

## Supplementary Material 2

### Icelandic Protected Area context

Iceland has about 130 terrestrial protected areas (PAs) covering approximately 20,500 km<sup>2</sup> or 20% of land and inland water (Government of Iceland, 2022). All PAs in Iceland are established by government. In most cases, the process follows the *Nature Conservation Act*, whereby the Environment Agency drafts the terms of protection and defines the site boundaries (Petursson et al., 2016). This is followed by a consultation period. Once the parties have agreed to the terms, the proposal is submitted to the Minister of the Environment. Some PAs have also been established through site-specific legislation allowing more contextual tailoring, e.g. co-management in the case of Vatnajökull NP (Siltanen et al., 2022). Table 1 outlines the laws and bylaws governing protected areas in Iceland.

All formally protected areas in Iceland have nature conservation as a primary objective. Therefore, there are no formal PAs in Iceland that would need to be considered as OECMs. A systematic approach towards biodiversity has been taken by mapping ecosystems, habitat types and biodiversity-rich areas in Iceland, and this work has provided a basis for identifying a network of PAs (Ottósson et al., 2016; Icelandic Institute of Natural History, n.d.). This work is ongoing.

Iceland is the only Arctic state that does not have Indigenous people. Protected areas can be established on any type of land tenure regime in Iceland. This includes land owned by the state (central government), private or local government (municipalities) or lands with specific tenure arrangements where land is held in public (*þjóðlenda*), but the management is joint between the central and local governments. In most cases PAs are not established without the consent of the landowner.

Iceland has two levels of governance: the central government and local government at the municipal level. Currently there are 68 local governments which have responsibility for spatial planning within their jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of the central government to formally establish protected areas with consent of the relevant local government(s). Local governments can also recommend new protected areas.

**Table 1. Laws and governance structures of Icelandic PAs**

Laws and bylaws	Sites	Management type	Responsible organisation
Nature Conservation Act 60/2013	This act defines several PA categories and covers most PAs in Iceland. Currently around 125 discrete sites.	Centralised	Environment Agency*
<i>Site-specific laws</i>			
Act 47/2004, update Act 85/2019	Þingvellir National Park (WHS)	Centralised	Parliament appoints 7 MPs to Þingvellir Committee. Independent park authority
Act 97/2004, bylaw 665/2012	Mývatn-Laxá Nature Reserve	Centralised	Environment Agency*
Act 54/1995	Breiðafjörður Protection Area	Locally managed by the Breiðafjörður Committee.	Breiðafjörður Committee appointed by the Minister. No management agency
Act 60/2007, update 101/2016, bylaw 300/2020	Vatnajökull National Park (WHS)	Co-managed between central and local	Central Board, Regional Committees, independent park authority*

		government and civil society	
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\* Merged into a new Nature Protected Agency on 1 January 2025

### Sources and further information

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- Ottósson, J. G., Sveinsdóttir, A., & Harðardóttir, M. (Eds.). (2016). Vistgerðir á Íslandi (trans. Ecosystems in Iceland). *Fjölrit Náttúrufræðistofnunar nr. 54*. Icelandic Institute of Natural History. <https://www.ni.is/is/rannsoknir/voktun-og-rannsoknir/vistgerdir-islandi>
- Siltanen, J., Petursson, J. G., Cook, D., & Davidsdóttir, B. (2022). Diversity in protected area governance and its implications for management: An institutional analysis of selected parks in Iceland. *Land*, 11(2), 315. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11020315>