

# #LandThatWeLove - COMMUNIQUE



## A Movement for All to LOVE and CARE for NATURE in Sierra Leone

The Western Area Peninsula National Park (WAPNAP) is a critically important eco-system within Sierra Leone which has been protected since first gazetted in 1916. Its 17,500 hectares of lush tropical forest, on the mountains and hillsides of the peninsula, are essential to ensuring the safety, health and security of the populations of Freetown and the greater Western Area.

The Peninsula Forest eco-system is vitally important for the protection of watersheds and catchments that are the source of clean pipe-borne water for Freetown and its environs, and for clean air and protecting the hillsides against landslides.

Yet this National Park is presently perhaps the most threatened forest eco-system in Sierra Leone due to demands of the rapidly growing urban population, infrastructural expansion and modernization of Freetown.

#LandThatWeLove was set up in 2017 following the catastrophic mudslide, and is part of a global movement **#NatureForAll** created under the auspices of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. As citizens and civil society, we must play a key role within our communities: to raise **AWARENESS, CONNECT with nature and its values, and COMMIT to CONSERVATION action.**

Building on the exhibition of historical photographs of the Western Area Peninsula Forest and other critical eco-systems, curated by #LandThatWeLove in locations across Sierra Leone, and the dialogue generated:

*We agree* that a transformational change is needed in the way Government, citizens and all stakeholders relate to nature and our environment in Sierra Leone.

*We believe* that commitment to maintaining the integrity of this fragile eco-system, is urgent and is vital to the future health, social and economic well-being of every person in our beloved nation and beyond.

We agree that these protected forests need to be effectively managed with the support of several new stakeholders that include you – a member of the public.

We advocate that enforcing existing laws and policies passed on the good management of natural resources, especially of the Western Area Peninsula Forest and other forests in Sierra Leone, is a matter of national security.

*We therefore urge Government* to take act now and to take all steps necessary to endorse and implement:

1. Strict observance of the forest boundary/demarcations and enforcement of the laws banning the sale of land and construction of houses in the WAPNAP
2. Immediate enforcement of all regulations governing the extraction of sand from beaches, protection of coastal areas, wetlands, creeks and other critical ecosystems in the Western Area
3. A national campaign to restore degraded areas and increase tree cover – **'Every Child Plants a Tree'** in which every child (especially school children) in the country, plants one tree, as part of a national awareness initiative on the importance of trees and the value of forests.

**In signing this communique, I commit to be part of this initiative.**

**#LandThatWeLove: AWARENESS, EXPERIENCE, CONNECTION with nature; CONSERVATION ACTION**

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**Partners:** British Council; Conservation Society of Sierra Leone; Environmental Foundation for Africa; Environmental Protection Agency (SL); National Protected Areas Authority; UNDP – GEF Small Grants Programme; Many Sierra Leoneans and friends of Sierra Leone