AWF-Esri Collaboration on Rethinking Geospatial Conservation

AWF and Esri have been partnering for over 2 decades to bring geospatial analysis to put people and nature at the heart of development decision making on the continent of Africa. At the core of our collaboration has been a shared commitment to democratizing data access for enhanced decision-making. Over time, AWF and Esri have developed and deployed tools to support protected area management, empower natural resource managers to prioritise and plan strategically, and track multiple threats at landscape level to enhance integrated approaches to conservation and development. AWF and Esri are levelling up this collaboration to bring these tools and approaches to empower a wider range of African decision makers through our pan-African networks.

In 2019 AWF received a 10-year grant from Esri's ArcGIS for Protected Area Management program and sought to leverage it by launching a collaborative partnership under the aegis of the Esri's Advantage program in 2020. The Esri-AWF partnership has since generated innovative, accessible tools to facilitate evidence-based decision-making by non-technical users. Additionally, the AWF Degradation Dashboard (2023) leverages deforestation alerts and near real-time high-resolution satellite imagery to enable users to explore potential degradation incidents and formulate agile, effective adaptive management responses. The Risk Management Dashboard profiles patterns of such incidents in near real time for AWF landscapes using data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

To scale the application of these tools, Esri and AWF have developed partnerships with implementing organizations:

- **Okavango Capital Partners;** With the support of USAID, Okavango Capital Partners (OCP), Esri, and AWF adapted TRACTS Scale to evaluate prospective investment companies against investment criteria related to biodiversity protection, climate-smart production, and poverty alleviation (2023). The team then adapted TRACTS Sites to support management and monitoring of two OCP investment companies in Kenya involved with restoration initiatives.
- **Africa Civil Society Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA);** This network of 80+ African Civil Society organizations is critical for biodiversity and sustainable development but generally have low spatial capacity. AWF and Esri are raising funds to onboard additional members to the spatial data revolution (2023). In the meantime, AWF has adapted the Degradation Dashboard to support five ACBA members.
- **Africa Protected Area Directors (APAD);** Esri and AWF launched a collaboration with APADs to enhance protected area management capacity via scaled adaptation of TRACTS Sites (2022). Currently, the partners are building towards deployment of TRACTS sites in Cameroon's Dja Faunal Reserve.

Esri recognized AWF's data democratization progress with a Special Achievement in GIS Award in 2023.

Online Tools

The Esri-AWF partnership has created two major online tools that AWF hopes will benefit the conservation and sustainable development communities:

- **TRACTS Scale**, a geo-design tool that leverages spatial data to inform planning and strategy development at landscape to national scales (2022).
- **TRACTS Sites**, aa protected area management support tool that integrates near real time data streams from field and remote sources (2022).

Esri-AWF Partnership: Major Milestones

ArcView 3.2 ArcInfo	**2002** AWF Conservation Geography Program established
Expanded access to ArcGIS Online/ Cons. Solution	**2019** AWF joined PA Mgt. grant program; CBI launched
Assessment of spatial tools landscape	**2020** Esri Advantage program-year 1
TRACATS Scale-AWF Countries. Storymap Situational analyses	**2021** Esri Advantage program-FY22
TRACATS Scale-Simien. AWF Spatial Tools Hub	**2022** AP FY 23
Degradation Dashboard (AWF, ACBA) Risk Managment Dashboard	**2023** Kaddu/Eric to UC AP FY24
TRACTS Scale-OCP. TRACTS Sites-OCP, Cameroon	**2024** Kaddu/Eric to UC AP FY25 The Geography of Hope Book by David Yarnold