



WILDLIFE CONSERVANCIES

For The Greater Mara



QUARTERLY

newsletter - 2026

QUARTER 3

EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the second edition of our quarterly newsletter.

This quarter has been marked by significant milestones for community-led conservation in the Maasai Mara landscape. From the signing of the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 2026, to strengthened conservancy governance, meaningful partnerships, and new wildlife research initiatives, there is much to celebrate and reflect upon.

I invite you to explore these stories and more as we share the progress, partnerships, and people shaping the future of conservation in our landscape.

Happy reading!

William M. Peshut
Strategic Communications Consultant, MMWCA.



1. Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 2026: A Landmark Milestone for Community Conservation

The signing into law of the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 2026 marks a significant milestone for the sustainability of community conservancies in Narok County.

For many years, Conservancies in the county have primarily been relying on tourism as their main source of income to support conservation operations. Donor funding has complemented this revenue and played a critical role in making community-led conservation a success across the county. However, despite this support, a substantial financing gap has persisted, posing a major challenge to the long-term sustainability of conservation efforts.

The need to secure alternative, more reliable funding sources became increasingly evident. Against this backdrop, conservation champions from the Maasai Mara advocated for legislation that would provide a legal framework for the County Government of Narok to support community conservancies directly.

Following extensive lobbying, public participation, and stakeholder consultations, the Narok County Assembly passed the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 2026 on 29 July 2026. Consequently, HE Governor Patrick Ntutu signed it into law during World Ranger Day at Oololaimutia on July 31, 2026.

The Act establishes a comprehensive legal framework for the County Government to recognize, promote, support, and facilitate the establishment, sustainability, and development of community conservancies throughout the county.

While speaking during the signing into law of the Act, the Chief Executive Officer for Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, Daniel Sopia, reiterated the importance of the legislation, stating that the Act now provides a formal framework that strengthens the legal and institutional foundation for recognition and funding of community Conservancies in the County. He added that conservancies now have a lifeline to expand land under conservation and double the number of rangers from the six hundred currently employed across all the conservancies. He further called on the county and other partners to fast-track implementation of key policies such as the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem plan, the tourism strategy, physical land use plan and the Maasai Mara national reserve management plan.

The new law also opens the door to expanding land under conservation, securing vital wildlife corridors, increasing ranger recruitment—including more female rangers—strengthening governance structures, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of community conservation.



SPECIAL ISSUE

Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 8 (Narok County Acts No. 4)



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NAROK COUNTY ACTS, 2026

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CONTENT

Act—

PAGE

The Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Act, 20261

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What does the new law mean for conservancies?

One of the Act's most important provisions is the formal recognition of wildlife conservancies. It establishes a clear framework for their establishment, governance, and management, providing greater clarity for communities and conservation partners operating within the county. The recognition creates opportunities for stronger collaboration between the County Government and conservation partners by providing technical assistance, conservation education and awareness, capacity building, and promoting good governance and effective conservancy management. Additionally, recognizing conservancies establishes mechanisms for interim financial support to families and victims affected by human-wildlife conflict, helping to mitigate losses.

In addition, the legislation provides for support for the socio-economic development of communities within the mara-ecosystem, as well as establishing research and data collection on wildlife populations, habitat condition, water resources, and human-wildlife conflict in the wildlife conservancies. These provisions will promote data-based decision-making and incentivize conservation work, especially at a time when conservation faces threats such as competing land use and population growth.

Furthermore, the Act establishes the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Board, an institution mandated to promote and facilitate the establishment of wildlife conservancies to promote wildlife conservation within the County. The Board is further expected to provide the necessary infrastructure and operational support to conservancies while providing an important platform for coordination and collaboration among communities, government, conservation organizations, and other stakeholders.

Unlocking resources for conservation

The most conspicuous highlight of the legislation is the establishment of the Wildlife Conservancies Fund. The fund shall be funded through moneys as may be approved, allocated and appropriated to the Board by the County Assembly as part of the budget process in every financial year, provided that not less than two (2) percent of the most recent audited accounts of the County Government and any grants, gifts, donations, endowments or bequests.

The fund, administered by a fund administrator, will support conservancies to carry out conservation activities, strengthen governance, maintain infrastructure, support community initiatives, and ensure communities continue to receive tangible benefits from conservation. With the Act now in force, community conservancies have gained a critical lifeline for long-term sustainability.



Putting communities at the heart of conservation

Perhaps most importantly, the Act reinforces the role of communities in conservation. By promoting public participation, collaboration, and inclusive governance, the legislation recognizes that successful conservation depends on the involvement of the people who live alongside wildlife and manage landscapes daily. This approach puts the local community at the center of decision-making and recognizes their role as custodians and equal partners in protecting wildlife and natural resources. To ensure that every voice in the county is heard, the Act categorizes the county into four main clusters. The Eastern Cluster comprises Naikarra, Loita, and Maji Moto-Naroosura wards; the Central Cluster comprises Mara and Siana wards; the Western Cluster comprises Lolgorian and Kimintet wards; and the Suswa Cluster comprises Keekonyokie, Suswa, Mosiro, and Ildamat wards. These clusters are crucial in ensuring that everyone is brought on board.

Following its gazettelement in the Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 8 (Narok County Acts No. 4) on August 5, 2026, the Act is now ready for implementation.





2. Leopard Research in the Landscape

For many years, accurately determining the leopard population in the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem has remained a significant challenge. Existing population estimates have largely relied on sightings and the identification of individual leopards at specific locations, resulting in limited scientific data and creating a notable gap in the wildlife status reports.

This gap will be addressed through a new long-term research initiative led by the Roman Wildlife Foundation, under the leadership of Papa Chui. The study seeks to generate reliable scientific data on leopard populations across the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem, providing critical information to guide conservation planning, research, and wildlife management.

The proposed research will cover the entire Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem. Partners shall agree on both monetary and non-monetary benefits arising from the collaboration, ensuring that the research contributes to biodiversity conservation, scientific knowledge, and the interests of local communities and institutions.

Once finalized, the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT) agreements will define the rights, responsibilities, and benefit-sharing arrangements among the providers—the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), the County Government of Narok (CGN), and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)—and the users, namely the Roman Wildlife Foundation and Maasai Mara University (MMU). These agreements are a key requirement in facilitating the research permit process.

A stakeholder meeting held at Sarova Mara Camp in July brought together representatives from the County Government of Narok, led by the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Tourism, Mr. Robert Simwoto, and the Chief Officer for Tourism, Sammy N'dorko. Also in attendance were our officers, leaders of the Maasai Mara National Reserve, Tourism Officers, and members of the Joint Research Permitting Clearance Committee (JRPCC), whose role is to facilitate the research permitting process.

The initiative marks an important milestone in strengthening collaborative wildlife research within the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem. By generating robust scientific data on leopard populations, the project is expected to support evidence-based conservation, inform wildlife management decisions, and deepen understanding of one of the most elusive cats.



3. MMWCA recognized



Monday, July 13, 2026, was yet another special day for us as the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, as we were awarded in recognition of our contribution to wildlife conservation, improving livelihoods, and protecting the Maasai Mara ecosystem. The award was presented to our Chief Executive Officer, Daniel Sopia, in a meeting convened by Governor Patrick Ntutu that brought together the Maasai Mara Landscape stakeholders.

While receiving the award, our CEO emphasized that the recognition belonged not only to MMWCA, but also to the many partners and communities we work with across the landscape. He further attributed the award to a strong partnership and a shared vision between the Mara Conservancies and the County government of

Narok, which operates the Maasai Mara National Reserve. The CEO used the occasion to provide a status update on the implementation of the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem Plan (GMMEP), where MMWCA is the lead plan coordinator.

Stakeholders from across the Maasai Mara landscape came together to review progress in implementing the Maasai Mara National Reserve Management Plan (MMNRMP), the GMMEP, and other strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing tourism, conservation, community partnerships, and the long-term sustainability of the Mara. The forum also provided an opportunity to discuss emerging issues affecting the landscape and to chart a collective path forward for its sustainable management.

4. AGM -2026



On June 29, 2026, under the leadership of our Chairman, Jackson ole Mpario, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in our offices in Aitong, Maasai Mara. The AGM provided us, together with our members and partners, an opportunity to reflect on the milestones achieved over the past year and reaffirm our commitment to conservation across the Mara conservancies.

In his report, the Chairman highlighted significant progress attained in implementing our strategic goal of strengthening the governance and resilience of Mara conservancies. Key achievements included successfully conducting conservancy elections in a number of our member conservancies. In the past year, we have successfully conducted elections in the following conservancies: Mara North, Lemek, Olare Motorogi, Naboisho, Oloisukut and Mara Ripoi. Additionally, the report highlighted the fruitful youth engagements, the implementation of female ranger exchange programs in Amboseli, and support for victims of human-wildlife conflict through intervention initiatives.

The report also showcased remarkable progress in expanding and securing land for conservation while highlighting significant steps achieved in the Mara East region. The report also highlighted increased conservancy revenue through diversified income streams, including carbon credits, a project operated by

One Mara Carbon Credit (OMCP). The report also highlighted existing strategic partnerships. For instance, through the partnership with Human Practice Foundation (HPF), 14 out of 160 schools in the MMara landscape have benefited from infrastructure construction, renovations, and the installation of solar systems. Additionally, through our partnership with Airkenya, we have benefited from 25 free return tickets to and from the Maasai Mara. The report further highlights the partnership between MMWCA and the County Government of Narok through which an enabling policy environment has been established, bringing into fruition relevant policies such as the Narok County Wildlife Conservancies Bill, which has since been passed into law.

The AGM also provided an important platform for our member conservancies to share their achievements and discuss the challenges they continue to face. These discussions generated valuable insights and reinforced our collective commitment to finding practical, collaborative solutions. Our partners also used the opportunity to engage with members. The One Mara Carbon Project (OMCP) presented key milestones achieved to date, shared updates on the project's implementation, and responded to member questions, fostering transparency and strengthening dialogue around the project.

Conservancy Highlights

1. Naboisho conservancy

On June 27, 2026, Naboisho conservancy marked a key milestone in strengthening its governance following the successful election of cluster representatives. The elections, held across the conservancy's nine clusters, reflect landowners' continued commitment to democratic governance, inclusivity, equity, transparency, and fairness. Strong governance remains the cornerstone of successful Mara conservancies, providing the leadership needed to build strong institutions that attract investments, promote accountability, and advance sustainable conservation and community livelihoods. Through the successful elections, 10 men, 5 women, and one Person Living with a disability were elected into office.



Further, the conservancy made a significant stride in June, following the gazettment of its management plan. Under section 44(3) of the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (Cap 376), the Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife, Rebecca Miano, issued a gazette notice officially gazetting the Mara Naboisho Conservancy Management Plan 2026-2030. The Plan defines the goals, objectives and actions that Mara Naboisho Conservancy has designed to address natural resource conservation, livestock management, community livelihoods development, tourism development and the Conservancy's operations. The Plan comprises five (5) management programs that address the key issues affecting the Conservancy.





The programs include;

- 1** The Natural Resource and Land Management Program aims to maintain, enhance, restore, and monitor the ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, and habitat quality of Mara Naboisho Conservancy and its connected landscapes using high-quality science, ensuring long-term benefits for both nature and people.
- 2** The Livestock Management Program that strives to create a regenerative livestock system that delivers healthy rangelands, cattle, community and wildlife through an integrated approach grounded in improved grazing management and value addition
- 3** The Tourism Development and Management Program, which endeavors to ensure the Conservancy continues being internationally recognized as a leading model of high-end, low-impact eco-tourism in Kenya.
- 4** The Community and Livelihoods Program that seeks to enhance the social well-being and livelihoods of the local community by fostering partnerships between the Conservancy, landowners and local partners, ensuring the long-term value of the Conservancy to its members.
- 5** A Conservancy Business and Operations Program that aims to enhance operations, improve financial credibility and diversify revenue streams, building on Naboisho's success

To fast-track implementation, the conservancy has developed a 5-year strategy of implementing the Plan, outlining the management actions and activities under each of the five management programs. The implementation plan provides a monitoring and evaluation framework for assessing the potential impacts of implementing each management program. The Plan is deposited at the offices of the Director General, Kenya Wildlife Service and at the Mara Naboisho Conservancy offices.

Through our facilitation, Olkinyei and Olare Motorogi conservancies have also registered their management plans with the Kenya Wildlife Service. They are now awaiting gazettelement by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.



2. Oloisukut conservancy

In August, we facilitated the Board of Trustees (BOT) cluster elections for Oloisukut Conservancy as a strategic intervention to strengthen governance in the conservancy's leadership structure. The conservancy has three clusters: Iltolish, Oloololo, and Kirindon. Two clusters, Iltolish and Oloololo, completed their selections through consensus, returning four and three trustees respectively. In contrast, the Kirindon cluster requested additional time to undertake internal consultations, which they concluded and presented to their leaders during the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Following the AGM, held on August 20, 2026, landowners formally validated and approved the newly constituted Board, and unanimously resolved to increase the number of Trustees to fifteen (15). The conservancy has now completed the composition of its Board of Trustees and formalized its operational governance framework, which is key in strengthening governance for the Conservancy.

In brief

World Rangers 2026



On July 31, 2026, we joined the local, national, and global community in celebrating World Rangers Day. The day honors the courage and commitment of rangers who protect wildlife and natural ecosystems. It also provides an opportunity to remember those who have lost their lives and to recognize those who have sustained injuries while serving on the front lines of conservation.

This year, we joined partners in a colorful celebration at Oololaimutia, Narok County, bringing together rangers, conservancies, government leaders, conservation partners, and the local community to celebrate the invaluable contribution of rangers to protecting the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem. During the celebrations, sixteen rangers from six conservancies were honored through awards for their courage in protecting the Mara landscape. The rangers had sustained injuries in the line of duty in the past year. During the occasion, rangers from Maasai Mara Reserve were also awarded.

ER implementation - Conservancies awards.

The EarthRanger (ER) app is one of the most valuable tools in our conservation work across the Mara ecosystem. To roll out ER, we provided each conservancy with a laptop and phones as initial equipment to support the platform operations. To ensure sustainability, we continued supporting the establishment of ER stations in conservancies to enhance monitoring and rapid response. This investment has significantly improved coordination among conservancies and strengthened their ability to respond quickly to wildlife-related incidents across the landscape. To assess how effectively the system is being used, we recently surveyed our member conservancies. The assessment examined ER adoption, operational efficiency, and the platform's contribution to day-to-day conservation management. We were encouraged by the findings. Several conservancies stood out for their exceptional use of EarthRanger and emerged as winners across five award categories. During this year's Rangers Day celebrations, we had the honor of recognizing and awarding these conservancies for their commitment, innovation, and excellence in applying conservation technology.

1. Pardamat Conservation Area – Overall Best in EarthRanger Implementation.

The Conservancy received the overall award for outstanding implementation of ER. The Conservancy has fully integrated the app into daily ranger patrol operations, generating real-time data that supports informed, timely decision-making.

2. Mara North Conservancy– Best Conservancy Ownership of EarthRanger.

Mara North Conservancy was recognized for demonstrating exemplary ownership of the ER program. In addition to the equipment we provided through the project, the conservancy established a fully equipped ER station, enabling rangers to build advanced skills in using the platform.

3. Enarau Conservancy – Most Improved in EarthRanger Use

As one of the new conservancies, Enarau received the award for being the most improved conservancy in ER use, showing remarkable progress in adoption and operational application.

4. Nashulai Conservancy– Most Inclusive EarthRanger Implementation

The Conservancy was recognized for its inclusive approach, with female rangers serving as the first implementers of ER within the conservancy.

5. Enonkishu Conservancy – Best in ER Data-Driven Decision-Making

Enonkishu Conservancy was awarded for excellence in data-driven decision-making. Rangers begin their daily patrols based on guidance and data generated through the ER platform.





Staff changes

Wilfred Koros, a former intern in our ICT department has rejoined the organisation as the ICT assistant. He is a talented IT professional and a graduate of the University of Eldoret with a degree in Information Technology. Koros is passionate and skilled in network and systems administration as well as cloud and network security. Wilfred brings fresh energy, motivation, and a strong technical drive to accelerate the innovative use of technology in wildlife conservation.



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