team understands that the participatory Land Use Plan implementation is awaiting the court resolution to start full implementation, and that creates a lot of confusion since at the same time, and while not legally required yet for the same reason, resources are being provided by the tourism operation to perform a number of actions decided by the Olderkesi committee, including many of the community benefits in terms of employment, health, education, infrastructures, etc. (see indicator 3.3.6.1)

All this is read by the audit team as relatively common since transparency, accountability, inclusivity and full participation are most likely to be for a long time work in progress. The effort in setting up the governance structure, which as said is clearly established, is recognized as a huge step, but with some time running now, it is clear that the identified gaps require intervention in order to strengthen the organisations functionality as the project evolves around participation, transparency, inclusivity, access to information, and benefit sharing, which are instrumental in a community-based project to last.

Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 02/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.4.7
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
Since the main restoration approach planned is to eliminate the most important factor for degradation, i.e. pastoralism, no other practises have been seen. The Organisation has though a good contact with some Maasai elders with whom they learn and promote in terms of traditional knowledge, but this aspect has not been explored in relation with restoration systems or practises.	
Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING

NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 03/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.4.8
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>With the Maasai Mara Natural Reserve bordering the Conservancy, the reference sites have been easy to determine in a general manner. This being said, since details have not been needed as the actual restoration has not officially started, specific sites have not been identified (or documented) for the different types of ecosystems present in the Conservancy to be able to provide target values for establishing recovery metrics in restoration sites.</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 04/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.5.3
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>While it's clear that no alien or invasive species are to be used, and also that the main approach will focus on eliminating the degradation drivers, mainly pastoralism, other techniques as Assisted Natural Regeneration with native species have been explored. Nevertheless, the plant selection process for this case has not been clearly described to demonstrate how species, genotypes, and densities are well-matched to climate, soils and water availability, with clear consideration given to climate change resiliency, pests and other risks (e.g. local availability).</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING

Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 05/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.5.5
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
The Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy Management Plan 2018-2023 determines the strategies for the different areas of focus, including conservation, management, tourism and communities. There isn't an assessment of the expected impacts, and while some of these are covered indirectly in this Management Plan, especially for the conservation part but also, to some extent, for the social part (e.g. with the human-wildlife conflict), the impacts haven't been assessed in a broad and systematic manner that would allow to knowing how the restoration effort is addressing all of them.	
Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 06/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.5.6
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
A number of current and potential financial resources have been indicated by the RM to the audit team in an outline, but it remains unclear in the planning what is specifically going to be allocated to cover which specific areas in connection with the Restoration Plan, also due to the fact that the Organisation is reorganizing to prioritize and plan from now onwards.	
Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required

Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 07/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.6
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>The restoration approach is mainly focussed currently in eliminating the threats of degradation, with a big focus on supporting the community to have alternatives to enter their cattle in the Conservancy. As explained in the indicator 1.5.5, the Management Plan outlines, in that sense, a number of objectives, with some of them being further broken down into activities, but the audit team didn't find clarity on the restoration techniques or practices to be used sufficiently to understand how desired targets, goals and/or objectives will be achieved and to assess the adequacy of performance from technical and field perspectives.</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 08/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 1.7
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>Monitoring is focussed in wildlife and vegetation, but there is not a specific and documented monitoring plan that would cover social, economic, and environmental targets, goals and objectives of the restoration activities.</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required

Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 09/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 3.3.3
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>Not all the activities are being undertaken yet and then it was not possible to check the full implementation. One of the key ones that does exist already though is the ranger activity, which ensures that no illegal or illicit activities happen in the Conservancy. Several ranger camps were visited during the audit, with interviews carried out with some rangers in each of them. One of the main issues identified was connected to the housing conditions, as temperatures inside can vary greatly and become very cold at night and very hot during the day. Also, the power and network system is to be improved, as rangers can lack it in several instances where it's needed. The house was also lacking intimacy, with one single place for all members to sleep. The access to portable water is provided through tanks that get filled regularly, but as observed in one of the camps it's not uncommon to have the refill sometime after the tanks are empty, forcing the rangers to drink and wash up at the water streams. Other things were raised during the interviews, as the fact that there can be a lot of smoke in the kitchen, or regarding the difficulties for mothers with small kids to breastfeed their kids as they were not allowed to bring them to the workplace at any time and the distance to their villages is long by walking. While some of the later could not be observed during the audit, as e.g. there was not cooking activities at the time of the visit, they were revealed through the interviews and thus, together with the above it's clear that working conditions need to be reassessed, including a gender perspective.</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 10/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 3.3.4
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

While the majority of the rangers interviewed were provided with the uniform and boots, in one case the ranger interviewed wasn't wearing any shoes at all, and the interviews with him and the responsible staff members revealed a lack of coordination to provide/renew the personal protection equipment (PPE) in time, while this is important due to e.g. the existence of dangerous snakes in the area.

Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 11/22	
Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 4.2
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p>Monitoring occurs to some extent, covering mainly some environmental aspects (mainly in terms of wildlife and vegetation). A number of documents have been developed by the Manager of the Wildlife Monitoring Department, who was also interviewed during the audit. These documents include the overarching Conservation Management Model, the methods for carrying out both the wildlife and vegetation monitoring, and the data sheet templates for each. Their use was also checked in the field, and the relevant staff implementing it were also interviewed, confirming they had undergone training on this and knew how to do it. Nevertheless, in none of the documents mentioned, nor during the interviews, the periodicity for monitoring was found to be clearly set (nor it covers the full range of aspects, especially on the social side). It was also not clear to some of the staff the importance of data, even though rangers are involved in data collection.</p>	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	2 years, after which a new validation (or verification) is required
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

1.3 Observations

Note: Observations are issued for the early stages of a problem which does not of itself constitute a non-conformance, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future non-conformance if not addressed by the organisation; observations may lead to direct non-conformances if not addressed.

No observations

OBS: 01/22	Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 2.5.1
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	A documented dispute resolution mechanism has been provided to the auditors. In the interviews, a number of community members indicated that there are some strength regarding dispute resolution which include regular reconciliation meetings in each village/cluster whenever conflict arise. There are also cases where successful reconciliation have occurred between the tourism partner and a section of community members. They also stated that one of the main concern on dispute resolution is the lack of a conflict resolution committee. Some community members are thus concerned that there is no designated group to carry out reconciliation in case of conflicts, and indicating that sometimes there are long delays. A section of the community feels completely neglected by the conservancy management and benefits are skewed towards those supporting the conservancy. They also indicate attempts to reconcile the differing groups by MMWCA.	
Observation:	The Organisation should reassess its dispute resolution to ensure that it covers the demands of the community members.	

OBS: 02/22	Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 3.2.1
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	The project activities will focus on controlling overgrazing, so the majority of the potential impact activities listed in the indicator are not applicable (for example overcollection of seed or wildings, harvesting of wood to build nursery). That said, erosion is one of the main impacts that the lack of vegetation cause, and gullies have been observed in some areas, mainly in the borders of the Conservancy, probably due to increased human pressure. Tourism activities are limited due to the exclusive nature of the operation, but while erosion is to be mitigated with the cattle control as well, especially within the Conservancy, the tracks made by vehicles for tourism and their impact in erosion should be also further analysed.	

Observation:	The Organisation should assess the erosion within the Conservancy and propose mitigation measures.
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OBS: 03/22	Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 3.2.4
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	Waste is generally controlled and treated safely as observed in the field and during the interviews, with new innovative projects being tested to use a part of it for energy. In one of the ranger camps visited, though, the waste was laying up in an area in a more disorganized manner. The intention was to remove it, as per the interviews, but it was there for several days and stayed after the first observation, with some rodents going in and out, which could lead to potential future problems (e.g. of dispersal).	
Observation:	The Organisation should ensure that waste is in all cases well stored, treated, and disposed so avoid health or safety risks to people or natural ecosystems.	

OBS: 04/22	Standard & Requirement:	Ecosystem Restoration Standard vs 3.0, 3.3.2.3
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	While the actual project implementing the full range of initiatives has not started yet, and thus the labour indicators have not been analysed in detail, no issues around the use of chemical products were observed during the audit. That being said, none of the staff members interviewed belonged to a workers union nor knew that this was a possibility.	
Observation:	The Organisation should ensure that workers are well aware of their rights, including the right to organize, freedom of association and collective bargaining.	

1.4 Stakeholder consultation

The purpose of the stakeholder consultation strategy is threefold:

- To ensure that the public is aware of and informed about the assessment process and its objectives;
- To assist the field assessment team in identifying potential issues; and,
- To provide diverse opportunities for the public to discuss and act upon the findings of the assessment.

The process of stakeholder interaction does not stop after the field visits, or, for that matter, after even a certification decision is made. Preferred by Nature welcomes, at any time, comments on verified projects and such comments often provide a basis for field assessment.

In the case of CWCT, being a community-based project, the stakeholders consultation was concentrated in the local community and more limited in terms of external

outreach, but since they were many connections with other organisations, as the initiative is very well linked in the territory, a number of dialogues were engaged, including with the Narok County Government, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and NGOs (Friends of Conservation, Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, the Mara Trust, Mara Predator). The focus in the local community included both informal and formal meetings, the latter focussing on the community leadership and specific relevant groups (women and youth).

Stakeholder Type (NGO, government bodies, local inhabitant, contractor etc.)	Stakeholders Notified (#)	Stakeholders consulted directly or provided input (#)
National/International NGOs	0	0
Local/Regional NGOs	0	4
Local Community members	0	+40
Government Agency	2	2
Labour Union	0	0

The table below summarises the issues identified by the assessment team with a brief discussion of each based upon specific interviews and/or public meeting comments.

Principle/Subject Area	Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
1: Planning	<p>We don't know how the money is used, and we suspect there are cases where the members of the board are privileging their own families and friends in the benefit sharing.</p> <p>We (<i>the women</i>) are invited to the board to show inclusiveness, but we are not told about all meetings, especially about some meetings where decisions are made. Also, as we lack information, it's difficult for us to participate actively in the meetings, it's difficult to engage. We have thought a number of areas we'd like to see improve, especially in terms of healthcare and education, but the rest would not listen to us and take those seriously.</p>	<p>Preferred by Nature conducted interviews with external stakeholders from the local government and NGOs and also community members both individually and in group meetings with leaders, women, youth, and some of the people involved in the complaint that has led to the court case to be solved over the Conservancy extension. While it's understood that the later, that has been pending over a long period now, has been preventing things to evolve and advance, and rather making thing stagnate to some extent, insufficient transparency has been noted to be a problem that can also magnify over time if not tackled, and that connects to lack of effective inclusion and potential nepotism. NCR 01/22 has been raised.</p>
2: Tenure & Security	<p>While we see things being polarized and us shown as opposing to the Conservancy, in reality we don't, but feel there is a lack of transparency on the initiative. We don't know what happened with the participatory process we undertook some years ago, with the idea of the benefit sharing model. We also</p>	<p>While the majority of the community has agreed to set this part of the group ranch as a Conservancy, some members are challenging this and there is a legal process in place that is to be concluded at the court. The audit team notes that this process is impeding the plans set at the participatory management</p>

	<p>don't know how the money is being spent currently, and we think some people are taking advantage of the situation.</p>	<p>meetings to evolve, the final decision is to be set before a number of actions can be legally undertaken, including the benefit sharing model planned. At the same time, and while this wouldn't be required with the Conservancy not being fully established, the leasing fees are being paid and a number of community benefits are ongoing as observed in the field and during the interviews, including in terms of provision of jobs/development opportunities/training (in tourism, in the women's groups, bee keeping...), healthcare (e.g. clinic staff), education (teachers, schools, scholarships, feeding programs), other infrastructure (e.g. bridge to be able to cross the Sand river).</p> <p>That said, and while tenure and management is in the due process, as said above insufficient transparency has been noted to be a problem that can also magnify over time if not tackled, and that connects to lack of effective inclusion and potential nepotism. NCR 01/22 has been raised.</p>
<p>3: Implementation</p>		
<p>4: Monitoring and Reporting</p>		

1.5 Actions taken by Organisation Prior to Report Finalisation

NA

2 AUDIT PROCESS

2.2 Standard Used

Standards Used (including version):	Ecosystem Restoration Standard – A Social and Environmental Standard for Field Verification of Restoration Initiatives version 3.0
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2.3 Audit Team and accompanying persons

Name	Role and qualifications
Mateo Fraise Cariño	Audit team leader. Mateo is Land Use Program Manager at Preferred by Nature, with extensive experience in forestry and carbon auditing (FSC, PEFC, CCB, VCS, Gold Standard, Plan Vivo, Carbon Footprint Management, etc.) and projects since 2000 globally. With a Forest Engineer background, Mateo has been involved in the social aspects of sustainability with smallholders, indigenous and traditional communities, and areas like gender, labour rights, or FPIC. Mateo has been providing training in forestry auditing, including High Conservation Values, Ecosystem Services, and social aspects for over 20 years internationally, and is a member of the IIFACE, to contribute as a facilitator to the eco-social change. He is currently leading the Preferred by Nature Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative that is aiming to support the global effort in restoration by bring field accountability to this growing trend. Mateo speaks Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese.
Eric Reson	Local Expert. Eric has a background in ecology and brings in vast experience in the field of conservation having been involved in both research and community conservation aspects. He holds an MSC in Wildlife Biology and is currently pursuing a PhD in ecological sciences. Currently, Eric oversees MMWCA’s portfolio of programs while leading the programs, communications and M&E staff to fulfil the mission and objectives of MMWCA.
Hernán Zaldívar	Report Reviewer. Hernán is Ecosystem Restoration specialist within the Strategy and Innovation division of PBN, where he applies his experience in various sectors and value chains, including forestry, palm oil and cocoa.

2.4 Audit Overview

Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.

Site(s)	Date(s)	Main activities	Auditor(s)
Olderkesi Conservancy	25th	Walk for a Conservancy Overview from the top of the hill	Mateo Cariño Fraise
Cottars Camp	25th	Initial audit team meeting	Audit team
Cottars Camp	26th	Opening meeting, initial interviews, documentation review	Audit team
Olderkesi Conservancy	26th	Staff interviews, field observation of status of the area and degradation drivers	Audit team
Olpalagilagi	26th	Stakeholder consultation (community leaders, Youth Association)	Audit team
Cottars Camp	26th	Documentation review and internal audit team meeting	Audit team
Area proposed for Olderkesi Conservancy development	27th	Staff interviews, field observation of status of the area and degradation drivers, and stakeholder consultation (women group, clinic staff)	Audit team
Olderkesi Conservancy	27th	Interviews with community members in conflict	Audit team
Cottars Camp	27th	Documentation review and internal audit team meeting	Audit team
Cottars Camp	28th	Closing meeting	Audit team
Total number of person-days used: 5 (not including days spent in travel and report writing and review) = numbers of auditors participating X number of days spent in preparation, on site and post site visit follow-up, including stakeholder consultation.			

2.5 Description of Overall Audit Process

The audit being a validation (as opposed to a verification), it was focussed on understanding the drivers of degradation and how those are being dealt with from the perspective of the restoration initiative promotion but also from other views, mainly at community level, since it's a community owned territory with a community governance structure in place.

Due to the later, and especially due to an ongoing dispute that is being dealt with currently, the number of activities in the field are limited, while the actions undertaken to promote engagement, uptake, and participatory management are significant.

The main driver of degradation is increasing pastoralism for limited grazing resources, which has been observed as being a general issue in the majority of the area. That said, different ecosystem types were visited besides the grasslands or savannah, as conditions change i.e. in the hills or along the river banks. These changing environments were selected for sampling. The other main area, the stakeholders interviews, was directed to understand the different implications and views from relevant community stakeholder groups (leaders, women, youth, workers, health providers), and it involved going outside of the restoration project zone. It's worth mentioning that, aligned with the aim of the ER standard evaluations to be as relevant and impactful as possible, one of the audit team members works for a local organisation Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) involved in social and environmental projects in the area, with the same people and actors, which was also instrumental to understand the main issues from a close experience but from an external auditing standpoint as guided by the lead auditor, as the team stuck together during the whole time.

Also, the project having a long trajectory, a number of documents (some old and less relevant, some new and less implemented) have been reviewed as well in order to complement the interviews and field observations and see the evolution of the initiative.

2.5.1 List of sites selected for evaluation

Site	Rationale for Selection
Olenturonto hills	Overall view including the borders with the Masai Mara Natural Reserve (MNR) and Tanzania. Areas under regeneration. Rangers camp. Steep slopes. Forests and woodland ecosystems.
Drive through the Olderkesi Conservancy, including Orng'aenet (phase 1)	Observe the degradation drivers and impacts (e.g. erosion) in the grasslands, savannah, and riverine ecosystems. Observe the wildlife. Interview stakeholders, including with an area in conflict.
Adjacent areas (Phase 2, including Olpalagilagi, Ositeti Oltulelei, Telegut, Sand river)	Observe critical water resources, the changing landscape (with agriculture), health facilities supported by the organisation, and undertake community consultation.

2.5.2 List of management aspects reviewed by assessment team

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction		Illegal settlement	
Soil drainage		Bridges/stream crossing	3
Workshop		Chemical storage	
Tree nursery		Wetland	
Planned harvest site		Steep slope/erosion	2
Ongoing harvest site		Riparian zone	3

Completed logging		Planting	
Soil scarification		Direct seeding	
Planting site		Weed control	
Felling by harvester		Natural regeneration	3
Felling by forest worker		Endangered species	3
Skidding/Forwarding		Wildlife management	3
Clearfelling/Clearcut		Nature Reserve	1
Shelterwood management		Key Biotope	
Selective felling		Special management area	
Sanitation cutting		Historical site	
Pre-commercial thinning		Recreational site	
Commercial thinning		Buffer zone	
Camp	1	Local community	3
Native reference sites	2	Permanent Monitoring Plot	

3 ORGANISATION DETAILS

3.2 Organisation specific background information

<p>Ownership and land tenure description (legal and customary)</p> <p>The Conservancy is owned by members of Olderkesi group ranch, managed by the Olderkesi Wildlife Conservation Trust (OWCT), in conjunction with Cottars Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT), a family owned trust, and both trusts make up of management committee that manages the Conservancy on behalf of 6.650 landowners (as per the adjudication list). OWCT is set out to preserve the healthy ecological function of the Greater Maasai Mara/Serengeti ecosystem as well as ensuring that the livelihoods and wellbeing of the Olderkesi-Maasai landowners and community at large are improved and sustainably secured.</p>
<p>Legislative and government regulatory context</p> <p>Kenya’s regulations allow for private sectors involvement in wildlife management and as a result there are currently as many as eight privately managed “Conservancies” in the areas bordering the MMNR, a number of them growing out of what were previously Group Ranches. As a wildlife Conservancy, Olderkesi falls under the Wildlife act, and is regulated by Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS). Regional authority is exercised by the Narok County, with environmental authority exercised by NEMA.</p> <p>The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act of 2013 places emphasis on community wildlife conservation and gives Kenya Wildlife Service the mandate to advise the Government, Local Authorities and land owners on the best methods of wildlife conservation and management. Policy and Guidelines empower the Director KWS to declare an area as a Conservancy or sanctuary.</p> <p>In September 2006, Cottar’s 1920 Camp initiated Cottar’s Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) as a charitable wildlife conservation trust for the promotion of wildlife, support for human development and environmental conservation. CWCT worked closely with the Olderkesi Group Ranch Land Adjudication Committee, Olderkesi Community Wildlife Trust (OCWT) and 6.650 community members to implement the Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy pilot project on the boundary of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the Serengeti National Park. This was a Private Public Partnership between Olderkesi and CWCT to test some innovative and ground breaking ways for wildlife to pay for human development and sustainable living for the people, and to secure the future of this key wildlife migration corridor. The Olderkesi Community Wildlife Trust (OCWT), Cottar’s Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) and the Olderkesi Group Ranch Committee developed</p>

a set of agreements and bylaws in 2012 to enhance conservation and sustainable development. These bylaws outlined restrictions on activities within the conservation area including: Construction of fences or buildings; Mining and excavation; Poaching, trapping and selling of wild animals and wild animal parts; grazing of livestock within the core area; Burning of green areas and/or rubbish; Pollution of water sources; Making roads and other infrastructure; and overstocking of livestock.

Environmental Context

The Olderkesi Conservancy area has varied habitats ranging from forests to woodlands and to open grasslands as well as riverine vegetation and some non-deciduous thickets dominated by Croton species.

The area is a vital dispersal area for the wildlife populations in the Mara ecosystem. The population of wildlife and livestock within the ecosystem as of the 2002 Mara count conducted by the Mara Count Foundation was 400,000. Within the conservation area Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*), Wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*), Giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), Thomson's Gazelles (*Gazella thomsoni*), Bush buck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), Dikdik (*Madoqua sp.*) have been observed, especially within the open grasslands and in the woodlands. Evidence of the presence of Buffalo and Elephants (dung and footprints) has also been observed in the forested areas i.e. the hills within the conservation area, pointing to their utilisation of these areas.

Critical migration corridors run through the Conservancy linking the Serengeti-Mara landscape with Nguruman forest and Loita Hills in the south. These corridors are known to be used by elephants and wildebeest.

Part of Olderkesi in particular Pololeti plains are known to be utilized as calving sites by wildebeest.

Livestock overgrazing is the single biggest driver of ecosystem degradation. Unsustainable livestock densities compete with wildlife for the grass banks. Proximity to MMNR and transitory access by extra-regional pastoralists during 2021/2022 droughts have both increased pressure, and consequential degradation, as well as creating expectation of access by external parties to the Conservancy for livestock grazing.

Socioeconomic Context

South Western Kenya is the heartland of the Maasai community, who are a strongly independent people who still value tradition and ritual as an integral part of their everyday lives. Traditionally, the Maasai are semi-nomadic pastoralists and live alongside wildlife in harmony, with lions and wildebeest playing an important role in their cultural beliefs as their own herds of cattle. This unique co-existence of man and wildlife makes this Maasai land one of the world's most unique wilderness regions.

The current land uses within and around the conservation area include Group ranches for pastoralist activities, subsistence farming, human settlements and tourism. The Conservancy's primary income source is from the tourism facilities at the 1920s Cottar's Safari Lodge.

The conservation area includes a network of roads, cattle trails and human footpaths utilized by the community in order to access grazing areas and water points. In relation to this, there are two salt licks within the Conservancy that are utilised by both livestock and wildlife. There also exists a watering point that was constructed for the community's livestock. This watering point was developed to pump water from the river source to watering troughs established at a distance from the source in order to prevent degradation of river banks and contamination of the river water.

Human-wildlife conflict issues in the conservation area can be divided into two categories:

- Damage to humans, livestock, crops and other property by wildlife
- Conflict in access to water and pasture resources between wildlife and livestock

Existing livelihood activities that the communities adjacent to the Conservancy engage in include pastoralism as their primary economic activity with a smaller number engaging in subsistence agriculture, teaching at the local school and employed in the tourism industry.

3.3 General overview of the organisation and scope

The Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy (OWC) aims to build a World-class tourism destination that is diverse, accessible and safe and will develop to its full potential, without damaging the tourism products such as wildlife and the Maasai culture which are regarded as the main assets on which the tourism industry is based. The OWC aims to become a leading community conservation areas in the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem and in Kenya at large, to demonstrate a successful protection of fauna and flora species by protecting wildlife corridors and providing safe wildlife dispersal area while connecting the greater protected areas of the Maasai Mara National Reserve in Kenya and the Serengeti national Park in Tanzania. These two protected areas are home to the Great Wildebeest migration, which is one of the New Seven Wonders of the World.

OWC sets out to preserve the healthy ecological function of the Greater Maasai Mara/Serengeti ecosystem as well as ensuring that the livelihoods and wellbeing of the Olderkesi-Maasai landowners and community at large are improved and sustainably secured. The Conservancy management intends to balance wildlife conservation with sustainable development. The Olderkesi Community Wildlife Trust (OCWT), representing 6.650 community members, as per the adjudication list (the owners), has convened to have Cottar's Wildlife Conservation Trust (CWCT) to support implement the Olderkesi Wildlife Conservancy pilot project in 3.080 ha (2226.39 ha under, future, single title -OCWT- and 857.11 ha under separate individual lease/use agreements - future separate title deeds) on the boundary of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the Serengeti National Park.

The mission of the Conservancy is:

- To protect the delicate ecosystem by integrating a diversity of sustainable land uses and economic and social development activities, including wildlife conservation, tourism, pastoralism, culture preservation and other enterprises which are conservation-friendly and mutually beneficial to the community and OWC management.
- To develop strong and participatory governance structures which will oversee all issues of good governance including transparency and accountability practices. It will also act as an advisory body to the community in regard to establishment of community livelihoods projects, social services and ensure equitable benefit sharing particularly to poor and marginalised community members.
- To trigger the participation and collaboration with other conservation institutions working in the Greater Maasai Mara ecosystem for the longer-term sustainability of the area.

