

Resolutions and Recommendations of the Third Forestry Conference, Samtse, 19-21 December 2013

Department of Forests and Park Services

PREAMBLE

SEEKING to realise national objectives of achieving self-reliance through inclusive socio-economic development through the 11th Five Year Plan programmes;

AWARE of the existing gaps in policies and strategies on conservation and sustainable forest management;

RECOGNIZING the importance of strengthening institutional linkages and enhancing coordination for effective management, including institutional and human resource reforms;

ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of creating an enabling platform for interaction and stimulating knowledge generation, sharing views and experiences on the forestry issues among and between forestry offices and other stakeholders geared towards concerted efforts in enhancing sustainable forest management through improved governance;

The THIRD FORESTRY CONFERENCE was held in Samtse from 19th – 21st December 2013. The Conference was attended by 189 participants, mostly from various forestry offices, with representatives from other Departments and Agencies under Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, and also representatives from donor and international organisations (WWF, BTF-EC, FAO Bhutan, and HSI). The Conference was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HSI).

Over the 3-day Conference themed, 'Enhancing sustainable forest management through improved governance', Sub themes revolved around *strengthening forestry programmes; new directions in forestry; strengthening institutional linkages and enhancing coordination; and reorganizing forestry institutions.*

The Conference yielded several resolutions and recommendations around various themes as discussed in the following;

A. Strengthening forestry programmes

Objectives

- Learning lessons and defining way forward to improve Forest Information Management systems
- Identifying status and defining way forward to pursue Nature Recreation and Ecotourism programmes
- Understanding survey protocol and designing way forward for the National Tiger Survey 2014
- Ensuring management effectiveness of Bhutan's protected area system including operationalization of biological corridors
- Strengthening anti-poaching and law enforcement to combat wildlife crime
- Addressing sustainability and implementation issues related to Cordyceps management

Key Resolutions

AWARE of the weaknesses in existing forest information management systems; NOTING inconsistent data from the field owing to frequent transfers of data managers or non-technical staffs attending database trainings:

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

1. Improve existing data base system and pooling funds to strengthen DoFPS website instead of creating multiple websites within the Department.
2. Conduct training of trainers (TOT) for data managers

NOTING the scope of nature recreation and ecotourism in the country; RECOGNIZING various coordination issues due to multiple tourism stakeholders; AWARE of the sustainability issues and meeting expectations from the communities;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

3. To improve the linkages of NRED to territorial divisions, NRED will extend the roles of existing parks focal person to relevant territorial divisions and Dzongkhags. Furthermore, the Conference encourages concept of assigning focal persons at Functional Divisions to field offices within the Department.
4. To ensure equitable benefit sharing among communities from tourism, NRED will explore to instituting various mechanisms including financial plough-back systems.

AWARE of the national and global significance of Tiger; NOTING the issue of increasing poaching; RECOGNIZING the need to have long-term monitoring and funds to conduct the National Tiger Survey;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

5. The survey will use existing equipments in different PAs where feasible; process procurement for new cameras based on funding support; involve our local expertise; and ensure better coordination among the existing task force team.
6. The resulting papers from this survey will be published by Bhutanese authors. Young Bhutanese officers are encouraged to be involved to be trained as future Tiger specialists.
7. Available budgets and funds for species conservation from different PAs shall be pooled for the National Tiger Survey while at the same time, the donor partners should be fully engaged for availing financial support to ensure continuity of the study.

RECOGNIZING the need to enhance management effectiveness of Bhutan's protected area system including biological corridors; AWARE that only 3 Parks (SWS, BWS, RMNP) have completed zoning; AWARE of boundary overlaps of biological corridors with private lands; AWARE of various challenges in protected area management from developmental activities;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

8. Park zoning shall be carried out as per the timeline decided during the side event between WCD and Parks;
 - JSWNP – to be completed by June 2014
 - JDNP – to be completed by December 2014
 - WCP – to be completed by June 2016
 - TSNR – Source funding immediately and start the activity
 - TNP – will be completed by December 2015 (as per budget availability)
9. Except for KWS & PWS, all other parks will submit co-ordinates for external boundary demarcation and has agreed to submit work plans with timeline and resources requirement (financial & human) to WCD latest by 10th January 2014.
10. Revive the evaluation of protected areas to ensure management effectiveness and explore realignment of PA boundaries wherever appropriate to exclude major settlement areas without negating on the ecological integrity of the Protected Areas for addressing immediate pressing needs of socio-economic developmental programmes.
11. Clarify with the National Land Commission Secretariat on various land demarcation issues including the presence of NLC surveyors and use of feno-pegs

APPRECIATING the admirable tasks carried out by the Surveillance Unit; NOTING the need to improve forestry and wildlife enforcement and; AWARE of various issues to combat wildlife crime and poaching;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

12. Strengthen the existing capacity of the surveillance unit
13. Enhance informant networking and maintain the sanctity of the informer
14. Establishment a Committee comprising of members from armed forces, judiciary, customs & immigration to improve linkages

RECOGNIZING various implementation issues related to Cordyceps management including the impact of collection; NOTING of many researches carried out on sustainability and management of Cordyceps;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

15. Jigme Dorji National Park shall present all the issues discussed during this conference (including impacts on habitat and social problems) to the Cordyceps Stakeholders Meeting conducted by Department of Agriculture Marketing & Cooperatives.
16. SFED shall review the existing guidelines based on research findings on sustainability and management of Cordyceps.

B. New directions in Forestry

Objectives

- Analysis and understanding of Forest Resources Potential Assessment 2013
- Understanding the status and defining way forward for watershed programmes
- Understanding emerging issues and defining way forward for community forests
- Understanding the status and defining way forward for plantation forests
- Redefining human-wildlife conflict management

Key resolutions

RECOGNIZING multiple-use objectives of forest management; NOTING the importance of forest resources potential assessment for sustainable management;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

17. Following , but not limited to, probable additional parameters needs to be included in the FRPA 2013 report;
 - Access to potential production areas (technical feasibility)
 - Economic viability
 - Projection of resource supply and demand scenarios
 - Conversion factors used to calculate volume
 - Segregation into forest types (broadleaf and conifer)
 - Overlay with settlements

18. Given that FRPA 2013 is based on LCMP 2010, the analysis needs to be revised to incorporate changes due to recent cadastral surveys instituted after 2010.

NOTING the importance of watersheds; RECOGNIZING the issues related to limited enabling authority and coordination at various levels;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

19. To avoid duplication of mandates across different sectors including water inventory being carried by National Environment Commission, Watershed Management Division as the focal agency shall lead 'water inventory' in close collaboration with UWICE.

AWARE the proliferation of community forests in the country; NOTING successes and issues relating thereof including boundary disputes, resource disparity, weak coordination, etc.; RECOGNIZING the need to strengthen community forestry programme;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

20. To avoid various issues relating to community forests, mechanisms will be instituted in place to;

- Improve coordination between territorial divisions, Dzongkhag and parks
- Have clear boundary demarcation for all CFs
- Increase awareness levels on community forest rules and guidelines
- Enhance internal auditing system and M & E

21. SFED shall review the existing area ceiling of 2.5 ha and provide policy recommendations.

22. SFED shall carry out analysis of Community forestry in the country to review strengths and weaknesses to recommend future scope of community forestry in the country.

RECOGNIZING several initiatives by the Department and others on plantation forests; NOTING weaknesses in monitoring and reporting systems; NOTING limited resources in plantation maintenances;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

23. To strengthen monitoring and supervision of plantation forests, following measures should be instituted;

- Physical verification of existing plantation records and proper record keeping through plantation journals
- Definition of clear responsibilities among TDs, Parks and Dzongkhags on plantation mandates and appointment of plantation in-charges

- Use of GIS & RS to trace potential areas for plantation and effective monitoring
24. SFED shall explore possibility of outsourcing plantation and come up with adequate guidelines on outsourcing
 25. Ensure allocation of more resources for maintenance of plantations

RECOGNIZING human-wildlife conflict as a serious concern; NOTING of the weak linkages among the implementing agencies; AWARE of many additional researches and studies on HWC mitigation and management;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

26. The coordinating unit under WCD shall be strengthened and available resources will be pooled under the unit.
27. The Task Force members will incorporate relevant research findings into the draft HWC Management Implementation Plan.

C. Strengthening institutional linkages and enhancing coordination

Objectives

- Resolving field coordination issues in sustainable forest management and National Forest Inventory
- Learning key lessons and understanding issues from the field
- Building coalitions and partnerships in forestry
- Understanding the status and scope of Forest Welfare Fund
- Enhancing monitoring and evaluation in forestry

Key resolutions

RECOGNIZING the potential of application of forest management in other areas including Parks, NOTING the delays in environmental clearances from National Environmental Commission; AWARE of the huge number of power chain saws in the country; ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of National Forest Inventory;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

28. FRMD will develop a modality on supply of rural timber in close consultation with NRDC.
29. Ensure sustainable harvesting of timber and other natural resources from buffer and multiple-use zones inside Protected Areas with the latter case to be meant exclusively for meeting local demands of the local communities.
30. The field offices will continue to support the NFI programme as part of Department's mandate while also providing opportunities and benefits to the members of the Crew at par with other staffs.

31. The Department will recommend the revival of the Environmental Cell within MoAF or form a committee comprising of MOAF Specialists to perform the tasks of the Cell.
32. The side event comprising of TDs and FRMD recommended the following additions to the power-chain saw regulations ;
 - Registration fee for power chain saw to be charged @ Nu. 500/1000 and annual renewal fee to be charged @ Nu.100-200 per power chain saw.
 - Registration/Renewal form to be standardized (in the form of booklet). Terms and conditions to be incorporated in the booklet and to be signed by the proponent with DoFPS (HQ or Field)
 - Penalty: Fine for 1st offence: as per FNCR. Subsequent offence-seizure of the power chain saw.
 - Regular chainsaw training to be instituted by UWICE.

APPRECIATING the roles of Territorial Divisions, Parks and Dzongkhag Forestry Sector and the need to encourage field staffs; RECOGNIZING various issues and problems faced in the field; NOTING of the multi tasks carried out by the field foresters; NOTING of various human and financial resource constraints;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

33. FRMD shall review firewood allotment system including pricing and collection system to develop Standard Operating Procedures for commercial firewood collection
34. SFED in consultation with DAMC shall explore legalization and promulgate regulations for *Sew Shamu* and *tuber-like Orchid* to benefit rural earnings
35. The Department shall propose 'Incentive systems' (for example -sharing of fines & compensations) to incentivize field staffs and victims from casualties.
36. The Department shall recruit a staff with legal background to support legal cases in the Department
37. Field offices will be better equipped in terms telecommunication facilities to facilitate communication during patrolling and field works
38. The Department will ensure to conduct specific wildlife training and encourage inter-park transfers
39. The Department shall streamline and rationalize the activities being implemented by DzFS
40. The Department shall carrying out detailed review prior to any policy decisions pertaining to change in existing arrangement and/or consolidation of Dzongkhag Forestry Programs

AWARE of the diverse nature of forestry stakeholders and values; NOTING policy requirements on enhancing effective coordination mechanisms; RECOGNIZING the need to set defined goals and roles with relevant partners in forestry;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

41. The Department must build partnerships and coalitions with relevant partners and stakeholders through effective mechanisms such as written agreements to enhance effective forest management, conservation and service delivery

RECOGNIZING the potentials of funds accumulated by the Forest Welfare Fund; NOTING several issues in the past;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

42. To ensure transparency of the Fund, the Forest Welfare Fund management will post quarterly financial statements on Department website.
43. The Fund managers will explore creative means of investing the fund and encourages all foresters to join as members of the Fund.

NOTING of existing weak monitoring mechanisms and their poor implementation; RECOGNIZING the need for M & E by various sections of the National Forest Policy and Departmental Plans;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

44. The Department will revitalize the submission of quarterly progress report as per respective annual plans.
45. The Department will institute monitoring frameworks to ensure effective monitoring of activities, impacts and re-defining roles of all foresters in M&E.

AWARE of Department's mandates in waste management in State forests; RECOGNIZING solid waste generation as a serious environmental concerns; NOTING various initiatives and innovative ideas to management waste in the field;

The Conference adopted following resolutions;

46. All field offices shall send ideas to NRED, which in turn will come up with a Waste Management Framework for State Forests
47. The Department in consultation with relevant stakeholders will initiate a 'Bhutan Clean-up Day' campaign to scale up waste management campaigns currently carried out at local levels. The date for the Day will be fixed by NRED

D. Reorganizing Forestry Institutions

Objectives

- Instituting effective forestry institutions including reforms and reorganization to enhance service delivery and improve forest governance

- Redefining the roles and institutional arrangement of Dzongkhag Forestry Sector
- Defining forest research priorities and institutional arrangements
- Laying out options for overall reorganization and strengthening of human resources in forestry

Key resolutions

RECOGNIZING the need to reorganize field offices within the Department, including Dzongkhag Forestry Sector; RECOGNIZING that major mandates in terms of forest service delivery rests with Territorial Divisions and Parks; AWARE of the overlap in terms of implementation of field activities between Dzongkhags, TDs and Parks; NOTING the confusion over allocation of forests for community forests, forest management units and other recreational areas; RECOGNIZING shortage of qualified staff in the territorial division and park offices, while every Dzongkhag Forestry Sectors have the largest share of qualified Rangers;

48. The Conference discussed on the need to explore the possibility of consolidating the three field institutions. While some were of the opinion that no such reorganization was necessary at this point of time, majority of the house felt that the Department would function and be able to deliver services more efficiently if the Dzongkhag Forestry Sector could be integrated within Territorial Divisions and Park Offices.

NOTING the fact that Functional Divisions have more technical officers in comparison to field offices; RECOGNIZING the limited role of Functional Divisions in implementation;

49. The Conference recognized the need to rationalize the structure and strength of functional divisions. The Conference agreed to reorganize the functional divisions as proposed (structures presented as Annexure 1), after revisiting the proposed strengths under respective Sections.

NOTING the fact that there seems to be an overlap of mandates between UWICE and RNR-RDC, Yusipang in terms of research;

50. The Conference discussed on the options for consolidation of these two research institutes. Some felt that consolidation would lead to more effectiveness, while others were of the opinion that these two institutes have clear mandates and foresaw no clear benefits from a merger.

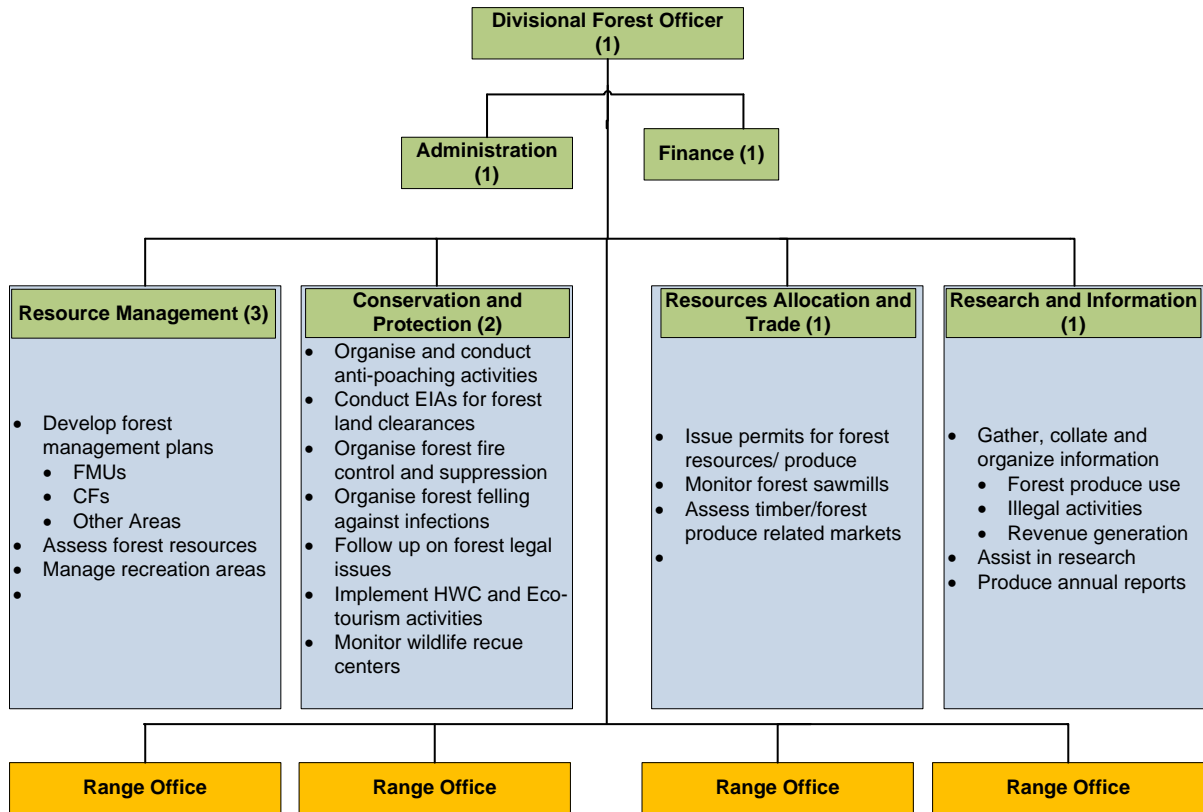
NOTING several recommendations in Reorganizing Forestry Institutions (48 – 50) including options to merge or consolidate; AWARE of the advantages and disadvantages; RECOGNIZING the need to improve forest governance and ensure effective services to the Bhutanese people;

The Conference adopted the following resolutions;

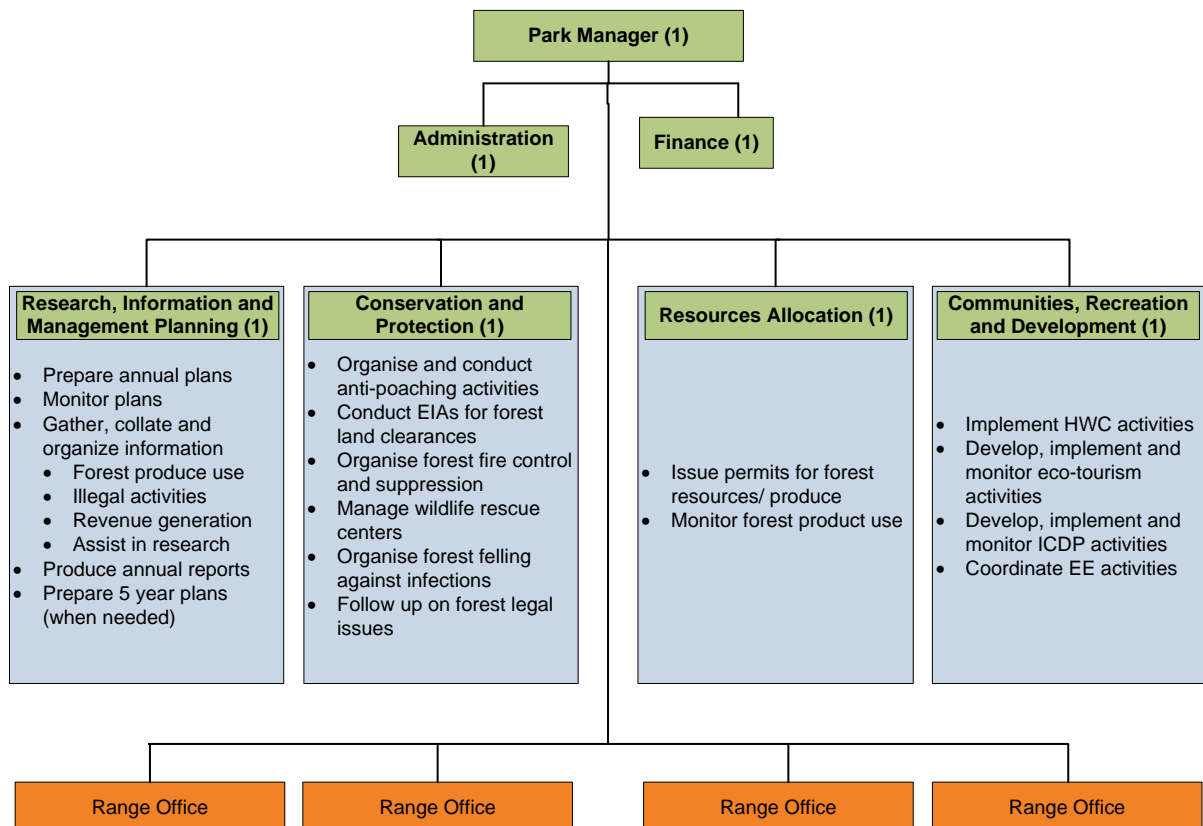
51. A Task Force Committee will be set up comprising of relevant forestry institutions (Functional Divisions, Territorial Divisions, Parks, Dzongkhag Forestry Sector, UWICE, and RDC) and other relevant agencies and institutions like the Local Governments to study the recommendations. The Task Force will be formed immediately and report their recommendations to the Ministry by end of April 2014.

Annexure: Proposed Structures for various forest offices

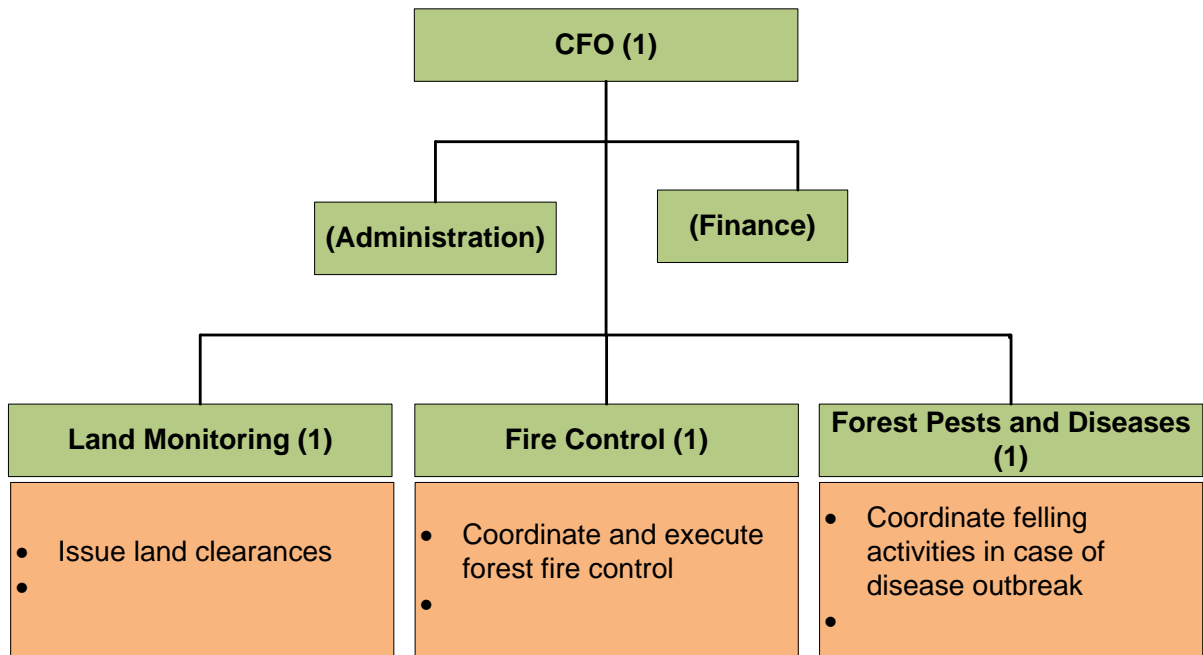
Territorial Division



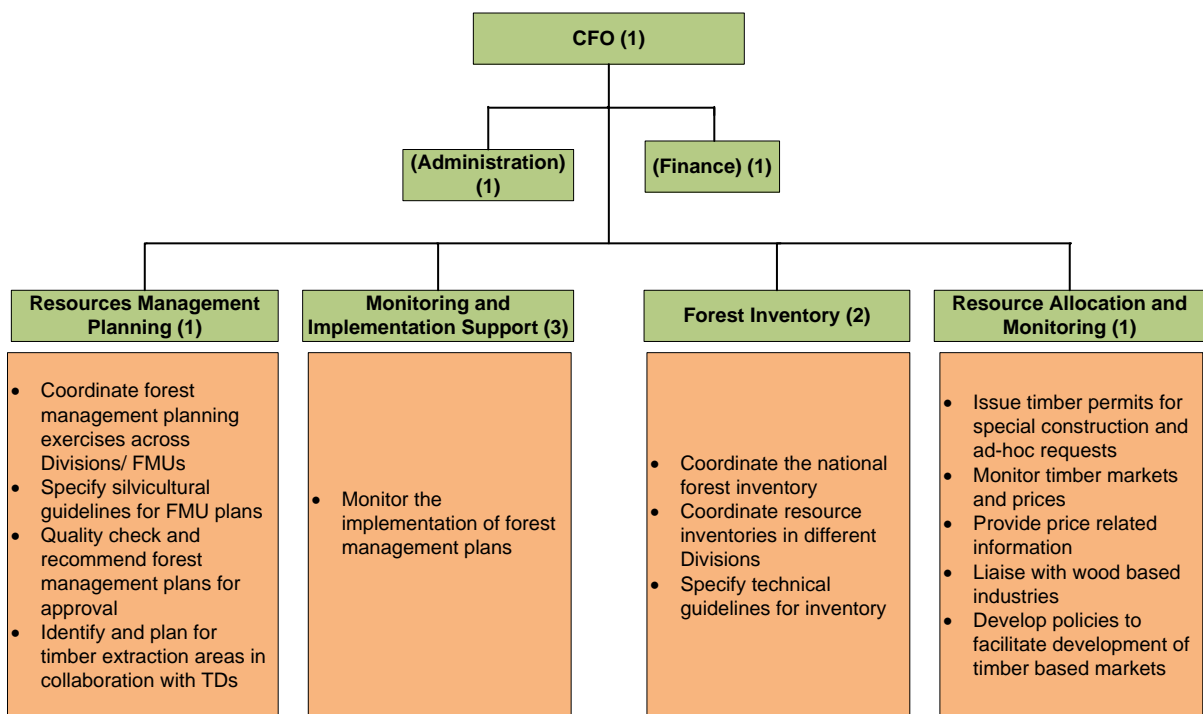
Parks



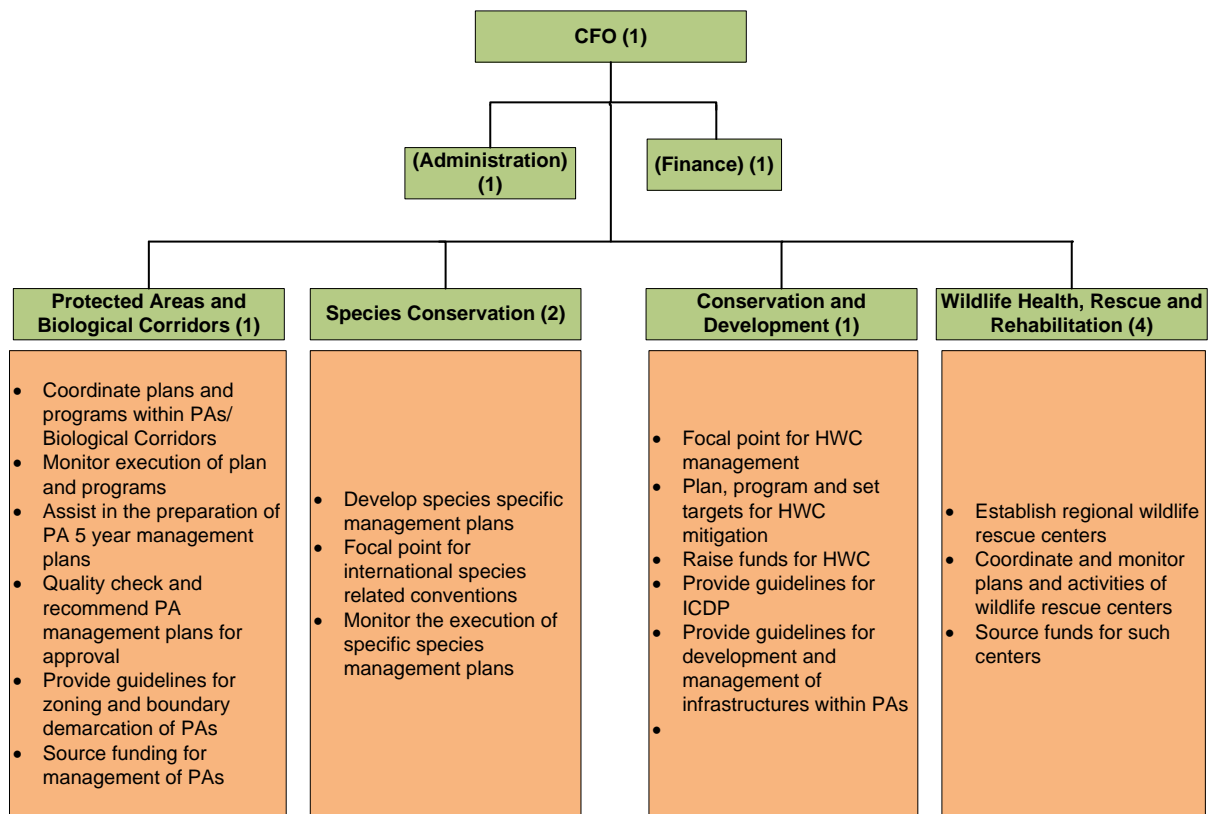
Forest Protection and Enforcement Division



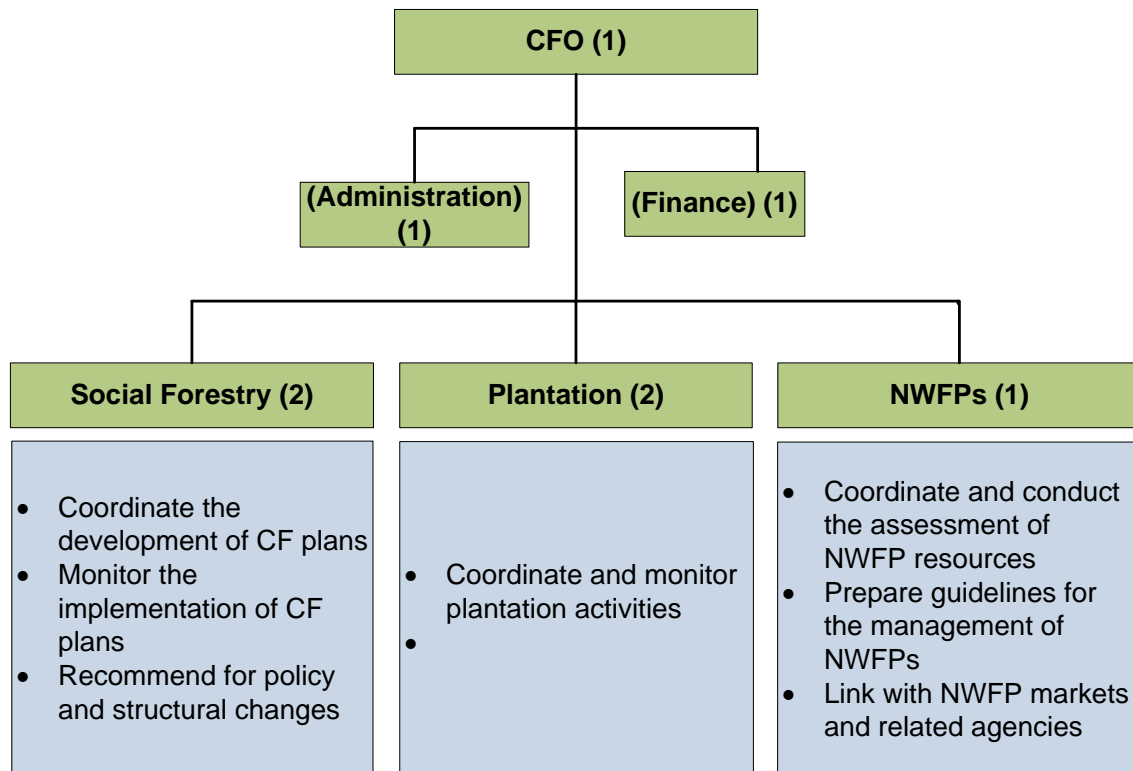
Forest Resource Management Division



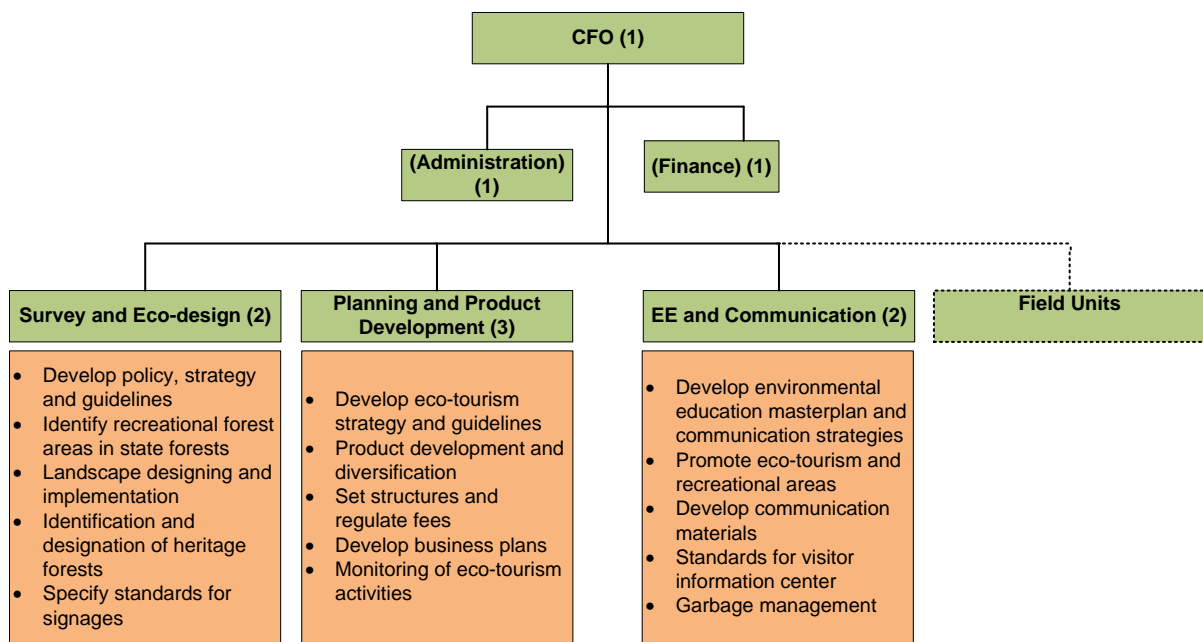
Wildlife Conservation Division



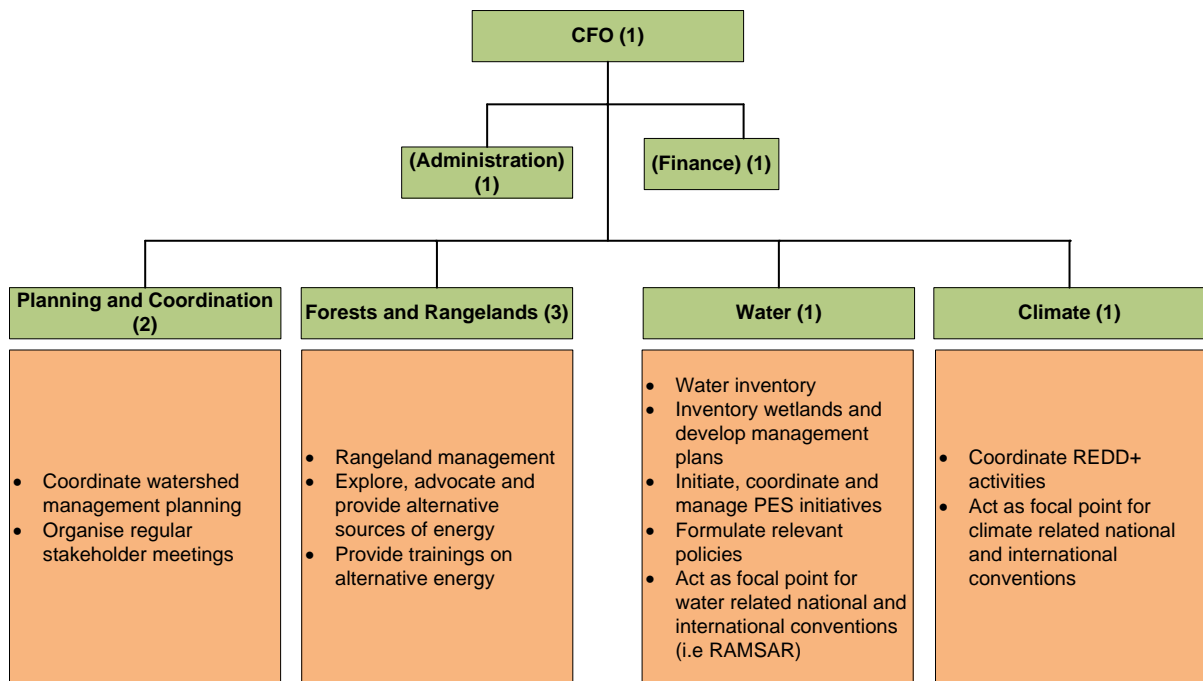
Social Forestry and Extension Division



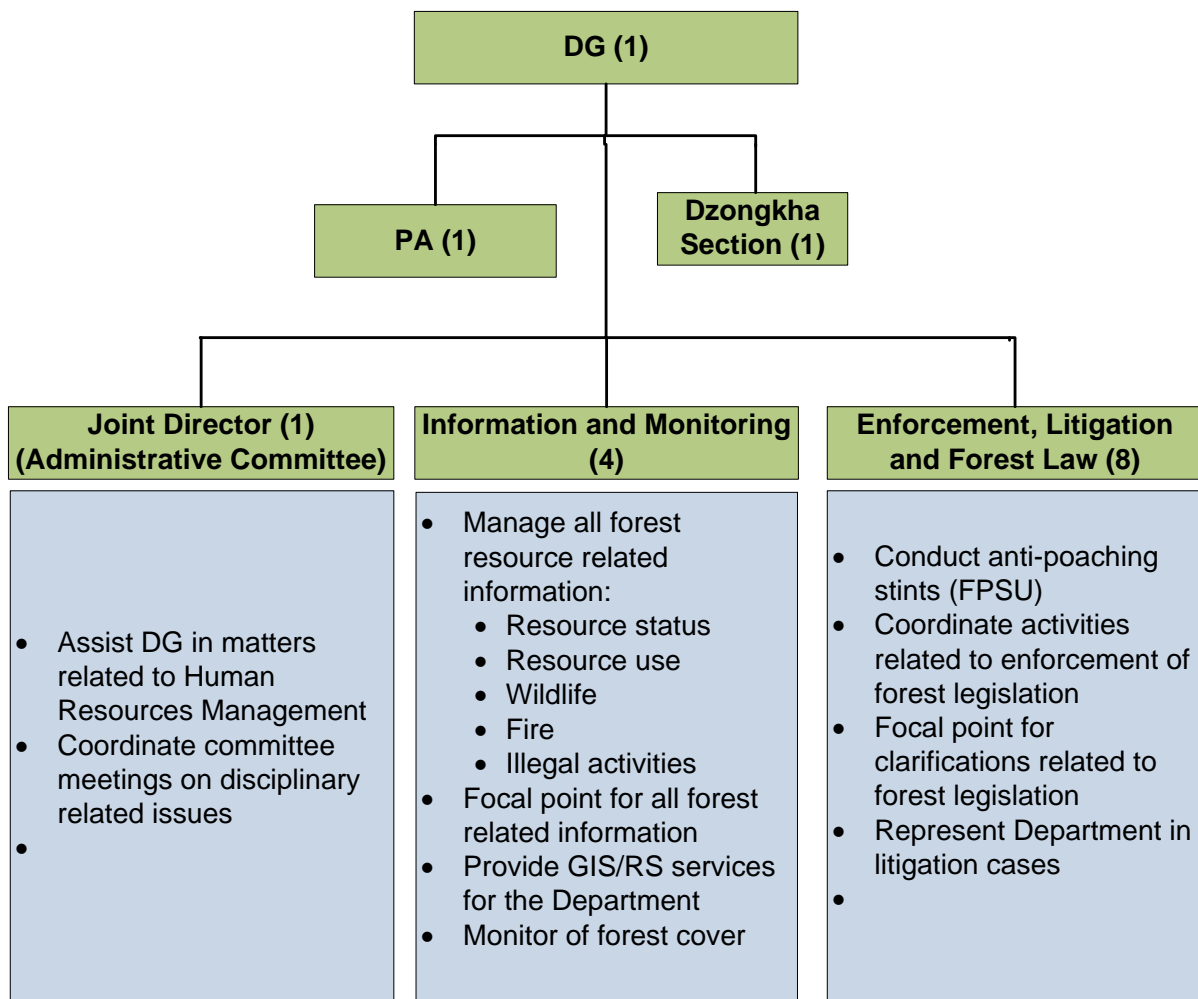
Nature Recreation and Ecotourism Division



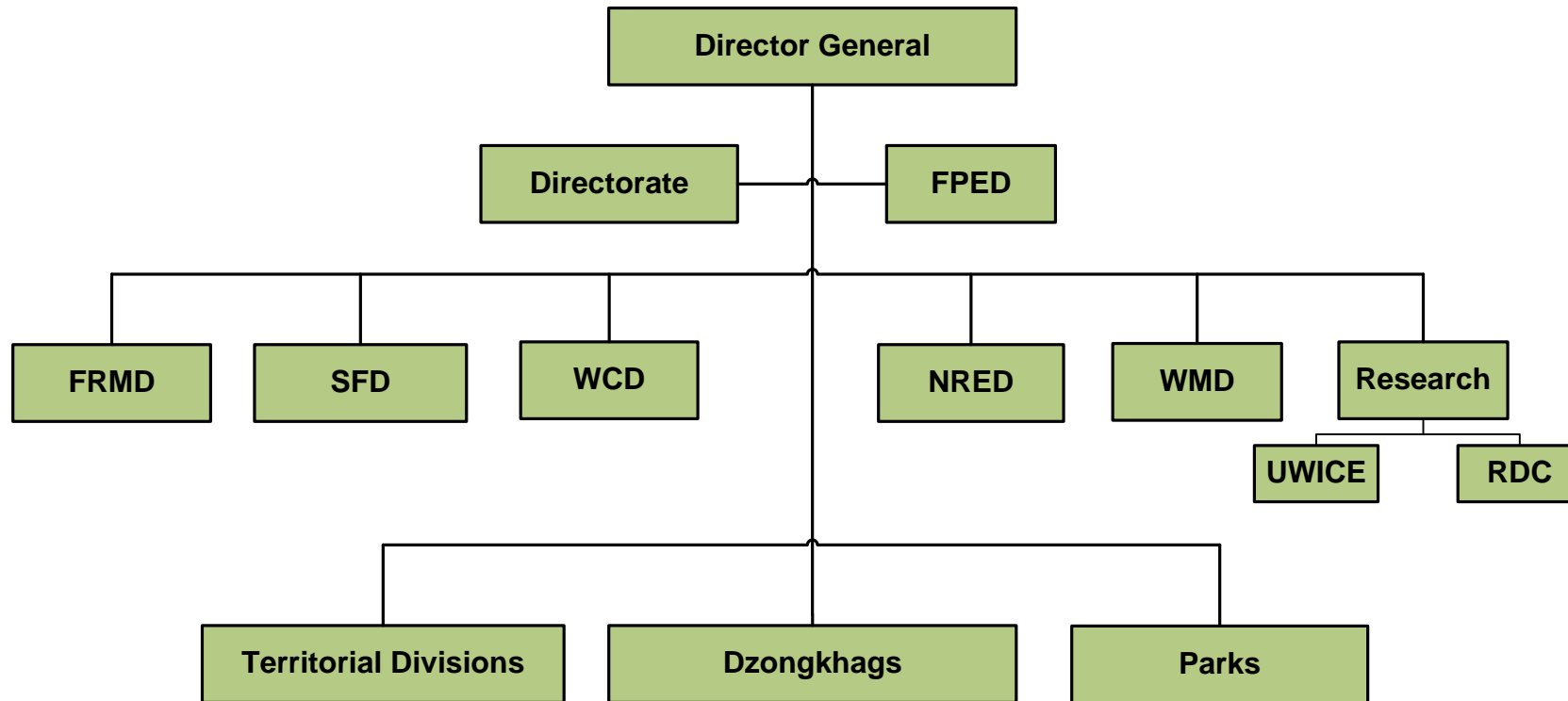
Watershed Management Division



Directorate Office

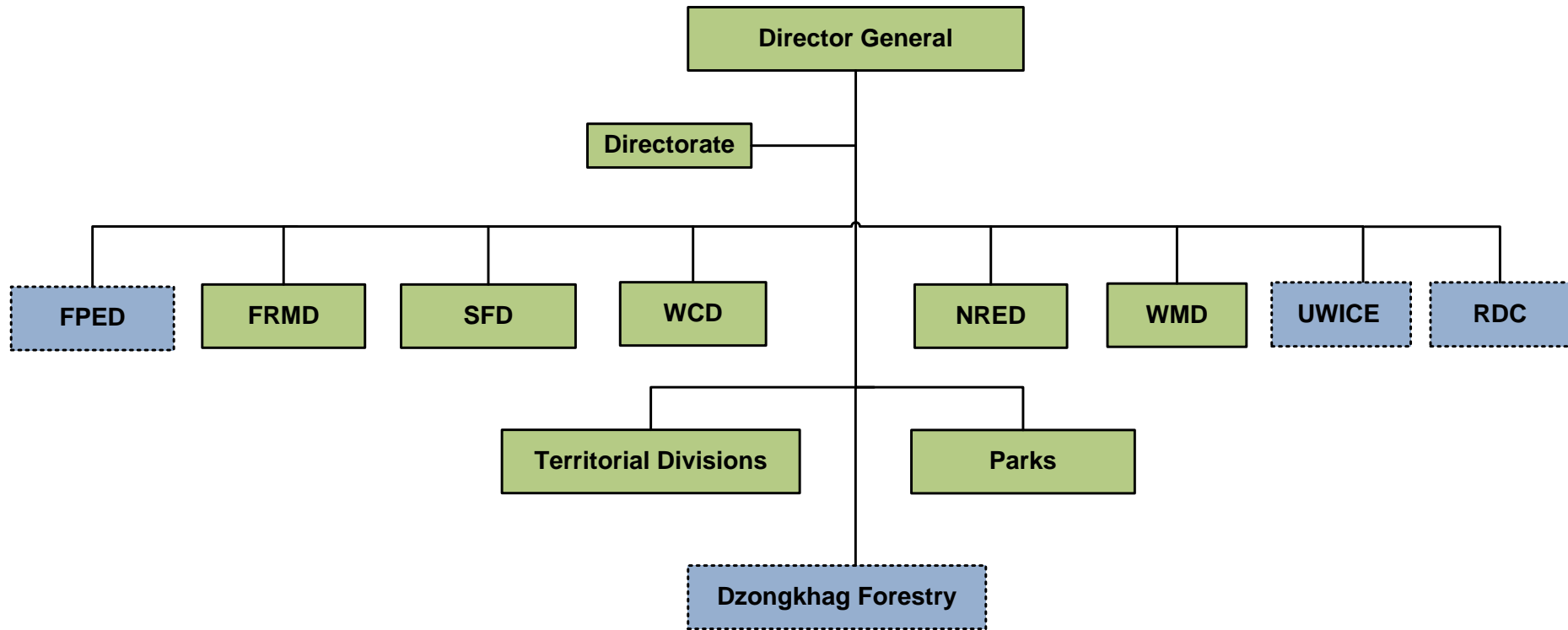


Department (A) – Proposed with changes (See footnote¹)



¹ In addition to the existing structures, this includes a Directorate Office and a Research Wing (RDC and UWICE)

Department (B) – Proposed with changes (See footnote²)



² **Scenarios** (Blue boxes and dotted lines) – FPED dissolved and merged with Directorate Office **and/or** Dzongkhag Forestry Sector merged with Territorial Divisions and Parks **and/or** UWICE and RDC consolidated as one Research Wing.