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Development of Conservation Management Scenarios: The Case of Amanzule Wetlands



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This publication is available electronically on Coastal Resources Center's website at <http://www.crc.uri.edu> and Friends of the Nation's website at <http://fonghana.org/>.

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Citation:

Adupong, R., and Gormey, B. (2013), Development of Conservation Management Scenarios: The case of Amanzule wetlands. Friends of the Nation and Coastal Resources Center, USAID Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance Program for the Western Region of Ghana. Narragansett, RI: Coastal Resources Center, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island. 18 pp

Disclaimer:

This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Ghana. The contents are the responsibility of the authors as part of the Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance (ICFG) Project and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Government. Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 641-A-00-09-00036-00 for "Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance (ICFG) Program for the Western Region of Ghana," Under the Leader with Associates Award No. EPP-A-00-04-00014-00

Cover Photo: Edinla Lagoon at Ezinlibo

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Contents

Contents	ii
List of Figures	ii
List of Abbreviation/Acronyms	iii
1. Introduction / Background	1
2. The Process of Developing Conservation Management Scenario	2
2.1 The Amanzule Retreat	2
2.2 The Amanzule Working Group	3
2.2.1 Expansion of Amanzule Working Group	3
2.2.2 Consultative/ stakeholder Meetings	3
2.2.3 Community Level Meetings	4
2.2.4 Endorsement Workshops	4
2.2.5 Socialization of the Model	4
3. THE PREFERRED SCENARIO	5
3.1 Amanzule Community Conservation Areas	5
3.2 Guiding Principles	6
3.3 Membership at GADCC	6
3.4 Roles of Stakeholders	6
3.5 Membership at Community Level	7
3.6 Tenure of Office	7
3.7 Meetings	7
3.8 Functions of the District and Community Committees	7
3.9 Mandate	8
4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations	9
Annexes:	10
Annex 1: Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA)	10
Annex 2: Project Management Committee in Amanzule	14

List of Figures

Figure 1 Mangrove nursery	2
Figure 2 The Amanzule wetland	3
Figure 3 Stakeholder meetings	4
Figure 4 Hierarchical Structure of the Amanzule Community Conservation Committee	5
Figure 5 Sketch of a 'preferred future beach'	8

List of Abbreviation/Acronyms

GACA	Greater Amanzule Conservation Area
GACC	Greater Amanzule Conservation Committee
GADCC	Greater Amanzule District Conservation Committee
GACC C	Greater Amanzule Community Conservation Committee
AWG	Amanzule Working Group
CREMA	Community Resource Management Area
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
MTDP	Medium Term Development Plan
PMC	Project Management Committee
SPAG	Spatial Planning Advisory Group
WD /FC	Wildlife Division of Forestry Commission

1. Introduction / Background

The importance of the natural environment to human survival cannot be underestimated. This appreciation of the values of the natural environment is widely acknowledged and accepted by stakeholders and modern driving factors of change such as religious beliefs and advancement in technology. The *Quran* regards the environment as Allah's creation. The creation of this earth and all its natural resources is a sign of His wisdom, mercy, power and His other attributes and therefore serves to develop human awareness and understanding of this creator (Ar-Ra`d, 13: 2-4; 21:79).

Indeed, the values and importance of the natural environment call for its conservation for generational use and benefit. By conservation, it implies the preservation and careful management of the environment and of natural resources. In the coastal communities of Ghana, wetlands remain one key natural resource. These wetlands are vital ecosystems and provide ecological, social and economic services. Prominent services provided by the wetlands include: fish catch, source of water to wash clothes and utensils, sand for making blocks and building and mangroves (serving as firewood, building material and charcoal) among others.

Unfortunately, public apathy and haphazard development on wetlands in most parts of the Ghana and the Western Region in particular is depriving humankind of the values of wetlands. Most wetlands have over the years witnessed massive levels of degradation issues such as dumping of solid waste into the lagoons, defecating into the lagoons, reclamation for industrial activity and of course cutting of mangroves for fuel and building. These degradation issues call for active steps towards the development of appropriate and practicable Conservation Management Scenarios to ensure the values and importance of the natural environment are not lost in the near future.

This document highlights the process of Conservation Management Scenario Development for the Greater Amanzule Wetlands. The Greater Amanzule Wetlands stretches from the Ankobra River estuary to the Ivory Coast border and covers the coastal plains of the Ellebelle and Jomoro Districts and to a little extent, the Nzema East District. Due to its rich biodiversity features, it remains a critical area of concern to many stakeholders (particularly Traditional Authorities and Civil society groups) but it is yet to have a formal conservation status.



Figure 1 Mangrove nursery

2. The Process of Developing Conservation Management Scenario

2.1 The Amanzule Retreat

With the support and benediction of the Nzema Manle¹, a conservation planning retreat (workshop) was held to discuss strategies for community conservation of the Amanzule wetlands. Different stakeholder groups representing Traditional Authorities, District Assemblies, Forestry Commission, other government agencies and civil society attended the two-day retreat. It was held under the theme “*Amanzule, our heritage our future*”.

The retreat which brought together both state and non-state actors involved in natural resource and environmental governance in Ghana was aimed at discussing the future of the Amanzule wetlands areas and proposing conservation scenarios for the wetlands. At the end,

¹ The highest Traditional Council in the Nzemaland

stakeholders agreed on the formation of a working group to move forward the issues discussed at the retreat.



Figure 2 The Amanzule wetland

2.2 The Amanzule Working Group

The outcome of the conservation planning retreat was the formation of the ‘*Amanzule Working Group*’ (AWG) to champion conservation in the Greater Amanzule wetland. The group (composed of representatives each of the 3 traditional councils, 3 district assemblies, Wildlife Division, civil society groups and private sector) meets monthly. It is chaired by Nana Takilik VII, chief of the famous stilt village (Nzulezo). As per the recommendations of the retreat, the AWG was tasked to identify the preferred scenario for management and conservation of the greater Amanzule wetlands that ensures the wise use of the benefits for local communities within the resources areas.

2.2.1 Expansion of Amanzule Working Group

As a move to strengthen collaboration, the AWG agreed and expanded the working group to include some members of the Spatial Planning Advisory Groups (SPAGs)² in Ellembelle and Jomoro District. In all, six Executives of the SPAGs in the two districts who were actively involved in the initial discussion sessions on the Conservation management scenarios by the Amanzule Working Group were formally co-opted to the AWG.

2.2.2 Consultative/ stakeholder Meetings

In developing the preferred conservation management scenarios, the AWG held a series of monthly meetings mostly in Nkroful and Beyin. In some of the meetings, invitations were

² Revived by the Hen Mpoano Initiative but created by Spatial Dimensions: the consulting firm contracted by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Jubilee Partners to develop spatial plans for three of the districts fronting the Gulf of Guinea-Ellembelle, Jomoro and Nzema East.

extended to community members, identifiable groups as well as other statutory sub-committees within the Ellebelle and Jomoro District Assembly.

2.2.3 Community Level Meetings

After agreeing on the draft preferred scenario, community level meetings were held to further discuss the proposed model with local stakeholders. Inputs from these discussions were factored into the model before a validation workshop with different stakeholder groups.

2.2.4 Endorsement Workshops

To ensure complete ownership of the conservation management by all relevant stakeholders, a district level validation / endorsement workshop (tagged 2nd Amanzule Planning Retreat) was held to agree upon the preferred management scenario for the wetland areas. A major outcome of the retreat was a Resolution passed and signed by stakeholders present for the conservation of the Amanzule wetlands.

2.2.5 Socialization of the Model

After the validation of the model by stakeholders, the agreed management scenario was socialized with selected communities. This was to ensure that communities understood all aspects of the model.



Figure 3 Stakeholder meetings

3. THE PREFERED SCENARIO

The AWG after several consultative meetings and studies, concluded that the Community Resources Management Area (CREMA; *attached as Annex 1*) model merged with Project Management Committee model (PMC; *attached as Annex 2*) be adopted at the community level for the management of the Amanzule wetlands and other resources in the Ellembelle and Jomoro Districts. The result after the merger was the **Greater Amanzule Conservation Area (GACA) and Greater Amanzule Conservation Committees (GACC)**.

3.1 Amanzule Community Conservation Areas

- The **Greater Amanzule Conservation Area (GACA)** are geographical areas with important wetland resources that merit conservation. The areas would be managed by the **Greater Amanzule Conservation Committees (GACC)**. Indeed, the **GACA** is a hybrid of the CREMA and PMC models. The **GACA** would have two levels: the **Greater Amanzule District Conservation Committee (GADCC) & Greater Amanzule Community Conservation Committee (GACCC)**.

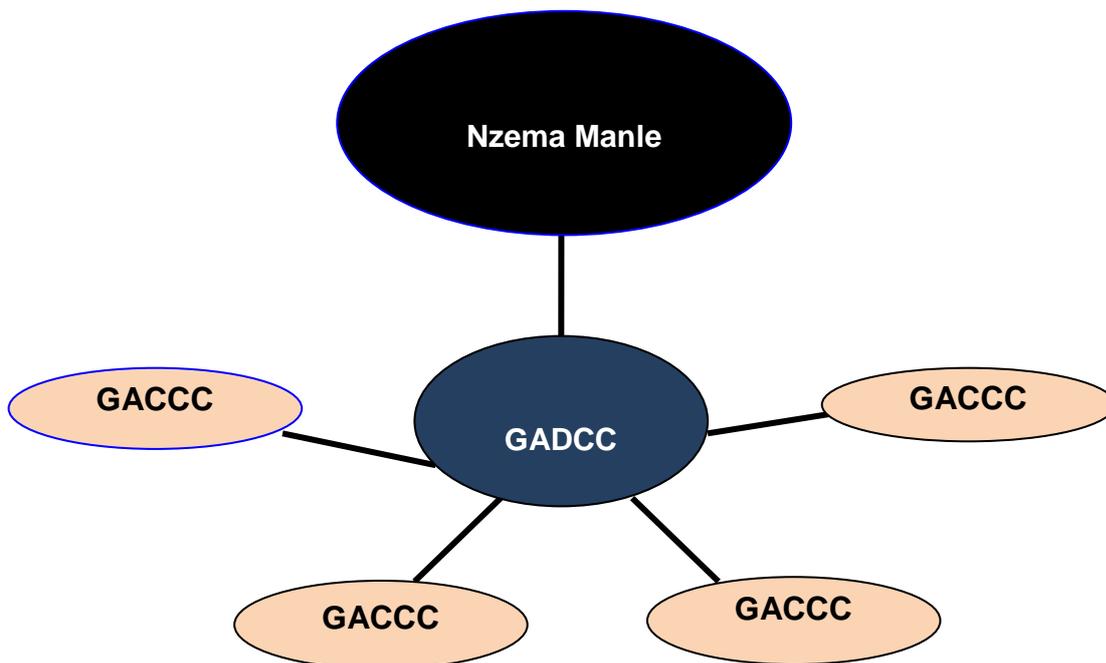


Figure 4 Hierarchical Structure of the Amanzule Community Conservation Committee

3.2 Guiding Principles

- Wetlands are unique natural resources offering various opportunities for sustainable rural development and economic utilization.
- Those who live within the wetlands must be the primary managers of the resource
- The primary managers of the wetland must be the first beneficiaries of any positive outcome
- The control of access and benefit from wetlands whether by the individual or collectively must be determined by those who live with the resource

3.3 Membership at GADCC

Membership of the Greater Amanzule District Conservation Committee (GADCC) shall comprise the following:

1. Representative of Ghana Wildlife Division
2. Representative from the Western Nzema Traditional Council
3. Representative from the Eastern Nzema Traditional Council
4. The Planning officers of the Jomoro, Ellembelle & Nzema East District Assemblies
5. The Environmental Officers of the Jomoro, Ellembelle & Nzema East District Assemblies
6. Representative from cluster of resource owing / participating communities
7. Representative of Civil Society (if any)
8. Representative of private sector (if any)

3.4 Roles of Stakeholders

Role of the Wildlife Division (WD)

- Catalyst for the process
- Provides technical support
- Ensures that devolution occurs
- Serves monitoring and advisory role
- Ensures appropriate legislative environment

Role of Nzema Manle

The role of traditional authorities is essential in

- Provide advisory services to the GADCC and GACCC
- Ensure the effective functioning of the GADCC and GACCC
- Resolve disputes especially those involving land under traditional tenure
- Promote appropriate traditional management practices
- Develop an increased understanding of traditional knowledge

Role of District Assemblies: Jomoro, Ellembelle and Nzema East

- Inaugurate the District and Community Conservation Committees
- Ensure the inclusion of the Amanzule Community Conservations Areas in the districts spatial planning and planning documents such the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP).

- Coordinate the activities of all stakeholders coming into the district as far as development along the coast/wetland areas are concerned
- Identify and invite relevant stakeholders from the private, public and civil sectors to attend technical review sessions on critical coastal and shorefront areas of the district

3.5 Membership at Community Level

Membership of the Community Conservation Committee would comprise the following

- The local Chief / representative
- Representative of youth group
- Assembly member / Unit Committee member
- Representative from Chief Fishermen and Council
- Representative from Women Group
- Representative from fishmongers
- Representative of Religious Leaders

3.6 Tenure of Office

Greater Amanzule District Conservation Committee (GACCC)

The tenure of office is 24 months but a member may be re-appointed for subsequent terms. Appointment of representatives from Communities is made by the people based on appropriate selection criteria.

3.7 Meetings

The group at the District level shall meet at least three times in a year and at least six times at the Community level. Emergency meetings would be organised as and when necessary.

3.8 Functions of the District and Community Committees

Greater Amanzule District Conservation Committee (GADCC)

The Committee at the District Level shall have the responsibility for policy issues and coordinate the activities of the local groups. Specifically, they would perform the following functions:

- Provides overall policy direction for management of sites within the districts
- Provide advice, guidance and support for the local group/committee
- Serve as link between the local committee and Nzema Manle
- Coordinate / liaise with other organisations (including NGOs) for the purposes of managing local wetland sites
- Advise on modalities for benefit sharing among key stakeholders
- Play a lead role in the identification of development priorities of the Communities
- Review problems and prospects presented by the communities
- Advice Communities on use and monitoring of their share of benefits
- Provide advisory role to the local Committee
- Ensure documentation of lessons for replication in other areas

Greater Amanzule Community Conservation Committees (GACCC)

Members at the community level would be responsible for the following functions:

- Serve as link between the District Committee and their respective communities

- Assist in educating communities on the values and importance of wetlands
- Assist in the management and ensures the implementation of bye-laws governing the community wetlands
- Help maintain good sanitation condition and promote tourism in the area.
- Ensure efficient monitoring of activities at local sites
- Identify priority developmental needs at the community and direct funds emanating from conservation at addressing such needs

3.9 Mandate

- Whiles, Devolution should be ensured by Wildlife Division of Forestry Commission (WD/FS), the GADCC and GACCC requires the total blessing, support and benediction of:
- Nzema Manle
- District Assemblies-Jomoro, Ellembelle and Nzema East



Figure 5 Sketch of a 'preferred future beach'

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident that in designing and developing such Conservation Management Scenarios, it is imperative that the ownership rests with the local people or those who immediately affected / impacted by the wetland. In the case of the Amanzule wetland, the Amanzule Working Group (AWG) was the driving force behind the development of the preferred conservation management scenarios. In doing so, the support and participation of all relevant stakeholders must be considered and factored in the planning and implementation stages. Thus, a local Committee if possible must be established to develop the management scenario for the resource.

It is also worth considering recommendations that may be made by such a committee. For instance, for the Amanzule wetlands, the Working Group concluded that the ‘Amanzule Community Conservation Committees’ if allowed to function as stipulated would facilitate the proper and much anticipated conservation and protection of wetlands in the area under consideration. The group noting that the wetland has no formal conservation status, made the following recommendations:

1. That the greater Amanzule wetlands be declared dedicated wetlands and/or Community Conservation Areas for present and future generations devoid of any form of compulsory acquisition
2. The declaration of Community Conservations Areas should be led by traditional authorities but also be included in districts spatial planning and planning documents such the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP).
3. That community management of the wetlands and social norms will be rendered coherent through a higher level body constituted by Traditional Councils, District Assemblies, Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, other relevant state agencies, civil society and private sector representatives.
4. Traditional authority and local government, exercising the mandate and powers conferred on them through MTDP and Spatial planning shall ensure gazetting of the resource area
5. That any benefits emerging from dedicated conservation areas, possibly conservation funding mechanisms, would first and foremost enhance conservation of the Amanzule wetland as well as improve socio-economic conditions of the local people

Annexes:

Annex 1: Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA)

Community Resource Management Areas (CREMA)

It's a geographically defined area gifted with sufficient resources where communities of farmers have organized themselves to sustainably manage the resources

Some Guiding principles

- Those who live with and bear the cost of wildlife and wetlands must be the primary beneficiary of its management
- The control of access and benefit from wildlife and wetlands whether by the individual or collectively must be determined by those who live with the resource
- Wildlife and wetlands are unique natural resources offering various opportunities for sustainable rural development and economic utilization.

The Underlying Philosophy -Creating the Win Win Scenario:

- The underlying philosophy of CBNRM is that - if natural resources are given “value” and communities are given the “authority” to “manage” then they will have the “incentive” to sustainably manage and conserve natural resources.
- From a rural development perspective it results in improved livelihoods and human well being.
- From a conservation perspective it secures habitats, protects endangered species and may enhance the security of protected areas.
- From a political perspective it strengthens democratisation and accountability at local levels.
- From an economic perspective it strengthens local economies and diversifies income at community and household levels.
- It establishes a congruency of interests.

The CREMA Concept

- The CREMA approach has been in development since November 1999 in the Western Region, and has been part of an overall strategic process being developed by the Wildlife Division.
- The concept is based on principals and approaches developed in Namibia and Zimbabwe BUT adapted to suit Ghanaian social and ecological situations.
- The development of CREMAs is an integral part of the Wildlife Division Policy For Collaborative Community Based Wildlife Management.
- The policy establishes the underlying principals of community based wildlife management in Ghana and the approach to be taken.

Why is the CREMA different?

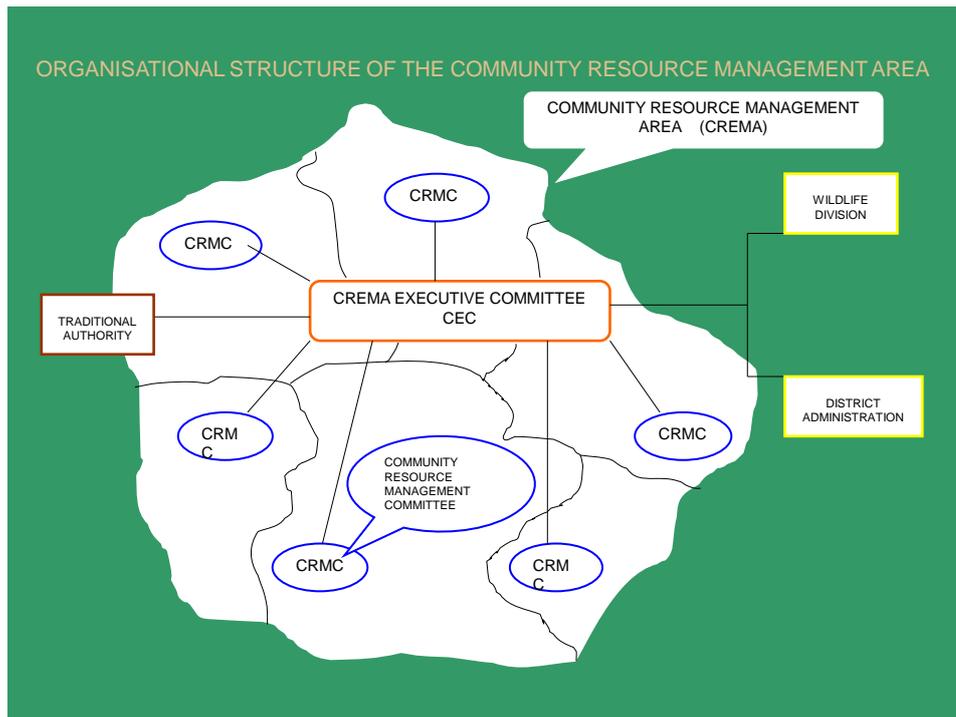
- The CREMA is significantly different to other CBNRM approaches in Ghana by virtue of its ability to devolve wildlife management authority AND responsibility to a community.

- It involves a significant transfer of power and changes communities from passive participants to active managers.
- It seeks to integrate wildlife management into existing agricultural activities.

Building the CREMA:

The Amokwaw CREMA is:

- Geographically defined area of nine communities that have agreed to work together for the sustainable use of shared natural resources.
- Institutionally it is a community based organisation that is built on existing community decision making structures, with an executive body and a *constitution* that guides the activities and regulations of the CREMA.
- From a community perspective the CREMA is a mechanism enables collective decision making for “common” – shared resources. It enables the community to make collective rules and the means to enforce these rules.
- From an external perspective the CREMA is a body that represents a broader community that is responsible for and can be held accountable for the sustainable use and management of natural resources.
- The Amokwaw CREMA was developed on the basis of the sustainable use of wildlife resources. But this can and has been extended to other resources by the community.
- Operationally the CREMA has three significant levels:
- The first level is the CREMA Executive – this is the executive and operational part of the CREMA. It is formed out of the Community Resource Management Committees (CRMC) of the CREMA and its powers are determined in the CREMA constitution.
- The Community Resource Management Committee or CRMC is the local unit of organisation and is formed at the level of each community. Based on existing community governance structures. The composition and function of the CRMC is outlined by the constitution.
- The individual farmers or land holders are the membership of the CREMA or in corporate terms the shareholders of this structure. They through the CRMC determine the policies and activities of the CREMA and hold the Executive accountable through their own CRMC.



Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the CREMA programme is recognized as an important aspect of its implementation and development;

- At the CREMA and individual level Production Monitoring i.e. the monitoring of wildlife populations, trends and levels of off-take will be of primary importance.
- The CRMCs will be responsible for this function - initially the CWO/NGO will conduct data collection.
- At the district and CREMA level, Trade Monitoring will be priority. The principal instrument for the monitoring will be bushmeat-trading permit. Receipts for this will be monitored at both CREMA and District Assembly levels. The establishment of a robust permitting system is a priority for development.

Benefits

- Improved environmental security and land use practices by farmers
- Improved incomes for farmers leading to greater food security and poverty reduction
- Improved security for Protected Areas
- Greater participation by all sectors of the community in the decision making process facilitating good governance
- Greater understanding by farmers of the importance of NR in farm management
- Strengthens local decision making structures and the ability of communities to make collective decisions
- It empowers communities to control access to resources by external groups and individuals
- Improved linkages between communities, the WD, DAs and TAs
- It provides the opportunity for the WD to initiate a process that could see wildlife and NRM develop into a significant industry in Ghana
- It provides opportunities for the development of secondary and tertiary industries at the local level in such activities as tourism and tourism support services

Possible drawbacks and limitations

- Failure to correctly identify the local decision making structures could result in a powerless CREMA
- Communities that are deeply divided over other issues may not be able to develop sufficient consensus to form a CREMA
- The CREMA approach is a process and especially in the early stages requires time, technical support and funding
- Inadequate funds to support the process
- Legitimization of unsustainable hunting
- CREMA hijacked by single/few individuals

Role of the WD

Catalyst for the process

- Provides technical support
- Ensures that devolution occurs
- Serves monitoring and advisory role
- Ensures appropriate legislative environment

Role of Traditional Authorities

The role of traditional authorities is essential in

- identifying appropriate management structure for CRMC
- resolving disputes especially those involving land under traditional tenure
- promoting appropriate traditional management practices
- Developing an increased understanding of traditional knowledge

Annex 2: Project Management Committee in Amanzule

The PMC was established in year 2000 after the Launching of the ACID project in April.

Membership

The PMC is made of the following members:

- The Executive Director of GWS
- The Project Coordinator
- Representative from the Western Nzema Traditional Council
- The Planning officer of the Jomoro District Assembly
- Representative from participating communities
- Assemblymen from participating communities
- A successful businessman from the area
- The Community Liaison Officer

Co-opted members

- Representative from Ghana Tourist Board
- Representative from EPA

Tenure of Office

The tenure of office is 24 months but a member may be re-appointed for subsequent terms. Appointment of representatives from Communities is made by the people based on appropriate selection criteria. The PMC shall meet at least six times in a year. Emergency meetings are organised as when necessary

Functions

The PMC have the responsibility for policy issues and the management of the ACID project and perform the following functions

- Provides overall policy direction of the project
- Provide advice, guidance and support for the successful implementation of the project
- Serve as link between the project and Communities/Organisations/Institutions they represent
- Assist in educating communities on the aims and objectives of the project and activities to be carried out and expected roles of communities
- Assist in the management and ensures the implementation of bye-laws governing the Community Nature Reserve
- Help maintain good sanitation condition and promote tourism in the area.
- Ensures complementarity of activities and the main ACID project
- Ensures efficient monitoring and evaluation of project activities
- Assist in the implementation of Tourism and SEDSF activities in the area
- Advise on modalities for benefit sharing among key stakeholders
- Responsible for fixing and reviewing Tourist rate
- Play a lead role in the identification of development priorities of the Communities
- Review problems and suspects presented by the communities
- Advice Communities on use of their share of the tourism proceeds
- Monitor the use of share of tourism proceeds by the communities
- Provide advisory role to the Tourism and SEDSF and Local PMCs
- Ensure documentation of lessons for replication in other areas