



Vuri Clan

Forest Conservation Area

MANAGEMENT PLAN



Above picture- A Signboard established at the entrance to the Vuri Forest Protected Area in 2009 . Below picture - Lokataveva Waterfalls near the entrance to the Protected Area



Prepared and Approved by **Vuri Forest Conservation Area Management Committee (VFCAMC)**. Sasamuqa, Choiseul Province. Solomon Islands

May 2021

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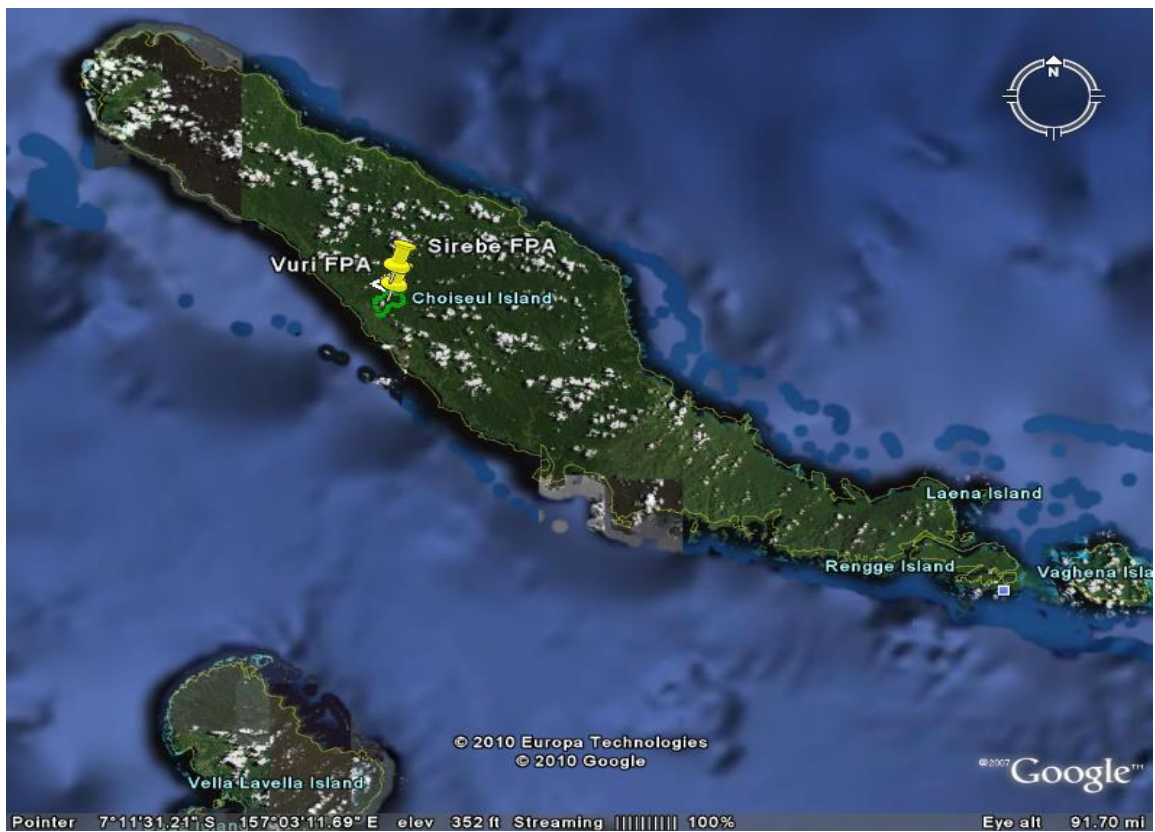
Acknowledgments

This Management Plan was prepared by the representatives of the Vuri Clan of Sikipozo Tribe in partnership with the Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF), Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands (ESSI), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-SI), the Ministry of Forestry and Research (National Herbarium and Botanic Gardens Division) (MoFR-NHBG) and the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology (MECDM).

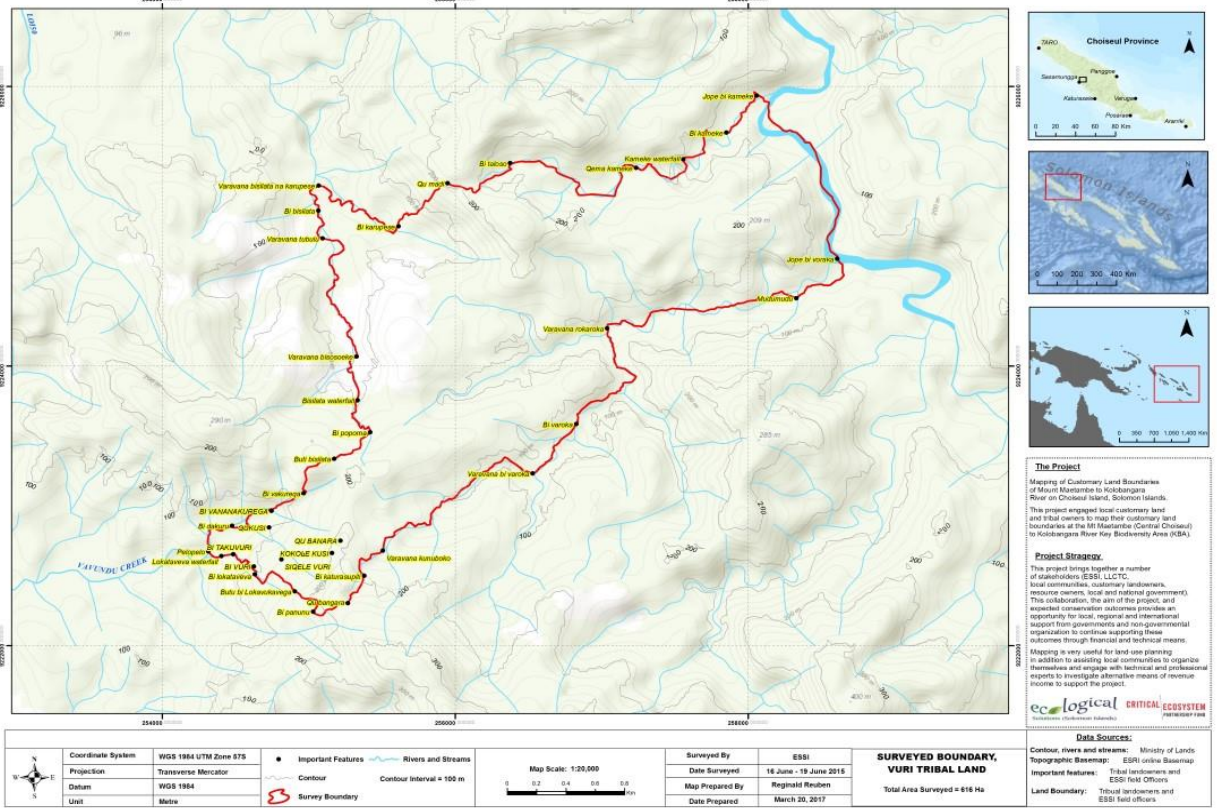
The Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee acknowledged that the Vuri Forest Protected Area is in the customary land of the Vuri Clan within the Sikipozo main tribe.

For further information or any inquiries about this Forest Protected Area or this Management Plan, contact the Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee through their Project Coordinator (Technical Advisor) and Representative by telephone on 7512609 or through Email: mykneesirikolo@gmail.com or the Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF) through Email: nrdf@solomon.com.sb

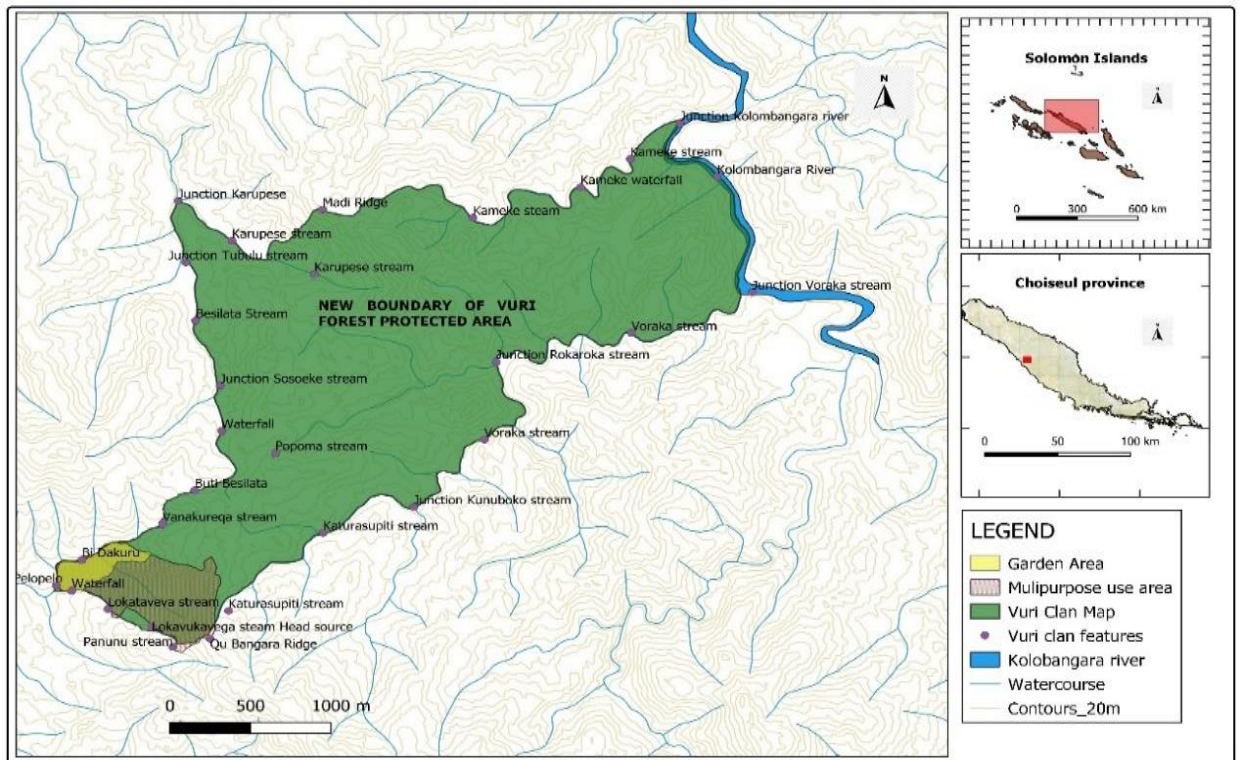
Location Maps of Vuri Forest Protected Area



Boundary Map of Vuri Clan Land within Sikipozo Tribe in South Choiseul

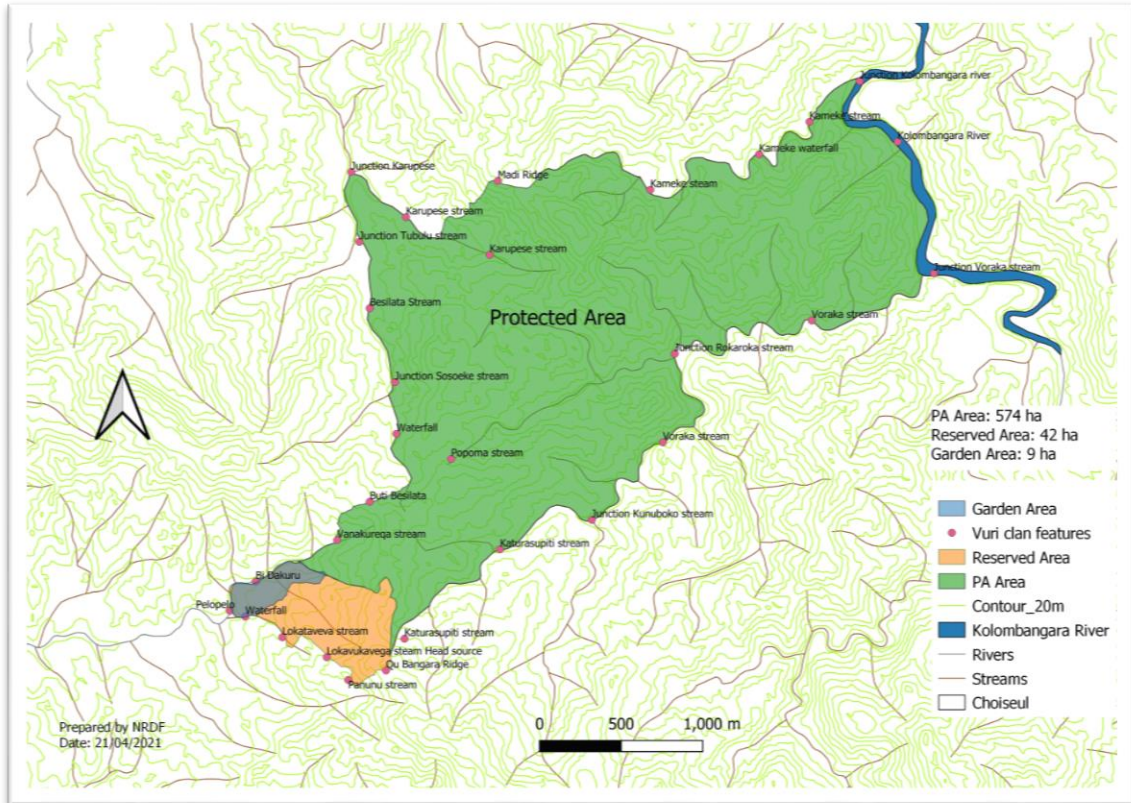


Land Use Map of Vuri Forest Protected Area (Revised):

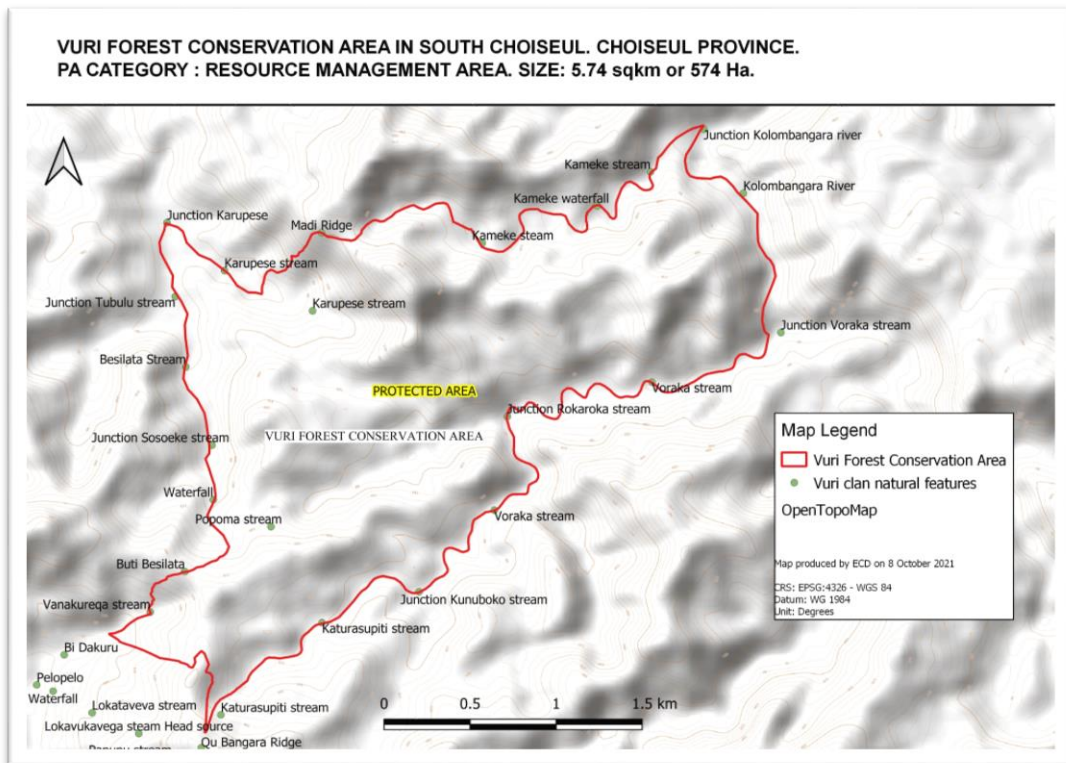


Map showing 3 main Land use areas: (a) Forest PA, (b) Multi-purpose use area and (c) Garden area.

A more defined map was updated in April 2021 and accepted by Vuri Clan management committee. Shape files of the boundaries are shared by ECD.



Map showing **FINAL PROTECTED AREA** proposed to be declared under the PA Act 2010 is below. Shape files for the actual boundaries are shared with ECD.



The Story of Our Plan

The Vuri Forest Conservation Area (VFCA) is part of the Vuri Clan customary land and is under ownership of the tribal people of the Vuri Clan of Sikipozo tribe. Some of these traditional landowners live in Sasamungga village in South Choiseul, while the majority live in other parts of Choiseul province and other parts of the country.

The Vuri Clan has a population of approximately 500 people. It is one of the three Clans that made up the main Sikipozo Tribe which has a total of more than 1,000 people. The Vuri Clan land is prone to logging and the people recognize the importance of conserving some of the last remaining untouched forest areas of Luru Island and that through conservation their livelihoods and heritage is safeguarded. They also recognize the importance of the area as catchment for clean water and its potential for income generating activities such as timber milling, eco-tourism and forest carbon trading in addition to the ecosystem services benefits.

The Vuri FCA is located along the Kolombangara River in Southwest Choiseul Province. The Vuri Clan, who partnered with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and established their Forest Conservation Area in June 2008 now developed a strong partnership with the Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF) since 2010 and ESSI since 2014. Under their Clan leadership, they have committed to protect and manage their unlogged forest area of approximately 61 hectares, designating it the Vuri Rainforest and Biodiversity Conservation Area. Other parts of the area were set aside for sustainable timber harvesting and some future gardening (see land use map). The area is also part of the Mt. Maetambe to Kolombangara River Corridor, an area of almost 87,000 hectares. It forms the largest water catchment on the island of Choiseul. The intact nature of the vegetation of the upper portion and the lower catchment areas is crucial to maintain the constancy of, and uncontaminated nature of the water source (Boseto & Pikacha 2015).

Currently, the Vuri FCA has no legal protected status. The NRDF approached the Vuri Forest Conservation Areas Management Committee (VCAMC) and proposed the idea of registering the Vuri FCA under the national Protected Areas Act (2010). There was an enormous amount of support amongst the people of Vuri Clan (Sikipozo tribe) for this.

This management plan gives detailed information about the Vuri FCA and describes the key issues regarding the implementation, management and conservation of the present forest ecosystems. The management plan has been prepared by the representatives of the Vuri FMC in close consultation with Vuri Clan members and with the assistance of the Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF), an organization which has been a long term partner of the Vuri Clan. The Committee has presented the plan to the Vuri Clan to ensure that the plan is in consistence with their aspirations for sustainable management of their natural resources.

The management plan summarizes the history of the Vuri area, provides a description of the site, the flora and fauna and the significance of its conservation, presents the objectives and descriptions of rules and regulations in the area, and lists the management, governance and monitoring of the Vuri FMC. As such, it is meant to provide a clear guideline for the committee and the Vuri Clan members to manage and administer the area in a most proper and beneficial way.

The Story of our Land and Sea

Location and Features

Vuri Clan land is located along the upper region of the Kolombangara River on Lauru Island in Choiseul Province in the Solomon Islands. The total area of the Vuri Clan land is approximately 616 hectares. The population of the Clan is more than 500 members, both young and old. Currently most of the Clan members are living in Sasamungga village and nearby communities, which is one of the biggest villages in Choiseul Province. Two other Vuri Clan lines have migrated and settled in Kuku village in Northwest Choiseul and at Beiporo village in Vella Ila Vella (Bilua), Western province, respectively due to inter-marriages. However, they still maintain their genealogical connections with the Vuri Clanship and Sikipozo main tribe at Sasamuqa in Choiseul.

The coordinates for the Vuri Clan Land within Sikipozo Tribal land are:

Latitude: S -7.012338
Longitude: E 156.79354

The Conservation area is linked by the Kolombangara River, a journey which can take two to three hours Outboard Motor boat trip up the river and several hours if one uses a dugout canoe and paddle. However, the most used way of getting to the area is by foot on several bush tracks towards north direction from Sasamungga village. There is a truck road connecting the Sasamungga main village and the Lauru Rural Training Centre on the lower part of Kolombangara River.

The conserved area contains a diversity of habitats which supports a wide range of plants and animals which is published in the “Rapid Biodiversity Assessment of Vuri Forest Reserve Area” by Patrick Pikacha and Myknee Sirikolo (2009). More recent data was collected and reported by an expedition carried out in 2014 led by ESSI. The area is a nesting place for many bird species, mammals and reptiles. Culturally the land is of paramount importance to the Vuri Clan and Sikipozo tribe and thus they have cultural sites on this particular piece of land.

The boundaries of the reserve are mostly marked by typical natural features such as streams, ridges and cascading gullies. These boundaries are agreed upon, mapped and have been demarcated in the field where necessary.

In the regional context this area is of great significance as lowland rainforest is disappearing rapidly due to unsustainable logging in the upper northern Kolombangara river area. The Vuri FCA is also significant as it is part of the Kolombangara River to Mt. Maetambe water catchment, known internationally as a biodiversity hotspot area in the country.

How We Use Our Land and Sea

The Vuri Forest Conservation Area and surrounding sites contains some of the last untouched virgin lowland and riverine rainforest on Choiseul Province. The area shows the evidences of earlier human occupation with older secondary re-growths along the river and up on the ridge. Some main features of the area are:

- Untouched lowland, riverine and hill rainforests

- Water catchment area of the Kolombangara river basin
- Water catchment area of the Vavudu river system with potential for a mini-hydropower project and also a water supply project for the broader Sasamuqa community
- High stocks of valuable commercial timber tree species
- High stocks of Non timber forest products (Lawyer canes, Bamboos, Fruits, Nuts
- Important Cultural sites of the Vuri Clan of Sikipozo tribe containing some very old tambu (sacred) places and abandoned settlements.

The habitats and associated resources within the terrestrial area are utilized by Sikipozo tribal members of Vuri Clan and others living within and near the Vuri catchment area for meeting their daily needs sustenance and cash needs, many of which are available for sustainable harvesting within the area. Livelihood opportunities are sufficient for meeting the tribal members' needs. The current management of the area, including Forest Conservation and multi-purpose managed area, has been implemented in an attempt to safeguard the benefits realized by the people and to preserve the natural value of the natural ecosystems.

The area is suitable to be developed into a biodiversity research centre and ecotourism destination. A Lodge and Forest Walk Bush track is being planned to be built in the area to facilitate researchers and visitors. Over the year many researchers have visited the area. In 2016 game fishermen from Germany visited the area from the adjacent Sirebe FCA and highly recommended the Kolombangara River for game fishing activities.

Why Our Protected Area is Important (Key Values)

The Vuri FCA has the following significant values:

Our Landscape and Ecosystem

- Vuri land has an intact rainforest with many different forest types which includes; low land forest, ridge forest, freshwater swamp forest and riparian forest. These forest types provide habitats that support numerous organisms, plants and animals in various life forms and stages and provide for the livelihood of the people.
- The Vuri land is part of the forest which provides the essence for the watershed catchment area for the Kolombangara River system.
- The Richness of the Biodiversity that exists in the land presents a perfect spot for scientific research, ecotourism and biodiversity conservation.

Our Plants and Animals

- The Terrestrial and freshwater habitats support numerous natural ecosystems services, functions and hosts unique species of flora and fauna (plants and animal). Some of the species are endemic to the area and are also listed in the IUCN Red List. For example the endemic Tree Frog (*Palmatorappia solomonis*) and the freshwater prawn (Carina sikipozoi).
- The land is part of the corridor which supports the whole Kolombangara River watershed and more so the areas supports habitats which contains some of the endemic Birds, Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Flora on Choiseul island. The River system also contains numerous fresh water vertebrates.

- The intact forest provides an ideal environment for all the terrestrial and fresh water invertebrates and vertebrates including all the many different plants to reproduce and live.

Our Culture

- There are significant cultural sites, relics and artefacts that are of customary significant and importance to our people.
- Many of the terrestrial organisms, including animals and plants, from our forests are important to our people for traditional food, medicines and many other supplements.

Our Economy

- Terrestrial and freshwater resources are relied upon for meeting livelihood needs of our people,
- There is a potential for ecotourism and scientific research opportunities for the area and other adjacent forest areas as they comprises the corridor to the *Mount Maetambe* an area scientifically significant in terms of its biodiversity.
- There had been a recent Scientific Expeditions done in the corridor forests areas which brought some income into the communities.
- The area is part of a Pilot Carbon Off-set Programme known as Nakau.

Threats to Our Area

The terrestrial environment the tribe depends on is extremely vulnerable. Today, there are many stresses that impact the health of this valuable natural system. Human threats are numerous and compounding. In our forest they include: unsustainable resource harvesting, development and expansion of settlements, increased sedimentation of the river system from land-based activities such as logging. The impacts associated with climate change intensify the existing threats and add yet another host of threats to consider for the conservation of our area.

The severity of the existing of potential future threats differs, depending on the environment and depending on the nature of the threat in question. Regardless of severity, however all threats have a negative impact on the values of our area. Table 1 below illustrates the main threats to the Vuri FCA and the priority in which management should address the threats.

Table 1. Threats to existing values within and around Vuri Forest Conservation Area

Value Threat	Fresh water ecosystem	Forest Habitats	Culture	Tourism& economy	Endemic Birds and plants	Overall Threat
Overharvest	Medium	medium	High	medium	medium	high
Logging	very high	very high	very high	high	medium	very high
Pollution (oil & rubbish)	very high	high	High	high	very high	high
Climate Change	Medium	medium	Medium	medium	medium	medium
Risk Status	High	high	High	high	high	

Logging

The main threats resulting from logging include increased sedimentation within the water and increased pollution. Logging activities on neighboring Paleka and Zodi Tribal lands has already resulted in polluted streams and rivers, and in high levels of sedimentation of coastal waters. These threats have a greater impact on certain habitats, such as the Kolombangara river system, coral reefs and sea grass meadows, than others. As these organisms rely on sunlight, nutrient loading and increased sedimentation can block sunlight and affect productivity. The animals and ecosystem services associated with these environments will, therefore, also be affected. Sport fishing can only take place when river water is clear.

Pollution

Pollution was mentioned above as a threat associated with nearby logging in the Paleka and Zodia tribal lands in North Choiseul. There is the threat of oil spillage from heavy machinery washed down the streams and rivers into the main Kolombangara River.

Overharvesting

The unsustainable harvest of resources in our forest area has obvious consequences on the resource base itself. Terrestrial invertebrates' populations are showing a decline in many areas of Choiseul Province. This includes wild pigs, possums, bats, native forest rats, eel fish and other freshwater fishes.

Forest provide habitat for many terrestrial animals and plants thus it protects the soil from erosion and it protects the river banks from erosion during flooding periods. So if the forest health is compromised, so too will be its ability to support other life and act as a buffer. Currently, tourists come to Choiseul Province to experience the pristine terrestrial environment, which supports beautiful rainforest and is teeming with life. As resources are depleted, and ecosystem health and balance is altered, the natural environment may become less appealing to tourists.

Expansion of Gardens

The management plan facilitates people to make small gardens along designated areas as planned (see land-use map). Most of these gardens sites are very small and have low impact on the forest ecosystem of environment. However, if population is increasing and gardening intensifies it could become a threat for some parts of the conservation area, especially when more forest is cleared for garden areas.

Climate Change

Climate change threats to our area include: sea level rise; warming temperatures of the atmosphere; ocean acidification; and increased storm events. It is uncertain to what extent these threats will impact terrestrial ecosystems such as Vuri FCA, but there are many ways in which animals and plant populations might be affected. Terrestrial habitats will certainly be affected by both the warming of the atmospheric temperatures and resulting in a deterioration of the forest health. Unusual heavy rainfall and occasional flash flooding can be attributed from the irregular weather patterns and climate change.

The threats discussed above, all result in a less pristine terrestrial and marine environment. Overall, ecotourism activities offered in the area are likely to be negatively impacted by all the mentioned threats.

Looking After Our Forest Protected Area

The Law and Policy

The establishment and the management of the Vuri FCA area in accordance with the Protected Areas Act 2010 (PA Act) and Protected Areas Regulations 2012, and the relevant policies of the Choiseul Provincial Government and the Solomon Islands Government.

The PA Act and PA Regulations are national legislation allowing for the establishment and management of protected areas in the Solomon Islands. As this national legislation is specific to protected areas, it provides the most sound policies, direction, and regulations for Forest Protected Areas in the country. Under the PA Act and the PA Regulations communities are presented with the greatest powers with respect to enforcement for forest protected areas.

The Vuri FCA is managed by the Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee (VFCMC), and it is intended that the Management Committee will be appointed under Section 12(1) of the PA Act. The powers and jurisdiction to manage and govern the Vuri Forest Conservation Area are granted under Sections 27 and 29 of the PA Regulations. It is intended that the Vuri Forest Conservation Area Management Committee will (as an existing committee) be adopted and continue to function as the management committee for the purposes of the PA Act and the PA Regulations. This is consistent with regulation 28 of the PA Regulations.

Our Protected Area Category

The Protected Areas Regulations 2012 prescribed the categories of protected areas for Solomon Islands. The categories listed in the Regulations are consistent with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Protected Area classification scheme and provide the management objectives and principles for each category of protected area. For our protected area we have assigned it the category of:

Resource Management Area

The primary objectives of a *Resource Management Area* include the promotion of ecologically sustainable use of natural ecosystems and resources for the benefit of customary owners and dependent local communities. *Resource Management Areas* shall be managed in such a way, or according to such a system, that allows for controlled access to, and use of, natural ecosystems and resources for the purpose of ensuring:

- Sustainable food security levels are achieved or maintained
- Optimal sustainable livelihood and development needs of customary owners and dependent local communities are met.

The management principles for a *Resource Management Area* are:

- Ecologically sustainable use of natural resources to meet the basic livelihood needs of dependent local communities will be permitted under a strong management regime;
- The basic livelihood needs of future generations dependent on the resources of the area will not be undermined or compromised by present generations; and
- Harvesting or extraction of natural resources is subject to continuous assessment of the health and state of stocks or harvestable natural resources.

Management Objectives for Our Area

In addition to the broad management objectives prescribed by the protected area category the following specific management objectives have been developed for the Vuri FCA:

- To work in partnership with other stakeholders, as an organized group, in the issue of resource management;
- To improve the capacity of Vuri inhabitants for resource management and develop appropriate livelihood options;
- To review and evaluate the status of resource bases and the effectiveness of the management plan; and
- To involve the community in the planning process, establishment, management, and monitoring process for the management sites.

Administration of Our Protected Area

The Vuri FCA is administered by the Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee (VFCMC). The VFCMC has already been established according to the Constitution of the Vuri Clan Association Protected Area Management Committee.

Roles of Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee (VFCMC)

The basic responsibility of the VFCMC is to supervise the implementation of the management plan and management rules and guidelines for the Vuri FCA. The other functions of the VFCMC are:

- Declare any forest sites within the customary areas of Vuri Clan land to be incorporated into specific management sites;
- Periodically review the management plan to ensure management objectives are being met;
- Appoint Rangers (community conservation officers - CCOs) for enforcing management rules and regulations;
- Recommend training for Forest Protected Area site staff and rangers;
- Screen and review all external research applications to conduct research within the Vuri Forest Conservation Area ; and
- Approve various activities and resource uses within the Vuri FCA

Vuri FCMC Membership

The VFCMC is composed of twelve (12) members, including a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, three Trustees and five other representatives for women,

youths and Honiara based members of the Vuri Clan of Sikipozo tribe. There are other members of Vuri Clan who reside outside of Sasamungga who, by virtue of their membership and status, can be called to attend meetings and are eligible to vote.

VFCMC Meetings

The VFCMC shall meet at least once every quarter of the year. The Vuri Forest Conservation Areas Management office at Paruqelo village, Sasamungga in South Choiseul is to be the venue of all meetings unless decided otherwise. In consultation with the Chairman, the Secretary can call for additional meetings should the need arise.

Term of Office

The term of office of each VFCMC member shall be in accordance with the terms set out in the Vuri Clan Association Constitution which is four years. Upon completion of the 4 year term, the committee will decide if another term will be filled by the individual.

Decision Making

The VFCMC is the body responsible for making decisions regarding the Vuri FCA. If the VFCMC cannot come to a consensus, the matter must be referred to the Vuri Forest Conservation Areas Executives (VCAE) for a decision.

Resolving Disputes

It is the responsibility of the VFCMC to resolve any disputes arising from the administration and uses of the Forest Protected Area. Any dispute which is trivial in nature and pertaining to ownership rights shall be settled by the principal owners. In these instances, the VFCMC will assist as necessary.

Allowances and Stipends

Depending on available funding, daily sitting allowances will be paid to VFCMC members for meetings. Also, if available, funding will be used to cover food and travel for those members residing outside of Paruqelo and Sasamungga. The travelling members will pay for their own fares and be refunded if transport is not arranged for them. Authorized receipts are required for refund if applicable.

Approval of this Management Plan

Upon completion, this plan was presented to the VFCMC for a final review. On the satisfaction of the VFCMC with the content of the plan, it was presented to community members for further consultation and final endorsement.

Protecting Our Values and Achieving Our Vision

The local community and other stakeholders with an interest in the protected area were consulted to identify the protected areas values. The protection of these values is the principal reason for establishment of the protected area and the basis upon which management decisions have been made.

The area included within the Vuri FCA comprises many significant habitats. These habitats support the livelihood of the people of Vuri Clan in Sasamungga and

surrounding villages and they fulfill various important functions for maintaining the balance and integrity of the natural terrestrial ecosystems, including their marine environment through ecological connectivity.

The important values of the Vuri FCA are grouped under the following headings:

- Our Landscape and Ecosystems
- Our Flora and Fauna Biodiversity (Plants and Animals)
- Our Culture and Traditions

The Vuri FCA will be managed to protect and maintain these values to ensure that the benefits derived from them are available to the present and future generations.

Our Landscape and Ecosystems

Background information

The Vuri Clan land composed of lowland rainforest, ridge and hill forest, freshwater swamp forest and riparian forest. Cascading valleys which are transacted by streams are dominated by Palms, Ferns and herbaceous plants whilst large trees including strangler figs are abundant on the slopes and the ridgeline. There are narrow flat areas around the abandoned villages on ridge tops depicting old gardens and groves of fruits and nut trees and betel nut groves.

Two major types of natural forests appear to dominate the Vuri Clan land. These are tropical lowland rainforest (TLR) and hill forest (HF) on the ridge tops. A third forest type is made up of mixed composition of old growth and secondary growth vegetation. This secondary vegetation occurs in old garden sites and old human settlements.

The rainforest here is very rich in commercial timber trees, small to medium size trees, shrubs, herbs, creepers and climbers. The tree flora is dominated by *Pometia pinnata*, *Vitex cofassus*, *Calophyllum peekellii*, *Calophyllum vitiense*, *Flueggia flexuosa*, *Canarium salomonense*, *Syzygium onesima*, *Syzygium nemorale* and *Syzygium tierneyanum*. However, the following timber trees are also found to occur throughout the area: *Alstonia scholaris*, *Alstonia spectabilis*, *Amoora cucullata*, *Burckella obovata*, *Canarium asperum*, *Camptosperma brevipetiolata*, *Elaeocarpus sphaericus*, *Dysoxylum excelsum*, *Terminalia calamansanai*, *Endospermum medullosum*, *Neonauclea orientalis*, *Sterculia conwentzii*, *Pterocarpus indicus*, *Octomeles sumatrana*, *Endospermum medullosum* and several other minor timber tree species. Thus, this primary rainforest is very rich in timber stock per unit area and is typical of forest areas coveted by all logging companies, which is a great threat to biodiversity conservation endeavours.

The Vuri FCA is part of the forest which provides the essence for the watershed catchment area for the Kolombangara River systems including other major streams within this central portion of Choiseul Island.

Management Issues

- Increased unsustainable logging activities from the nearby Paleka and Zodia tribal lands in North Choiseul is imposing a threat on the health of the adjacent forest areas including Vuri clan land areas.
- Water pollution was observed to be getting worse as the operation is getting closer to the main streams and rivers connecting the Kolombangara River water catchment.

- Impacts associated with climate change, such as frequent storm pose a threat to the forest as when a gap is created by a fallen tree or several trees they alter the environment thus having a direct impact on the eco system and the bio diversity.
- Over harvesting of natural resources in the nearby forest areas is also posing a threat to our land as the population is increasing and the demand for resources is also increasing.

Desired Outcomes

- Protect the Vuri FCA from overharvesting of its resources
- Protect the Vuri FCA from all forms of severe degradation through human activities
- Maintain an intact forest with its multi-functional diversity in protecting the fragile ecosystems of the Vuri FCA
- Increase and continue education, awareness and community capacity building in conservation management issues and monitoring.

Management Actions

A.1 The commercial harvest of all terrestrial and freshwater resources is prohibited from designated forest areas

A.2 Sustainable harvesting of terrestrial and freshwater resources is permitted from forest areas, streams and river, if authorized by the VFCMC

A.3 Community participation in forest conservation workshops, training and the selection of Rangers and community monitors.

A.4 Annual inventory, review and monitoring of some major animal and plant species to measure the health of the forest.

Our Flora and Fauna Biodiversity (Plants and Animals)

Background Information

From the 2009 biodiversity assessments done in the Vuri Forest Conservation Area, there were a total of 70 vertebrates identified during the course of the survey. This included 12 mammals, 31 birds, 13 frogs, 14 reptiles. Despite being a short and rapid survey, this study showed high levels of diversity of vertebrates in the proposed protected area. There were presence of endemic species like *Solomys* rats, palm frogs (*Palmatorappia solomonis*), and birds like White winged fantails (*Rhipidura cockerelli*), variable kingfishers (*Ceyx Lepidus meeki*), and dusky myzomela's (*Myzome lalarfargei*). A more recent bird count was done in 2014, identifying 56 bird species within the area. See appendix 2 for detailed animal survey data (2009 and 2014) from the Vuri area.

The assortment of plants and the landscape that support this remarkable vertebrate diversity is itself extremely varied. Native and endemic orchids that are either epiphytic or terrestrial in nature are distributed randomly in tree tops and on the forest floor.

An endemic herb, only known to exist in some islands in the Solomons, *Spathiphyllum solomonensis*, is also found to be quite common here. Another striking feature of the Vuri rainforest flora is the typical balance in the abundance and distribution of native palm species throughout the reserve area. The following palms are found in the area, some domesticated and others wild; *Areca catechu* (planted), *Areca macrocalyx* (wild), *Calamus hollrungii*, *Calamus stipitatus*, *Hydriastele macrospadix*, *Heterospathe minor*, *Heterospathe salomonense*, *Licuala lauterbachii*, *Ptychosperma latius*, *Ptychosperma salomonense*, *Rhopaloblaste elegans* and *Physokentia solomonensis*.

Management Issues

- Logging in the area poses serious threats to the habitat of river plants and animals as well to plant and animals living in the interior rain forests
- The area contains some very unique plant and animal life which will attract researchers and tourists interested in plant and wildlife.

Desired Outcomes

- All plant and animal life protected from damage and disturbances.
- Tribal community members more aware about the plant and animal life in the conservation area and the need to protect these
- Develop eco-tourism and research facilitation by improving facilities and advertise the natural features in the conservation area

Management Actions

A.1 Prohibit the commercial hunting or collection of any animal or plants within the conservation area

A.2 Sustainable collection, hunting or harvesting of terrestrial and freshwater resources is permitted from forest areas, streams and river only if authorized by the VFCMC

A.3 Educate tribal members on plant and animal life present in the conservation area and the need to protect them.

A.4 Ranger to check that there is no trespassing by logging operations in surrounding area.

A.5 Make a summary booklet (or poster) from the studies done in the area presenting data on natural features and animal and plant life within Vuri FCA to support the development of eco-tourism and facilitate biodiversity research.

Our Culture and Traditions

Background

The Vuri land hosts many culturally significant sites of our Clan and tribe. The land is our place of origin (birth place) where sacred alters and burial sites existed, along with significant sites from headhunting days. Traditionally, our people have depended on forest resources from the land and river system for food, medicine, tools, shelter, and transportation.

Management Issues

- The conservation of our culturally significant sites is equally as important as the conservation of our natural environment.
- Sustaining traditional resource use is important for future generations. Many people in the village are not fully aware of the cultural importance of the Vuri Clan area because most people have been living along the coast for a long time.

Desired Outcomes

- Maintain the cultural values within or nearby Vuri FCA.
- Protect culturally significant sites within or nearby the Forest Conservation Area.
- Ensure future generations can enjoy the same traditional use of resources as past generations

Management Actions

A.1 Encourage the people of Vuri Clan and Sikipozo tribe to continue practicing the use of traditional knowledge and techniques for natural resource management.

A.2 Make an inventory and description (photos and GPS) of all cultural important sites within the area.

Benefits and Opportunities

Eco-Tourism

Background Information

The Vuri Clan through the VFCMC is planning to build an Eco-lodge at the Protected Area and it will be used by local and overseas visitors, Sasamunga School students, researchers and other organizations carrying out Scientific and Forestry studies in the Area. There is much opportunity for ecotourism and recreation activities to expand and diversify throughout the Forest Conservation Area once there is good publicity about the area.

Management Issues

- The whole Vuri Clan members must benefit equally from tourists visiting and enjoying their Forest Conservation Area.
- Currently efforts are focusing on building an eco-lodge within the Vuri land.
- Plenty of additional opportunities for ecotourism exist including: paddling up the River, Camping in the forest, Bush hiking , Bird watching and involvement in conservation efforts (tree planting, bird monitoring, forest inventory surveys, fresh water fish counts) and participating in traditional resource use activities.
- There is a lack of funding to help initiate, or develop, the above mentioned ecotourism activities.

Desired Outcomes

- Expand and diversify ecotourism-based livelihoods so that all Vuri members benefit.

- Ecotourism activities contribute to a Forest Conservation Area management fund.
- Improve community capacity for development of ecotourism activities on the Forest Conservation Area and within Vuri land.
- Establish governance/management structure for sound financial management.
- Further investigate community involvement in ecotourism activities.
- Source funding for the development of the ecotourism industry.

Management Actions

A.1 Seek out training opportunities to build better community ecotourism capacity.

A.2 Ecotourism activities available within the Forest Conservation Area will be advertised in nearby Taro and Gizo, and through the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau.

A.3 Apply Forest Conservation Area custom fees to contribute to management fund.

A.4 Establishment of ecotourism management body to develop ecotourism activities and manage finance.

A.5 Seek funding support to assist with the development of ecotourism opportunities.

Business and Livelihoods

Background Information

Within the Vuri land and Vuri FCA, there are business and livelihood opportunities do exists in addition to the ones associated with ecotourism. If such opportunities are to be explored, the development of a sustainable financing mechanism would be useful in ensuring that money matters are properly managed and that livelihoods are sustainable. The Vuri FCA may present the opportunity for Vuri Clan members to someday operate independently of donors. In Sasamunga there are honey bee hives set up by Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF) which are managed by individual families and that the produce are sold by them and the money is saved in a saving club run by the women groups of Sasamunga village. Currently the honey bee project is proving to be successful in that it brings in money for the bee keeping families.

The possibility of selling forest Carbon credits in the future is another opportunity that exists for the Vuri Clan. They have set aside a large area (approx. 600 Ha) under a program known as the NAKAU Program where they will be able to trade their forest carbon credits once all the requirements are done.

Management Issues

- Sustainable livelihoods may be achieved through honey bee farming, organic farming, or forestry activities.
- The forest will be saved from destructive logging activities if the NAKAU forest carbon program does eventuate thus providing the much needed resources for community development.
- There is limited capacity and knowledge amongst the people regarding alternate livelihood opportunities.
- Lack of funding delays the development or initiation of alternate livelihoods.

- Sustainable financing is a new concept to most of the Vuri Clan members and local residents of Sasamungga village. Experts are needed to educate and assist in the implementation of finance mechanisms.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased community understanding of alternate livelihood opportunities
- Completion of a business/livelihood development plan
- Increased community understanding of sustainable financing
- Implementation of one financing mechanism
- Vuri FCA beneficiaries work together with, and learn from, others involved in alternate livelihood activities within Choiseul Province

Management Actions

A.1 Help organize and participate in training workshops on possible livelihood opportunities and business skills.

A.2 Seek assistance for the completion of a business/livelihood development plan.

A.3 Seek funding for the hiring of experts or volunteers to assist with the development of sustainable livelihoods and the implementation of a financing mechanism.

A.4 Investigate other alternate livelihood initiatives within Choiseul Province and establish learning networks.

Partnerships

Background information

The Vuri Clan has had some long term partnerships and engagement with NGOs and government agencies assisting the Clan in conservation initiatives. Some examples of these networking partnerships are:

- Partnership with World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and established the Forest Conservation Area in June 2008 and undertook Biodiversity surveys in 2009.
- Partnership with Natural Resources Development Foundation (NRDF) since 2010, focussing on forest conservation, sustainable forest management and FSC certification and livelihood development (honey farming, saving clubs).
- Partnership with Ecological Solutions Solomon Islands (ESSI) since 2014 and effectively GIS mapping of the land boundaries of the Vuri Clan land and the forest Conservation area and also carried out Genealogical recordings of Clan and tribal members and lineages.
- Partnership with the National Herbarium of the Ministry of Forestry and Research to conduct scientific research of the taxonomic status of the flora.

Besides supporting forest conservation and setting up income generating activities for the community, the organizations use the local facilities while doing their programmes and activities.

Management Issues

- Sometimes too many intervening organizations confuse the Clan members and community people especially when organizations are doing the same or similar programmes.
- Need transparency towards the community or Clan members. Community members should be informed of what partner organizations are doing and differentiate incoming visiting representatives and purpose of visits.
- Some partnerships have short term time frames, introducing certain activities without following up. Most of such programmes fail.
- The partnership with ESSI and NRDF are long term which strengthens the conservations efforts of the Clan and tribes involved.
- Responsible committees must be empowered to seek alternative funds to help in their work. Economic activities such as eco-tourism and forest carbon trading are seen as great potential opportunities.
- There is potential that visitors neglect certain local protocols (cultural, church) when visiting the village or conservation areas. There should be proper introductions and procedures or code of conduct in place for visitors to prevent any disputes, grievances or embarrassment from local community members.

Desired Outcomes

- Increase in number of partnerships to support in the conservation efforts of the Vuri Clan.
- Management efforts and activities are financially supported by income generating activities such as eco-tourism, research facilitation fees and forest carbon trade.
- Community members clearly aware of different partnerships and visitors.

Management Actions

A.1 Prepare to inform and introduce visitors upon arrival. Draft a code of conduct for visitors to the village and the Forest Conservation Areas.

A.2 Inform and clearly explain to community members about the partnerships and the work they do through pre-arranged community meetings.

A.3 MOU or MOA must be negotiated, developed and signed between Vuri Clan Association Committee and the Partner Organizations.

Community Participation and Awareness

Background Information

Conservation efforts and the development of sustainable livelihoods within the Vuri FCA will present many opportunities for the people of Vuri Clan and Sikipozo tribe to increase their awareness on numerous subjects, to participate in various training and monitoring activities, and to work together to maintain the values and opportunities associated with the Forest Conservation Area.

Management Issues

- The successful operation of the Forest Conservation Area will require the members of the Vuri Clan to work together. In doing so, there should be equal

opportunity for those available and willing to participate in various training activities.

- Those who attend training workshops have a responsibility in educating those who do not, and in raising awareness for the Vuri Clan membership.
- The Forest Conservation Area presents many opportunities for community involvement, starting with the creation of this management plan to the implementation and monitoring of stated actions, regulations and guidelines.

Desired Outcomes

- Increased awareness regarding the Vuri FCA values, threats, and opportunities.
- Increased understanding and capability amongst Vuri Clan members for the successful implementation of the management plan and associated monitoring program.
- Monitoring and compliance duties within the Forest Conservation Area are shared amongst community members.

Management Actions

A.1 Seek support from the Environment and Conservation Division (MECDM), Ministry of Forestry and Research (MoFR) and other Partner Organizations such as Solomon Islands Rangers Association (SIRA) and ESSi to conduct relevant training workshops on biodiversity inventory and monitoring.

A.2 Designate and appoint community rangers (conservation officers) to conduct monitoring (biological and compliance) within the Vuri Forest Conservation Area.

A.3 Organize training workshop on monitoring and enforcement of Forest Conservation Area rules and regulations for community rangers.

A.4 Participation of Conservation Rangers in a Look and Learn visit to other Sites.

A.5 Participation of the Conservation Management Committee in a Look and Learn visit to other community based organizations (CBO) and conservation sites.

Our Rules and Regulations

The Protected Area Regulations 2012 set out the General Prohibitions and Restricted Activities that apply to protected areas. Within the Vuri FCA it is an offence to do any of the following:

General Prohibitions

- Carry out industrial or commercial extraction of timber, round logs or non-timber forest products.
- Carry out industrial or commercial extraction of minerals including quarrying or gravel.
- Take or remove any plants, animal species or other organisms unless authorized by the management committee.

Restricted Activities

Within the Vuri Forest Conservation Area it is an offence to do any of the following unless authorized by the management committee (*note: reference to resolutions made in 2018 meeting at Paruqelo*).

- carry on any agricultural or gardening activities
- Build any dwelling house or unlawfully occupy the area
- Light or cause any open fire to be started unless authorized on designated areas
- Throw, litter, dump or release any effluent, sewage, refuse, rubbish or toilet waste
- Allow or introduce any grazing stock animal or species
- Erect, install or display any billboard, advertisement or promotional material
- Cut, destroy or remove any plant or tree including firewood
- Remove, extract, or excavate any sand or gravel
- Hunt, kill, or slaughter any animal or other living creatures
- Destroy or deface any cultural object or monument of biocultural significance
- Remove or be in possession of any cultural artefact or sacred objects
- Remove or be in possession of any fossil, archaeological remain or paleontological specimen
- Sow, propagate or introduce any exotic or invasive species
- Significantly alter or change the natural flow of a river or stream
- Use a vehicle, bull-dozer or other heavy machinery other than that complying with the dimensions specified by the management committee
- Organise or participate in any public meeting, demonstration or gathering
- Flying aircraft in or over a protected area lower than 500m
- Wilful obstruction of a protected area Ranger

Authorised Activities

The following activities have been authorized by the management committee:

- Members of Vuri Clan may take or remove any plants, animal species or other organism for traditional purposes if approved by the VFCMC but excludes animal and plant species listed in the attached protected species list.

- Members of the Vuri Clan are permitted limited non-commercial extraction of timber for construction of office buildings of the committee and to meet their minimal housing needs.

Noting that additional rules are listed in the 2018 Resolutions of the PA Meeting held on 20th April 2018 at Paruqelo.

Compliance and Monitoring

Management Issues

- In order to ensure that the rules and regulations are obeyed, a compliance and enforcement program must be included in the management approach of the Forest Conservation Area. The success of the FCA, and the achievement of its management objectives, is directly related to the level of compliance with the FCA's rules and regulations.
- People will comply with rules and regulations when they understand and accept them. However, penalties need to be enforced on those who do not comply with, or break, the rules and regulations.
- Within the Solomon Islands, non-compliance within protected areas has been observed as a result of the following:
 - Lack of awareness and understanding about the protected area or rules
 - Food or cash requirements
 - Lack of respect for local/traditional rules
 - Disagreement or disputes of rights and rules (e.g., ownership)
 - Destructive harvesting techniques

Desired Outcome

- A compliance and enforcement program should aim to increase understanding of FCA rules, regulations, and penalties; achieve a high level of compliance with FCA rules and regulations; and assist in the achievement of the FCA objectives and desired outcomes.

Management Actions

A.1 As part of our compliance and enforcement program, regular education and awareness activities will be conducted within schools, communities, and with other relevant stakeholders. This compliance education and awareness program will cover:

- The purpose (goals) of the FCA
- FCA boundaries
- Proposed benefits of FCA
- FCA rules and regulations
- Penalties for breaking the rules

A.2 Public notices of FCA rules and penalties will be posted within the FCA, in nearby communities, and advertised through media.

A.3 Develop and establish regular compliance monitoring and enforcement program

Penalties and Enforcement

Trained Rangers, appointed by the Management Committee, are responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of compliance with the Vuri FCA rules and regulations that fall under the Protected Areas Act. The enforcement powers that may be assigned to a ranger are set out under Section 66 of the Protected Area Regulations (2012). More information regarding the role and responsibility of rangers can be found in.

In addition to these powers, it is possible for the Minister to appoint a ranger as an “inspector” under section 19(1) of the PA Act. Any ranger that is appointed as an inspector will then have the power to issue infringement notices with respect to offences under the PA Regulations that occur within the FCA. These infringement notices will contain a fixed penalty that is payable by the offender. The PA Regulations do not however, at the date of this management plan, contain the amount of the fixed penalties. It is, however, stated in section 22(2)(b) of the PA Act that a fixed penalty infringement notice cannot exceed 1/5 of the maximum penalty (maximum penalties have been summarized in Appendix 3).

Prescribed offences and penalties, as outlined in the Protected Area Regulations (2012), are also provided in Appendix 3. Individuals who fail to observe the General Prohibitions or carry out a Restricted Activity, without Management Committee approval, may be subject to the maximum penalty listed in the table. An offence under the Protected Areas Regulations is a criminal offence for which the offender can be legally prosecuted.

Vuri FCA rules and regulations that do not fall under the national legislation, but are supported under the Choiseul Province Natural Resources Ordinance (CPNRO), can be enforced by enforcement officers appointed by the Provincial Government and local police. Vuri inhabitants may report any offence to enforcement officers, or police for assistance in enforcing such rules and regulations.

Neither the Vuri Forest Conservation Area Management Committee, nor the rangers have legal authority to enforce Forest Conservation Area rules and regulations that do not fall under the PA Act or offenses related to outside of the protected area.

Also the agreed enforcement and compliance system and process is captured in the 2018 resolution meeting at Paruqelo.

Our Action Plan

This plan of management establishes a scheme of operations for the Vuri FCA. Implementation of this plan will be undertaken within the annual program of Vuri Forest Conservation Area Management Committee.

Identified activities for implementation are listed in Table 2. Relative priorities are allocated against each activity as follows:

- High priority activities are those essential to achievement of the objectives and desired outcomes. They must be undertaken in the near future to avoid significant deterioration in natural, cultural or management resources.
- Medium priority activities are those that are necessary to achieve the objectives and desired outcomes but are not urgent.
- Low priority activities are desirable to achieve management objectives and desired outcomes but can wait until resources become available.
- Ongoing is for activities that are undertaken on an annual basis or statements of management intent that will direct the management response if an issue arises.

This plan of management does not have a specific term and will stay in force until amended or replaced in accordance with the Protected Areas Act.

Table 2: List of Management Actions

Action No.	Management Actions	Priority
Our Landscape & Ecosystems		
A.1	The commercial harvest of all terrestrial and freshwater resources is prohibited within the boundaries of the Vuri FCA.	Ongoing
A.2	Sustainable harvesting of terrestrial and freshwater resources is permitted from forest areas, streams and river if authorized by the Vuri Forest Management Committee (VFMC).	Ongoing
A.3	Community participation in forest conservation workshops and the selection of Rangers and community monitors.	High priority
A.4	Annual monitoring of some major animal and plant species to measure the health of the forest.	Ongoing
Our Plants and Animals		

A.1	Prohibited the commercial hunting or collection of any animal or plants within the conservation area	On going
A.2	Sustainable collection, hunting or harvesting of terrestrial and freshwater resources is permitted from forest areas, streams and river only if authorized by the Vuri FMC	On going
A.3	Educate tribal members on plant and animal life present in the conservation area and the need to protect these.	High
A.4	Ranger to check that there is no trespassing by logging operations in surrounding area.	Ongoing
A.5	Make a summary booklet (or poster) from the studies done in the area presenting data on natural features and animal and plant life within Vuri FCA to support the development of tourism and research facilities.	Medium
Our Culture		
A.1	Encourage the people of Vuri Clan to continue practicing the use of traditional knowledge and techniques for natural resource management.	On going
A.2	Make an inventory and description (photos and GPS) of all cultural sites within the area	Medium
Ecotourism		
A.1	Seek out training opportunities to build better community ecotourism capacity.	On going
A.2	Ecotourism activities available within the Forest Conservation Area will be advertised in nearby Taro and Gizo, and through the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau.	High
A.3	Apply Forest Conservation Area custom fees to contribute to management fund.	High
A.4	Establishment of ecotourism management body to develop ecotourism activities, oversee funds, and manage received monies.	Medium
A.5	Funding support will be sought to assist with the development of ecotourism opportunities.	High
Benefits & opportunities: Business and Livelihoods		

A.1	Help organize and participate in training workshops on possible livelihood opportunities and business skills.	On going
A.2	Seek assistance for the completion of a business/livelihood development plan.	High
A.3	Seek funding for the hiring of experts or volunteers to assist with the development of sustainable livelihoods and the implementation of a financing mechanism.	High
A.4	Investigate other alternate livelihood initiatives within Choiseul Province and establish learning networks.	Medium
Benefits & Opportunities: Partnerships		
A.1	Draft a code of conduct for visitors visiting the village and conservation areas	High
A.2	Inform and clearly explain to community members about the partnerships and the work they do through pre-arranged community meetings.	Medium
A.3	MOU and MOA must be signed between Vuri Clan and the partner organizations to give way for programmes or activities in the community or conservation areas	Ongoing
Benefits & opportunities: Community Participation and Awareness		
A.1	Seek support from Environment and Conservation Division (MECDM) and other partners such as ESSI and SIRA to conduct various training workshops on biodiversity monitoring.	High
A.2	Designate community rangers (conservation officers) to conduct monitoring (biological and compliance) within the Vuri Forest Conservation Area.	High
A.3	Organize training workshop on monitoring and enforcement of Forest Conservation Area rules and regulations for community rangers.	High
A.4	Participation of community rangers in Look and Learn Visits to other FCA sites.	High
A.5	Participation of Management Committee in Look and Learn visits to other community based organization (CBO) and FCA sites.	Medium

Annual Operations Plan

To guide the implementation of the Conservation Plan, an Annual Operations Plan will be prepared on annual basis and reported to relevant stakeholders.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of the Plan

It is important to check that the plan is on track to achieve the objectives, outcomes and vision for the protected area. We need to measure progress and collect information to confirm the status of the values and to determine whether or not threats are under control. One of the strategies in this plan is to put together a monitoring and evaluation program. Table 3 summarizes the indicators associated with each management action (Table 2) already discussed in this plan. Indicators will be monitored and measured to determine whether or not the individual targets for each value are being achieved. The proposed methods for measuring the indicators are also presented in Table 3.

Table 3. List of indicators for the monitoring and evaluation program.

Value Category	Indicators	Monitoring Method
Our Landscape & Ecosystems	A1 – Level of compliance with harvest rules and regulations	Field monitoring trip by rangers
	A2 – Level of harvesting and records of applications and approvals from SFMC	Field visits and observations from rangers
	A3 – Number of people conducted training and selection of rangers	Participations lists
	A4 – Annual Inventory list of environmental indicator species	Field visits by rangers and researchers
Our Plants & Animals	A1 – Level of compliance with harvest rules and regulations	Field visits by rangers
	A2 – Level of knowledge and understanding by community members	Interviews
	A3 – No acts of trespassing	Field visits by rangers
	A4 – Annual report on status of plant and animals in the area	Field monitoring by rangers and researchers
	A5 – Brochure in use	Not specific
Our Culture	A1 – Traditional knowledge captured and passed onto youth; traditional harvesting methods maintained	Community surveys
	A2 – Records of cultural important and tambu sites present	Not specific
Benefits & Opportunities Ecotourism	A1 – Community participation in training workshops	Annual progress review against indicators (all)
	A2 – Ecotourism activities within the FCA advertised in a number of locations	
	A3 – Establishment of FCA management	

	<p>fund</p> <p>A4 – Ecotourism management body established</p> <p>A5 – Donor support proposal(s) prepared and submitted to relevant donors</p>	
Benefits & Opportunities Business and Livelihoods	<p>A1 – Community participation in alternate livelihood training workshops</p> <p>A2 – Completion of business/livelihood development plan</p> <p>A3 – At least one alternate livelihood option developed and one sustainable finance mechanism established</p> <p>A4 – One ‘Look and Learn’ trip to another alternate livelihood project in Choiseul Province</p>	Annual progress review against indicators (all)
Benefits & Opportunities Partnerships	<p>A.1 – Code of conduct in place and used</p> <p>A.2 – Community members aware of partnerships and visitors</p> <p>A.3 – MOU or MOA with partners signed</p>	<p>On-site verification</p> <p>Community interviews</p> <p>On-site verification</p>
Benefits & Opportunities Community Participation and Awareness	<p>A1 – Opportunity for community participation in workshops and training</p> <p>A2 – Designation of community rangers</p> <p>A3 – Number of rangers trained in compliance and enforcement</p> <p>A4 – Ranger participation in ‘Look & Learn’ trips</p> <p>A5 – Management Committee participation in ‘Look & Learn’ visits</p>	Annual progress review against indicators (all)

The Vuri Forest Conservation Management Committee (VFCMC) will provide annual reports to the Director of Environment and Conservation Division (MECDM) on the implementation of the Management Plan.

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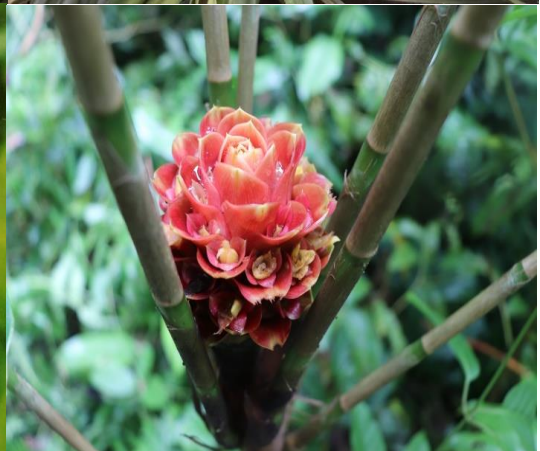
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Photos of some unique flora found in Vuri Forest Protected Area





Appendix 2: Photos of some unique fauna found in Vuri Forest Protected Area





