

## Community-Based Forest Management Rules Manual Korab Protected Area

### Korab-Koritnik Nature Park (Korab protected area)

Purpose: provide a clear, practical set of rules, roles, processes and templates for communities, park managers and partners to manage forest resources inside and adjacent to the Korab protected area in a way that sustains biodiversity, prevents illegal use, and supports local livelihoods. The manual aligns with the Korab-Koritnik management planning and recent regional conservation projects.

### 1. Principles & Objectives

- Protect key habitats (old-growth stands, rare species habitat, riparian strips) and reduce threats (illegal logging, uncontrolled grazing, fires).
- Share forest benefits fairly and transparently with local communities to strengthen stewardship and livelihoods.
- Use participatory decision-making: local community councils, park authority, and forestry services jointly set and enforce rules.
- Apply sustainable use principles: harvest only what can naturally regenerate or be restored, protect soil and water, and favor low-impact uses (non-timber forest products, selective fuelwood, small-scale timber under strict controls).

### 2. Legal & Planning Context

Korab-Koritnik is a protected area under Albania's protected area system and managed according to the park management plan and law for protected area. The National Agency of Protected Areas (AKZM) is the institution responsible for managing the national system of protected areas in Albania, where the day-to-day management of protected areas has been delegated to 12 Regional Administrations of Protected Areas (AdZM) as part of the AKZM structure. Korab-Koritnik protected area is under management of Regional Administration of Protected Area Kukes and Diber. Legal framework for management of this protected area includes:

- Law No. 81/2017 "On protected areas" and Law No. 21/2024 "On some additions and amendments to law no. 81/2017, "on protected areas"
- Law No. 69/2024 "On some amendments and additions to law no. 9587, dated 20.7.2006, "on the protection of biodiversity," as amended.

- Law No. 46/2019 "On some amendments and additions to law no. 10 006, dated 23.10.2008, "On the protection of wild fauna" as amended.
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 57, dated 6.2.2019 "On the criteria and manner of zoning the territory of an environmental protected area".
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 302, dated 10.5.2019 "On the criteria for conducting, approving, and monitoring research and scientific activities in environmental protected areas"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 369, dated 29.5.2019 "On the approval of rules for the designation of special conservation areas"
- Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 303, dated 10.5.2019 "On the approval of the revised and updated list of monuments of Albanian nature"

Local rules must be consistent with the park management plan and national legislation; where a conflict exists, the national legal framework and the park zoning rules prevail.

### 3. Zoning & Permitted Activities

Defines strict conservation, sustainable use, restoration, and access zones with corresponding permitted activities. Use the park's zoning (as in Korab-Koritnik management plan) to define rules in each zone. At minimum define:

1. **Strict Conservation Zone** (core habitat, sensitive species, high elevation cliffs):
  - o No commercial timber harvest. No grazing or only seasonal controlled grazing in specified pastures. No collection of rare plants. Permitted: scientific research, strictly controlled tourism with permits.
2. **Sustainable Use Zone** (buffer areas and community-managed forests):
  - o Controlled gathering of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) with quotas. Selective timber removals only after site-specific permits and community management plan approval. Fuelwood collection by permit and quota.
3. **Restoration & Agro-silvo-pastoral Zone** (degraded areas, terraces, lower slopes):
  - o Priority for restoration plantings, erosion control, sustainable grazing rotations, and agroforestry pilot projects.
4. **Access & Infrastructure Zone** (roads, settlement edges):
  - o Community access routes and limited infrastructure allowed under environmental safeguards.

#### 4. Roles & Governance

- **RAPA KUKES & DIBER (National Agency of Protected Areas):** final approval of zoning-consistent permits; technical oversight; enforcement powers inside protected boundaries.
- **Community Forest Committee (CFC):** elected by village(s) members responsible for cooperation with RAPA administration; together with RAPA defines areas of grazing, fuelwood collection and NTFPs; support PA Ranger to collect fees according to agreed schedule.
- **PA Ranger:** issues day-to-day small permits (fuelwood), organizes monitoring, collects fees for wood and non-wood products used by local communities
- **Civil Society / NGOs:** capacity building, market links for sustainable products, independent monitoring support.

#### 5. Annual Plan to Implement Korab-Koritnik management Plan

When a community seeks to manage a defined forest block, the CFMP must include:

- a) Map and boundaries (GPS coordinates).
- b) Zoning inside the used area (conservation patches, harvest stands, grazing rotations).
- c) Allowable uses and annual quotas (fuelwood, timber, NTFPs).
- d) Harvest rules and techniques (selective cutting, max tree diameter, season restrictions).
- e) Regeneration & restoration actions (planting schedule, species list, erosion control).
- f) Monitoring plan and indicators.
- g) Benefit-sharing rules and fee schedule.
- h) Sanctions and dispute resolution.
- i) Signatures of Park Authority and CFC.

#### 6. Rules for Timber, Fuelwood & NTFPs

##### Timber (construction,)

- i. Timber harvest only by permit following a technical harvest plan signed and approved by the Park Authority and CFC.
- ii. Only selective felling allowed; clearcutting is prohibited inside the park.
- iii. Maximum single-tree diameter for felling: defined in harvest plan (example approach: only trees in class X meeting health criteria).
- iv. Harvesters must mark trees with a unique tag; all timber must be transported with a signed transit permit.
- v. Revenues split per approved Annual Plan (e.g., 50% community fund for restoration and local services; 30% forest regeneration; 20% park fees) — percentages to be decided locally and recorded.

### **Fuelwood (household)**

- i. Household fuelwood permits issued by the CFC (annual or seasonal), with a per-household quota set in cooperation with RAPA staff.
- ii. Fuelwood collection restricted to deadwood, low-value thinning areas, or designated fuelwood patches; cutting of live mature trees for fuelwood is prohibited unless emergency (and then must be recorded).

### **Non-timber forest products (medicinal plants, berries, mushrooms, rangeland herbs)**

- i. Harvest seasons and quotas assigned by RAPA with technical guidance to avoid overharvesting of key species.
- ii. Commercial collection requires a permit and buyer registration. CFC & RAPA keeps an annual NTFP harvest register.

## **7. Grazing & Pasture Management**

- i. Grazing allowed only in designated pastures and following a rotational grazing calendar.
- ii. Stocking densities must be set to avoid overgrazing; transhumance routes must avoid core conservation zones.
- iii. Penalties for straying into protected zones. CFC issues seasonal grazing tags for flocks.

## **8. Fire Prevention & Response**

- i. No open fires in forest zones except in designated areas with a permit. Controlled, small campfires only in established camping sites and only outside high-risk season.
- ii. CFC and Park Authority must maintain a joint rapid response team during fire season (volunteer roster, trained lookouts, tools cache: beaters, shovels, radios).
- iii. NGOs may support training and equipment.

## **9. Monitoring & Reporting**

Core monitoring indicators (minimum):

1. Number of trees felled by species and volume (m<sup>3</sup>) — monthly register.
2. Area (ha) under active regeneration or restoration.



3. Incidents: illegal logging, fires, large herbivore damage — incident log.
4. Presence/absence surveys of target species (e.g., raptors, large carnivores) — annual.
5. Community benefit distribution: amounts collected and spent — quarterly financial report.

Monitoring schedule: quarterly community members, annual technical audit by local park administration. Results feed into annual update of Korab-Koritnik Management Plan and Cadaster.

## 10. Permits & Documentation

- **Simple permits** (fuelwood, small NTFP collection): issued by CFC; logbook entries mandatory.
- **Harvest permits (timber)**: issued only after technical harvest plan; include tree tags, transit permit, and load receipts. Copies held by Park Ranger, CFC, and RAPA.
- **Transport & market**: timber/NTFP buyers must be registered and provide copies of permits; market inspections may be conducted by RAPA and other responsible structures.

## 11. Enforcement & Sanctions

Three-level penalties from warnings to legal action for serious offenses.

1. Minor infractions (unauthorized collection of small NTFPs, missing permit): warning + mandatory training + payment of small administrative fine to community and RAPA fund.
2. Moderate infractions (cutting without permit, grazing into restricted zone): confiscation of tools/wood, larger fine, community service (restoration work).
3. Serious infractions (organized illegal logging, repeated violations, arson): immediate referral to Park Authority and law enforcement, prosecution under national law, full restoration costs charged.

All sanctions and appeal procedures must be recorded. CFC enforces community sanctions; Park Authority handles legal cases. Ensure transparency by publicizing violations and sanctions at village meetings.

## 12. Benefit Sharing & Incentives

Community Forest Fund for restoration, social services, and performance payments.



- i. Small user fees and sustainable timber revenues go into a **Community Forest Fund (CFF)** managed by CFC with transparent accounting. Eligible uses: restoration plantings, school or health projects, firefighting equipment, alternative livelihood training.
- ii. Introduce performance payments or grants for communities that meet ecological indicators (e.g., decreased illegal logging incidents, area under restoration) — seek NGO/ donor support

### 13. Conflict Resolution

Three-tier procedure: local mediation → RAPA → NAPA.

- 1) Local mediation by CFC (traditional leaders included);
- 2) If unresolved, mediation by RAPA;
- 3) Final arbitration by NAPA with option of legal proceedings.

Keep records of all steps.

### 14. Capacity Building & Livelihoods

Training on sustainable harvesting, mapping, NTFPs, eco-tourism, and fire prevention.

### 15. Restoration & Climate Resilience

Prioritize native species for planting (e.g., fir, beech, pine species used in Korab according to local ecozones). Use assisted natural regeneration where possible. Buffer riparian strips (minimum 20–30 m, depending on slope) from any extraction.

### 16. Tourism & Visitor Management

Eco-tourism only in designated zones; enforce visitor conduct codes.

Tourism allowed only in zones designated for it. Community-led eco-tourism (guiding, homestays) encouraged under simple codes of conduct: no off-trail access in sensitive zones, no removal of flora/fauna, group size limits. Park issues commercial visitation permits if needed.

## 17. Templates

### A. Fuelwood Permit (sample)

Village: \_\_\_\_\_ Household ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Permit no: \_\_\_\_\_

Permit period: From \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_

Authorized collector: \_\_\_\_\_

Quota (stack cubic meters or bundles): \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized area/stand: \_\_\_\_\_ (map ref)

Conditions: only deadwood/assigned trees; no cutting of live mature trees; report any incidents.

Issuer: CFC Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Holder signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### B. Timber harvest permit (sample)

Permit no: \_\_\_\_\_

CFMP block name: \_\_\_\_\_

Technical harvest plan ref: \_\_\_\_\_ (attached)

Trees approved (tag numbers/species/dbh/estimated m<sup>3</sup>):

1) Tag\_ Species\_ DBH\_ m<sup>3</sup>\_

Transport routes: \_\_\_\_\_

Revenue sharing: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: Ranger \_\_ RAPA Representative \_\_ CFC Chair \_\_

### C. Incident report (sample)

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location (GPS): \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_ Type: (illegal logging / fire / poaching / other)

Short description: \_\_\_\_\_



Evidence collected: (photos, tags, witness names) \_\_\_\_\_

Immediate action taken: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow up assigned to: \_\_\_\_\_ Deadline: \_\_\_\_\_

### 18. Suggested process to set these rules with communities (stepwise)

- Convene multi-stakeholder meeting (community leaders, Park Authority, municipality, NGOs). Present zoning and management plan.
- Elect or confirm Community Forest Committee and record its mandate.
- Jointly map community forest areas used annually (3–6 months).
- Technical inventory support from RAPA staff / NGO.
- Finalize annual plan, sign MoU with Park Authority, and begin a pilot year with monitoring.
- Annual review and adaptive changes.

### 19. Financial Mechanisms

- Small user fees and timber revenues (as above).
- Grants/partnerships: PONT, DBU projects, Northern Forests Initiative and other international donors have supported Korab-region projects — these are potential sources for initial capacity building, equipment, and restoration funding.

### 20. Good Practice Checklist

- Annual Protected Area Management Plan exists and approved by Park Authority.
- Maps and GPS boundaries recorded.
- All harvests have permits and tags.
- Quarterly monitoring records up to date.
- Community Fund accounts are audited annually.
- Fire response roster and equipment are operational before fire season.
- Annual community meeting to review performance and budgets.

### 21. What to do if illegal logging or serious violations are found

- Record incident (use Incident Report). Collect evidence (photos, tag numbers, witness statements).
- Immediately notify Park Authority and RAPA representatives.
- If safe, CFC should suspend offenders and confiscate tools/wood until authorities arrive. Do not use violence.
- Park Authority initiates legal procedures; community can pursue local sanctions per their community members.