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FINANCIAL AUTONOMY OF NATIONAL PARKS IN VIETNAM

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SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. The necessity of the research problem

Financial autonomy refers to an organization's ability to control financial decisions and resources without significant outside interference (Smith, 2020). In Vietnam, the FA mechanism is applied to public service units (PSUs), which stipulates autonomy and self-responsibility in implementing regulations on the public service portfolio; classification of FSU levels; autonomy in using financial resources and autonomy in a number of other related regulations (Government, 2021).

In Vietnam, the National parks (NPs) are non-state-owned natural resources. In fact, NPs have begun to implement financial management according to the adjustment of state management documents. Although some NPs have had certain changes in financial management, autonomy and self-responsibility. However, most NPs still depend heavily on the state budget (Emerton et al., 2006; Le Thanh An et al., 2018; Tran Quang Bao et al., 2019; GIZ, 2021). While financial instability and lack of financial resources are becoming core barriers to effective management of protected areas, especially in pursuing natural resource management and conservation strategies (Wilkie et al., 2001; Emerton, 2006; Martin et al., 2018). Therefore, diversification and self-reliance of financial sources not only contribute to financial sustainability but also improve management efficiency as well as the ability to implement long-term goals of national parks (Hockings et al., 2000; Emerton, 2006).

Resolution 19/NQ-TW of the 12th Central Executive Committee on continuing to innovate the organization and management system, improving the quality and efficiency of operations of public service units (PSUs) has identified the innovation of management mechanisms, financial mechanisms and reorganization of the PSU system as a priority goal, emphasizing the sharp reduction in the proportion and improvement of the efficiency of state budget expenditures for PSUs (including national parks) to restructure the state budget. National parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, including Ba Vi, Tam Dao, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Yok Don and Cat Tien, are the PSUs that pioneered the implementation of the financial autonomy mechanism of the forestry sector. However, with the management of specific public assets such as forests, forest land and ecosystems; many types of work are difficult in establishing expenditure norms; The goods and services provided are mostly essential public goods and services whose value is difficult to determine and measure... creating significant barriers in the implementation of the financial autonomy mechanism. According to the General Department of Forestry (2022), over 80% of national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development have not yet ensured regular expenditures. In the face of increasing threats to biodiversity, challenges to national park management, and difficulties that national parks face in forest protection and development (FPD), the need to take steps to strengthen financial autonomy (through immediate cuts in regular expenditure and staffing budgets) may threaten the sustainability of national parks.

Therefore, in the context of the need for financial reform and reducing dependence on the state budget, it is necessary to study and recommend a suitable financial reform model, based on an analysis of the current status of financial resources, allocation and use of financial resources, and assessment of the level of financial reform of national parks, to see opportunities for national parks to diversify revenue sources, take advantage of available natural resources, and reduce dependence on the state budget. Improve the capacity of financial autonomy but still ensure the most important goals of maintaining and protecting the biodiversity of national parks .

Based on this reality, the PhD student chose the research topic "***Financial autonomy of National Parks in Vietnam***" to exploit and maintain sustainable financial resources for forest protection activities and biodiversity conservation.

1. 2. Research objectives

1.2.1. Overall objectives:

Based on the assessment of the current financial situation of national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, propose solutions to diversify revenue sources and enhance sustainable financial autonomy for national parks.

1. 2. 2. Specific objectives:

- Systematize and supplement theoretical and practical basis on financial autonomy of national parks.
- Assess the current status of financial autonomy of 06 National Park under the management of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Analyze the shortcomings in the current financial autonomy mechanism of national parks and clearly identify the causes .
- Propose a financial autonomy mechanism suitable to the characteristics of national parks.

1. 3 . Research scope

The research object of the Dissertation is the financial autonomy of 06 National Parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao , Bach Ma, Yokdon, Cat Tien).

1. 4. Scope of research

1.4.1. Scope of content

The dissertation focuses on studying aspects of financial management including autonomy in mobilizing, allocating and using financial resources; illustrating the current situation of financial management of 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Tam Dao, Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Yokdon, Cat Tien); The dissertation also studies the favorable factors, difficulties, barriers and challenges to the financial management capacity of 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to assess the current situation and propose appropriate financial management mechanisms for national parks .

1.4.2. Spatial scope:

The dissertation studies 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Tam Dao, Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Yokdon, Cat Tien).

1.4.3 . Time scope:

- Secondary data was collected over 5 years (2018-2022) at 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Yokdon, Cat Tien).
- Primary data was investigated and surveyed in 2022.

1.5. Research content

- Theoretical and practical basis of financial autonomy of national parks.
- Current status of financial autonomy of 6 National Parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- Analyze the shortcomings in the current financial autonomy mechanism of national parks and clearly identify the causes .
- Propose a financial autonomy mechanism suitable to the characteristics of the managed national parks .

1. 6. New contributions of the thesis

1. 6 .1. New theoretical contributions

The dissertation has systematized and supplemented the theoretical and practical basis on Financial Autonomy of National Parks. The dissertation provides practical documents on the overview of financial autonomy of PSUs in general and financial autonomy of national parks in Vietnam in particular. Based on the

inheritance of domestic and foreign studies and the findings of field research, the content of financial autonomy of national parks has been determined in accordance with international practices, financial autonomy mechanisms applied to Vietnamese national parks and the characteristics of the forestry sector. . .

1. 6 .2. New practical contributions

The disseration has assessed the current status of the financial autonomy of the studied national parks; provided practical results showing the differences and proving that the national parks are a type of public service with their own specific characteristics. On the one hand, national parks must provide specific public goods and services (sustainable forest protection and development, biodiversity conservation, environmental and ecosystem protection, etc.). While, national parks still provide public goods and services (ecotourism, environmental education, etc.). From there, the study has assessed the impact of the financial autonomy mechanism on national parks, the revenue generated, the financial autonomy capacity of national parks, and proposed a financial autonomy mechanism suitable to the characteristics of national parks .

CHAPTER 1 : THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL BASIS OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY IN THE NATIONAL PARKS IN VIETNAM

1.1. Theoretical basis for financial autonomy of National Parks

1 .1.1 . Related concepts

Financial autonomy:

Financial management at the National Park refers to the ability of the National Park to make decisions about its internal financial affairs. Financial management is the capacity of the National Park to generate income, allocate capital, and set budget priorities based on the specific characteristics of the National Park to achieve the strategic goals of the unit.

From the perspective of financial management, financial autonomy is the act of the superior management agency (management entity) allowing the subordinate unit (managed entity) to proactively manage and make decisions on financial activities within the framework of the law on financial management with the aim of improving the unit's operational efficiency. Financial autonomy allows organizations to diversify revenue sources, invest strategically, develop institutions and ensure long-term stability.

Financial Autonomy Rights:

Smith (2020) defines financial freedom as “the freedom of an organization to control and manage its financial resources independently without undue influence or constraint from outside.” This definition emphasizes the independence and authority of organizations in managing their finances.

1.1.2. The meaning of financial autonomy in public organizations

The importance of financial autonomy can be understood through the lens of various studies. Adams (2021) , argues that financial autonomy plays a vital role in promoting organizational innovation and adaptation . Brown (2017) emphasizes the importance of financial autonomy in enhancing organizational performance and efficiency. Furthermore, Anderson (2019) , emphasizes the impact of financial autonomy on organizational accountability .

Financial autonomy helps organizations diversify resources, explore diverse sources of finance beyond traditional channels; promote innovation and adaptation; improve accountability and transparency, especially important in financial management. Financial autonomy rights allow organizations to plan and manage their financial resources with a long-term vision.

Financial autonomy provides organizations the independence and authority to make financial decisions that are consistent with their goals and priorities. Financial autonomy allows organizations to diversify their funding sources, invest strategically, promote growth, and ensure sustainability. By embracing financial autonomy, organizations can improve their effectiveness, adaptability, and success.

1.1.3. Goals of financial autonomy for public organizations

The objectives of financial autonomy for public organizations are expressed in the following aspects: give autonomy and self-responsibility to public organizations in organizing work, reorganizing the apparatus, using labor and financial resources to complete assigned tasks; socializing revenue sources, and ensuring the stability of public organizations.

1.2. Financial autonomy in National Parks

Concept of National Park

A national park is an area established to protect biological diversity and essential ecological structures, support environmental processes, and promote education and recreation. A national park is a clearly defined spatial area, recognized, managed through legislation and other effective means, to achieve the long-term goal of conserving nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Dudley 2008).

In Vietnam, according to the Law on Biodiversity 2008, a National Park is a place with an important natural ecosystem for the country, internationally, specific or representative of a natural ecological region; is a permanent or seasonal natural habitat of at least one species on the List of endangered, precious, rare species prioritized for protection; has special value in science and education; has environmental landscape, unique natural beauty, and ecotourism value.

According to the Forestry Law, 2017, a national park is a type of special-use forest (SUF) , used mainly to conserve natural forest ecosystems, forest biological gene sources, scientific research, conservation of historical - cultural relics, beliefs, scenic spots combined with ecotourism; recreation, entertainment except for strictly protected zones. (National Assembly 2017) .

Characteristics of national parks

From the perspective of financial planners, national parks can be viewed as an organizational activity. National park goods include recreational opportunities, basic food items and genetic resources, and services such as biodiversity conservation, crop pollination, clean water, and scenic views. Such goods and services provide a wide range of benefits to people. New approaches to protected areas, including national parks, need to recognize the economic value of national parks. The goods, services and products that national parks create are highly renewable, not lost but on the contrary have higher value. *It can be seen that applying a business perspective for conservation purposes and building a conservation business plan is not an easy problem for many managers of protected areas. A fundamental issue that needs to be affirmed is that the existence of protected areas is an objective requirement to preserve our living environment.*

In Vietnam, national parks are considered as a public service unit. National parks have all the characteristics of a public service unit such as operating on the principle of serving society, none for profit. National parks are a type of special-use forest, where forest ecosystem services provide forestry goods and services that bring direct or indirect economic, material, psychological, and emotional benefits to humans (Sincere Forests, 2021). Most ecosystem services are more or less of the nature of public goods/services or freely accessible goods/services available for everyone to use and everyone can access and use these goods. Due to their non-rival nature and very weak excludability (if they can be excluded, it will cost a lot), public goods or services are often overused and depleted, often called the Tragedy of the Commons (Hardin, 1968). However, national parks have their own unique characteristics, due to the nature of the goods/services they provide and their significance and value at the national, regional and global levels. National parks provide unique public services that cannot be socialized (with the participation of private and other stakeholders), monetized, priced or regulated by market principles (GIZ, 2021). National parks provide public goods that are “non-excludable” and indivisible, meaning that when provided, they are available to everyone. In the case of national parks, the public goods created by national parks are the protection of watersheds, carbon sequestration and the protection of important ecosystems, and these goods can only be provided and protected by the Government (IUCN, 2001, Sylvia Leroy et al., 2005).

The Concept of Financial Autonomy in National Parks

Financial Autonomy at National Parks are the capacity of national parks to independently manage their own funds and budgets. Autonomy is understood to be a core part of any strategy to enhance the **financial sustainability of national parks** – but should not be seen as the sole goal or intended outcome of the process. Rather, autonomy is a means to reach results. The main driver is to establish the financial conditions necessary to facilitate, encourage and manage national parks effectively. Creating new sources of funding for national parks is necessary when the state budget is under pressure and is unlikely to be sufficient to cover all of the costs of national parks in the long term. However, self-generated revenues should not be seen as a substitute for the core public budget support needed for national parks to carry out their public duties, but as **an additional resource** used to enhance and benefit national park management.

Research content on financial autonomy at National Parks

- Autonomy in mobilizing and creating financial resources
- Autonomy in allocating financial resources
- Autonomy in the use of financial resources

Factors for effective implementation of Financial Autonomy in National Parks

The concepts of financial autonomy of public organizations are different from financial independence. Financial autonomy allows a unit in the context of spending completely dependent on the State budget allocated by the superior level to still be given autonomy in allocating and using the allocated funds. In addition to the delegation of authority, public service delivery units must also be responsible for the results of completing assigned tasks. Therefore, financial autonomy is consistent with the principle of results-based management (RBM) (UNDP, 2011).

RBM is particularly useful in managing public organizations, non-profit organizations, and development projects. RBM includes Key elements : (i) Identify desired outcomes : Set goals and end results that the organization organization or project to achieve ; (ii) Monitor and evaluate results : Use measurement indicators to track progress toward achieving goals, and adjust activities as necessary ; (iii) Respond and adjust : Use evaluation results to improve or adjust strategies, resources, and operations for greater effectiveness ; (iv) Enhance accountability ; Effectively manage financial resources; Enhance management capacity.

Lessons learned for National Park research :

- Revenue from the state budget is still the main source of revenue.
- National parks need to promote the development of their units' financial planning plans, paying attention to diversifying non-state budget revenue sources.
- Management agencies need to establish economic and technical norms and unit prices.
- Innovate financial management, decentralize to affiliated units to proactively increase revenue and proactively spend.
- National Parks need to improve access and financial management skills .

1.3. Research gap

- There have been no studies on the role, characteristics and significance of financial autonomy in the National Park, nor on the differences and specificities of the National Park compared to other natural resources and environment.
- Studies have not analyzed and clarified factors affecting the financial autonomy of national parks and conditions to enhance the financial autonomy of national parks;
- Studies have not proposed specific solutions to unlock financial sources outside the state budget, and appropriate financial mechanisms for national parks.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Characteristics of the research areas

Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao, Bach Ma, Yokdon, Cat Tien National Parks are under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. With many advantages in natural landscapes, diversity of ecosystems, flora and fauna, and cultural and historical values, the National Parks have truly become attractive ecotourism destinations for many domestic and international tourists. In addition to the potential value of ecotourism, the National Parks also have many potential for forest environmental services that need to be exploited soon to increase the budget for the Park such as clean water supply services and carbon absorption and storage services.

2.2. Research methodology

In the thesis, the author chooses the following research approach: Research approach on the financial autonomy mechanism at 2 levels: national level, national park level.

+ At the national (system) level: Research to clarify the financial situation for the work of environmental protection nationwide through macro-financial analysis to clarify financial gaps; analyze and evaluate current financial mechanisms for funding sources for environmental protection work (budget, ODA, trust funds, payment for forest environmental services, carbon trading, etc.); analyze and evaluate the suitability of the legal and institutional framework for mobilizing, allocating and using financial resources for environmental protection work at the national level; analyze and provide suggestions for a macro-financial plan based on business principles for environmental protection work with optimal scenarios. The research approach at this level helps to identify, select and propose sustainable financial mechanisms at the system-wide level (macro-financial mechanisms) based on innovations in institutional and policy frameworks.

+ At the national park level (base level): The research approach is similar to that at the national level, the difference is that this is the level directly implementing the activities of receiving/creating, managing and using financial resources for the national park. At this level, the research clarifies the financial status for the protection of natural resources at the base level, through microfinance analysis to clarify financial gaps; analyze and evaluate current financial mechanisms for funding sources for protection of natural resources at each national park unit; analyze and evaluate the suitability of the legal and institutional framework (suitability of the legal framework and macro institutions with the base practice; suitability of the institutions and internal financial management policies of the national park with the implementation practice) for mobilizing, allocating and using financial resources for protection of natural resources at the national park; the analysis provides suggestions for a microfinance plan based on business principles for protection of natural resources with the optimal scenario. Research approaches at this level help identify, select, and propose sustainable microfinance mechanisms based on institutional and policy innovations at the grassroots level.

Information collection : Secondary information is inherited from data, documents, and reports related to the management and use of financial resources at 6 national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The main data for analysis and assessment of the financial situation of the national parks are the Financial Reports and Summary Reports of 6 national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development collected in 5 years (2018 - 2022); conservation management and sustainable development plans, ecotourism development projects, reports of topics, research works related to forest protection and development activities, biodiversity conservation;

Primary information used to supplement information that secondary data lacks for the purpose of: supplementing to assess the current situation, identifying trends and revenue generation capabilities, identifying influencing factors, identifying favorable and difficult factors affecting the ability to conduct financial audits of national parks. Specifically, regarding the financial audits of national parks, the main survey subjects are the national park management boards managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Primary information is collected through a number of methods: semi-structured interviews; in-depth interviews. In-depth

interviews aim to understand the advantages, difficulties, obstacles, causes, suggest solutions/models of financial audits in national parks, issues that secondary data cannot reflect; and the method of obtaining expert opinions.

Criteria for selecting research sites: The selection of research sites is based on differences in natural conditions, geography, ecosystems and different levels of financial management to clarify differences in financial management, resource mobilization, allocation and use of revenue and potential of national parks. On that basis, the author has proposals and solutions suitable to the characteristics of national parks.

Analysis methods : Qualitative analysis of interviews; Descriptive statistical method: Presenting data in tables and charts to see the structure and fluctuation trends of financial resources and regular expenditures of 6 national parks (2018 - 2022); Statistical analysis method: Secondary data is collected according to the research period and processed using Excel software, specifically: calculating the average, continuous growth rate, average, calculating indicators reflecting the level of financial stability such as the ratio of regular expenditure guarantee, the ratio of fund allocation, the coefficient of increased income increase; Comparison (by time, space, research period...) to see the difference in regular revenue and expenditure of national parks over the years; the ability of national parks to meet financial stability requirements compared to requirements. Based on the analysis data to clarify the current situation (advantages, difficulties, problems, obstacles that need to be resolved...); Consult with experts in the research field to improve the quality of the research.

System of research indicators:

Indicators reflecting the current situation of the National Park's financial resources (Indicators reflecting the level of autonomy in resource mobilization (total revenue from each source of revenue from the National Park's activities; proportion of each source of revenue; fluctuations in each source of revenue; Level of ensuring regular expenditure)

Indicators reflecting the level of autonomy in allocating financial resources of the National Park (Proportion of each expenditure item in regular expenditure; Fluctuation of each expenditure content; Difference between revenue and expenditure on total revenue).

Indicators reflecting the level of autonomy in using financial resources of the National Park (Rate of income increase for officers and employees of the National Park; Rate of fund allocation and use from the difference between revenue and expenditure regularly assigned for autonomy; Level of annual fund allocation) .

Other research indicators (Indicators related to basic characteristics of the National Park such as (facilities, human resources, land, etc.); Indicators related to business performance of the National Park such as total number of visitors, total number of other visits, revenue, other income, etc.)

CHAPTER 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Current status of finance autonomy in National Parks under MARD

3.1.1. Autonomy in mobilizing and creating financial resources

According to the provisions of the Forestry Law, the financial sources of national parks include: (1) State budget; (2) Revenue from production and business activities; (3) Other legal revenue activities.

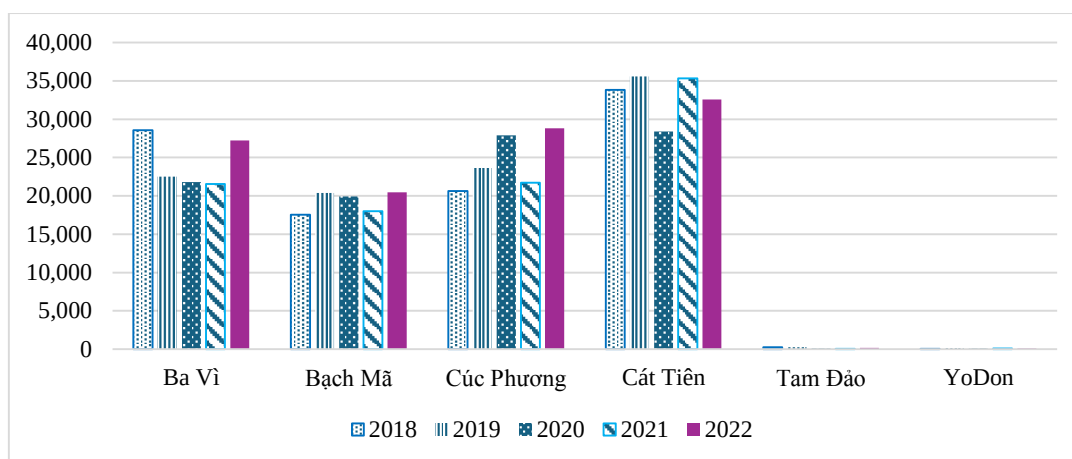


Figure 3. 2 : Total revenue of national parks under MARD (2018 - 2022) (Unit: Million VND)

Source: Compiled from Financial Reports of National Parks (2018-2022)

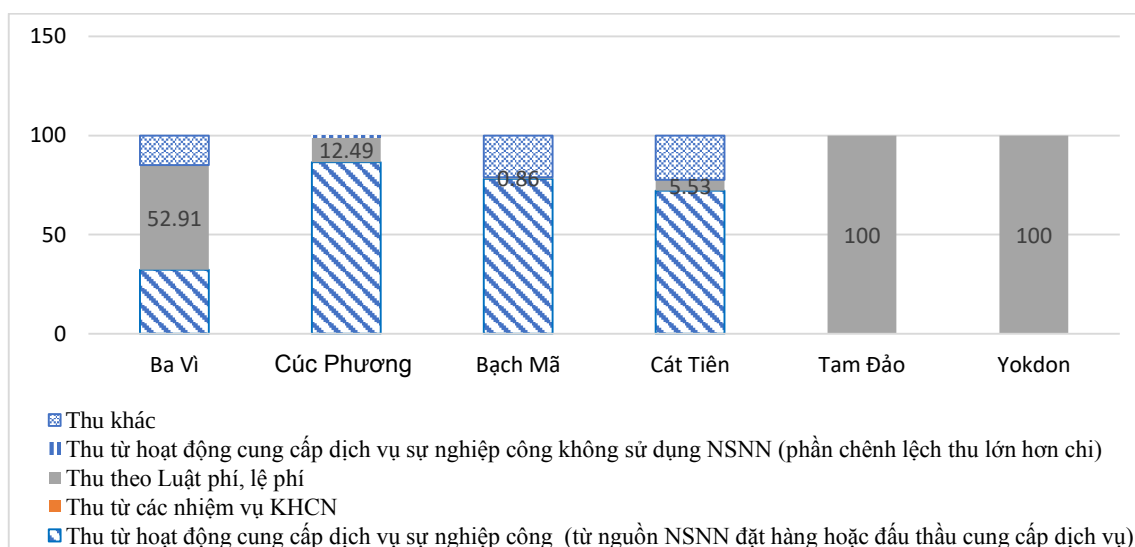


Figure 3.3 : Revenue structure of national parks under MARD in 2022 (Unit: %)

Source: Compiled from Financial Reports of National Parks, 2022

State budget

Article 4 of the 2017 Forestry Law stipulates: "The State ensures resources for the management, protection and development of special-use forests and protection forests."

The State budget is allocated to national parks through four types: salary and apparatus operation expenses, development investment expenses, expenses for irregular activities (for example, national programs and projects, etc.) and other expenses (for example, expenses to support the development of buffer zone communities). The central State budget source is quite stable and this source can be forecasted because it is balanced and allocated directly to the parks based on the number of staff and workers and the budget allocation norms approved by competent authorities according to the annual, 3-year, and 5-year plans, creating favorable conditions for national parks in forecasting and planning with the received funds. In Vietnam, forest management and biodiversity conservation are still considered public services, so the state will always allocate

a portion of the budget to national parks. In general, this is an important financial source in the autonomous revenue structure of the national parks in the study.

National parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are the most important special-use forests in Vietnam, so they always receive attention and financial support from various sources, creating favorable conditions for management. However, in the period of 2018 - 2022, the total revenue of national parks tends to decrease. The revenue of national parks is highly differentiated, Cat Tien is the national park with the largest total revenue with an average of 33.14 billion VND/year; followed by Cuc Phuong, Ba Vi national parks (about 24.5 billion VND/year), Bach Ma (19.26 billion VND/year); the 2 national parks with the lowest average revenue are Tam Dao national park with 164 million VND, Yok Don national park with 85 million VND. The large revenue is mainly concentrated in national parks with favorable natural conditions for the development of ecotourism services such as Cat Tien national park and Ba Vi national park.

In the period of 2018 - 2022, the structure of regular financial resources of the national parks is mainly revenue from the State budget (accounting for over 80%). Of which, the State budget for regular expenditure based on the number of employees and the estimated norms accounts for a large proportion (over 40%).

Among the 4 national parks classified as group 2 national parks, Ba Vi National Park with non-state budget revenue accounting for the largest proportion of total revenue at 67.75% (Figure 3.2). Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, and Cat Tien National Parks all have revenue from state budget sources for ordering or bidding for service provision (accounting for over 70%), of which Cuc Phuong National Park has the highest revenue of 24.98 billion (accounting for 86.65%), showing that most of the national parks' non-state budget service provision activities are maintained by state budget revenue.

Entrance fee revenue of national parks

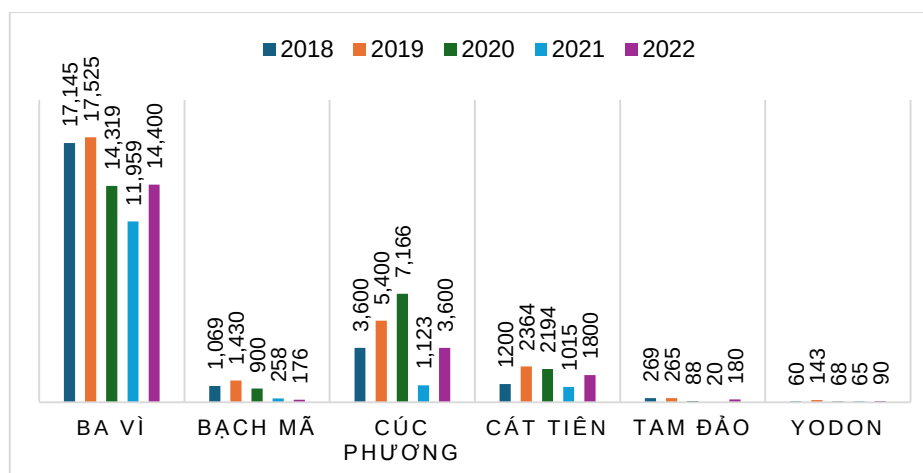
Entrance fees are one of the main sources of revenue for national parks. Circular No. 206/2016/TT-BTC dated November 9, 2016 stipulates the collection rates, collection, payment and management of fees for visiting national parks. The current collection rate for adults is 60,000 VND/visit, students: 20,000 VND/visit, children and pupils: 10,000 VND/visit. Also according to this circular, fee-collecting organizations are allowed to retain 90% of the total collected fees to cover expenses as prescribed in Clause 2, Article 5 of Decree 120/2016/ND-CP dated August 23, 2016 of the Government; pay 10% of the collected fees to the State budget according to the corresponding chapters, sections and sub-sections of the State budget directory.

The revenue structure of 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development shows that revenue from fees and charges still accounts for a low proportion and tends to decrease gradually, specifically: in 2018, Ba Vi National Park had the largest revenue of 17.14 billion VND (accounting for 60.05% of total revenue), followed by Cuc Phuong with a rate of 17.43%, Cat Tien National Park with a rate of 18.24%, Bach Ma National Park with a rate of 6%, the remaining Tam Dao and Yokdon National Parks have revenue from fees and charges that account for a small proportion (both below 2 %). By 2022, these revenue sources tend to decrease due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and are in the recovery phase, Ba Vi National Park is the national park with the largest revenue from fees and charges, only reaching 14.4 billion (accounting for 52.91%). In Tam Dao and Yok Don National Parks, this source of revenue

has almost not improved .

Figure : 3.4. Total revenue according to the Law on fees and charges of National Parks

(unit: million VND)



(Source : compiled from financial reports of national parks 2023)

Revenue from ecotourism business

According to Article 53 of the Forestry Law 2017 and Decree 156/2018/ND-CP (previously according to Decree 117 /2010/ND-CP and Decision 24/2012/QĐ-TTg), national parks in Vietnam can organize ecotourism business and service activities in one or several of the following ways: (i) National parks organize ecotourism business and service activities themselves ; (ii) National parks can use part of the forest and forestry land for organizations and individuals to lease for the purpose of ecotourism business combined with forest protection and development and natural resource conservation in accordance with approved planning and current regulations of law; (iii) National parks enter into joint ventures or partnerships with other organizations and individuals to organize ecotourism business and service activities.

Revenues from each activity vary between national parks. Ba Vi National Park has the most diverse activities, Tam Dao National Park only has environmental education services. Thanks to the ecotourism development policy in national parks, revenue from ecotourism in national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development also increases annually, along with the increasing demand for ecotourism in society . Ba Vi National Park has the highest number of visitors and revenue, while Tam Dao National Park has very few visitors and tends to decrease from 13,737 in 2016 to 5,739 in 2020. In 2020, due to the impact of the Covid epidemic, the number of tourists decreased sharply, not only in national parks but also in the general tourism industry .

Table 3.5. Ecotourism business situation in the studied national parks

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Cuc Phuong National Park					
Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	120,900	105,600	58,500	32,573	98,827
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	5,928	5.120	2,816	1,491	4,584
Ba Vi National Park					

Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	398,610	413,138	351,682	262,402	426,091
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	19,049	19,471	15,910	14,640	22,797
Tam Dao National Park					
Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	13,856	10,080	4,900	1 , 100	14,811
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	277.12	201.6	98	22	296.22
Bach Ma National Park					
Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	25 , 000	30,850	16,170	6.113	5,500
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	1,156	1,520	878	342	294
Yokdon National Park					
Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	5,383	2,303	4,737	5,800	6,289
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	576	921	630	420	1,145
Cat Tien National Park					
Total number of visitors (number of visitors)	43,419	51,685	42,971	33,598	54,080
Total tourism revenue (million VND)	11,566	12,676	7,776	6,733	13,534

(Source: Forestry Department, 2022)

Revenue from MTR leasing policy for ecotourism business

Ba Vi National Park was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development for the Pilot Project on Using Special-Use Forestry for Ecotourism Development and Vocational Education in Decision No. 5561/2002/QĐ-BNN-KL dated December 9, 2002. Decree 158/2018/ND-CP on the implementation of a number of articles of the Forestry Law introduces the concept of Forestry, detailing the content of collecting Forestry fees for ecotourism, resort and entertainment in special-use forests, protection forests and production forests. Forestry leasing policies have been developed and issued. National Parks have also approved Ecotourism Projects as the basis for leasing Forestry. Currently, Ba Vi National Park is the best unit implementing the leasing of Forestry for ecotourism business, generating a large source of revenue, contributing to raising workers' income and supporting conservation activities.

Revenue from forest environmental service payment policy:

Decree No. 05/2008/ND-CP and Decree No. 99/2010/ND-CP have created a legal basis for mobilizing, managing and using socialized capital sources for investment in forest protection and development, creating abundant financial resources, significantly reducing the burden on the State budget. After reviewing and evaluating the results achieved, on November 2, 2016, the Government issued Decree No. 147/2016/ND-CP amending and supplementing a number of articles of Decree 99/2010/ND-CP, deciding to increase the level of payment for forest environmental services for hydropower production facilities, creating a significant increase in socialized financial resources for investment in forest environmental protection and development. Payment for forest environmental services has become a major source of revenue for the Management Boards of special-use forests, protected areas and national parks.

Currently, in the 6 national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ba Vi Cat Tien National Park and Bach Ma National Park have revenue from payment for forest environmental services. Cat Tien National Park has received a large amount of funding from payment for forest

environmental services. The reason is that Cat Tien National Park is spread over 3 provinces of Dong Nai, Lam Dong, Binh Phuoc with the forest area in the river basin having Da Nhim hydropower plant, so every year Cat Tien National Park has received money for forest environmental services from 3 Forest Protection and Development Funds. The total amount of money for forest environmental services that Cat Tien National Park received in the period of 2018-2022 is 129,807 billion VND, an average of 25.97 billion VND/year. Revenue from forest environmental services is an important source of income and is used by Cat Tien National Park to carry out patrol activities, protect forest resources, and upgrade the Park's facilities. Since 2021, Cat Tien National Park has expanded the implementation of the payment mechanism for forest environmental services to the fields of industrial water production, carbon storage and absorption, contributing to increasing revenue from payment for forest environmental services.

Ba Vi National Park has revenue from payment for forest environmental services. On average, Ba Vi National Park annually earns about 764 million VND from payment for forest environmental services. Bach Ma National Park's revenue from payment for forest environmental services in 2018 was 5,806 million VND and increased steadily each year. National Parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are all special-use forests with large areas, diverse and rich natural resources of animals, and many potentials for payment for forest environmental services that can be exploited to increase revenue for the Park such as clean water supply services, soil and water conservation services, and carbon absorption and storage services; reducing greenhouse gas emissions from limiting deforestation and forest degradation, and sustainable forest management.

Funding, aid sources

This is the source of funding mobilized. The main source of funding for natural conservation activities is ODA-funded projects. However, this source of support has some limitations: it is irregular, unevenly distributed, and depends on the interests of the donors, mainly concentrated in a few large-scale national parks such as Cuc Phuong and Cat Tien National Parks, with little attention paid to small and medium-sized protected areas (under 15,000 hectares). In addition, this source of capital is showing a sharp decline as Vietnam moves into the middle-income group since 2010. National parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development have greater opportunities to access foreign aid investment projects, especially since these 6 national parks are all special-use forests with rich natural resources and high biodiversity.

General assessment: Through the analysis of information and data on the current status of financial resources at 6 national parks studied in the period of 2018-2022, it can be seen that in the revenue structure of 6 national parks, the state budget accounts for a large proportion (80-100%). In the proportion of non-state budget revenue from entrance fees, ecotourism business activities, renting forest environment for ecotourism business, paying for forest environment services, aid, sponsorship, other revenue sources still account for a low proportion. Revenue from entrance fees is a traditional source of revenue that still plays an important role in the revenue of national parks. However, the regulation of the same fee level among all national parks is also limiting the ability to increase revenue of national parks with the potential to attract tourists. Ecotourism activities are carried out in the following forms: Renting forest environment, self-organizing ecotourism, joint ventures, some national parks have done well in ecotourism activities, renting forest environment such as Cat

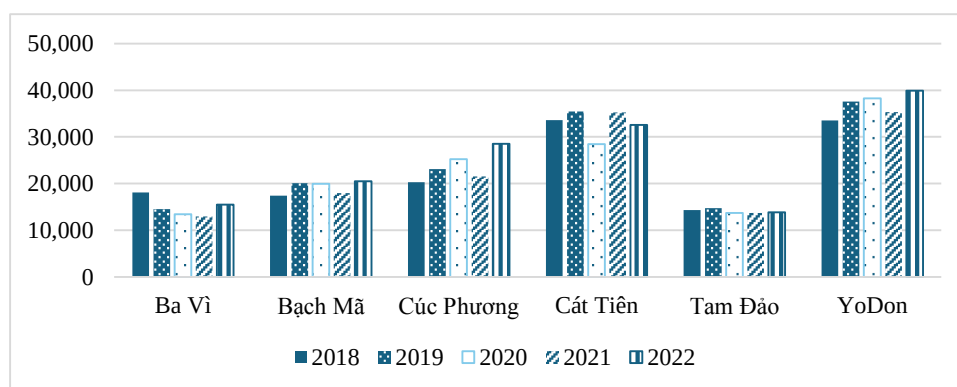
Tien, Bach Ma, Ba Vi National Parks; Cuc Phuong National Park has proactively organized ecotourism and created good revenue for the park, but Tam Dao and Yokdon National Parks, these activities have not been implemented well so the revenue for the park is also limited. However, in the structure of non-state budget revenue, revenue from entrance fees is still the main source of revenue, some national parks have additional revenue from payment for forest environmental services such as Cat Tien, Ba Vi. The remaining national parks have non-state budget revenue such as payment for environmental products, carbon absorption services... currently the national parks have not been exploited to increase revenue and are still at the potential level.

Ability to ensure regular expenditure of national parks

In the period of 2018 - 2022, the regular funding sources for the national parks are relatively stable. In particular, Ba Vi, Cat Tien and Tam Dao National Parks tend to decrease slightly with an average growth rate of 96%, 99.24% and 99.17% respectively. The remaining national parks, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma and Yok Don, tend to increase slightly with an average growth rate of 108.9%; 104.19% and 108.48% respectively. In the recent period, due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, the revenue from entrance fees of the national parks has tended to decrease, but the revenue sources from the ordered state budget have remained relatively stable. For national parks with a large proportion of revenue from tourism services such as Ba Vi, Cat Tien and Tam Dao National Parks, the funding sources for the national parks have tended to decrease. In 2022, YokDon is the national park with the largest autonomous regular expenditure budget of 39.9 billion VND, the national park with the lowest autonomous regular expenditure budget is Tam Dao at 13.86 billion VND.

Figure 3.5 : Total regular budget allocated to national parks (2018 – 2022)

(unit: million VND)



Source: Compiled from Financial Reports of National Parks (2018-2022)

3.1.2. Autonomy in allocating financial resources

***Autonomy in regular expenses**

In the period of 2016 - 2020, implementing the financial autonomy mechanism according to Decree 141/2016/ND-CP and Decision No. 441/QĐ-BNN-TC dated January 21, 2021 on granting autonomy to other economic and public service units under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with national parks that ensure regular expenditures, such as Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Cat Tien, Bach Ma national parks; State guaranteed regular expenditure for Tam dao, Yokdon national parks.

However, according to Report No. 2059/BC - TCLN - KHTC dated December 8, 2022 on the syndisseration of the financial autonomy classification plan and revenue and expenditure estimates of economic units in the period of 2023 - 2027 of the General Department of Forestry, Ba Vi National Park is the only national park with a stable and fairly solid regular expenditure guarantee rate of over 100%; Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Tien National Park has a regular expenditure guarantee rate that only reaches the prescribed level of autonomy; Tam Dao and Yokdon National Park is still completely dependent on the State budget with an extremely modest regular expenditure guarantee rate (less than 2%). Faced with difficulties from the sharp decline in revenue due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the gradual decrease in revenue from the State budget, the Report proposes that in the period of 2023 - 2027, only Ba Vi National Park will be classified as a type 2 national park, while Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Tien National Park will be transferred from a type 2 national park to a type 3 national park. This shows that except for Ba Vi National Park, the remaining national parks are still concerned about their ability to self-finance because they are facing many difficulties in ensuring their ability to self-finance as required due to the unstable revenue of the units, which depends heavily on objective factors, while having to perform the assigned functions and tasks for sustainable forest protection and development.

****Self-employed salary payment***

Regarding the structure of regular expenditure, the proportion of expenditure on salaries and wages accounts for the majority (about 40-83%) (Table 1) and is very difficult to cut because the number of staff is currently quite small compared to the need to protect national parks over large areas such as Cuc Phuong National Park with an area of 22,408 hectares has only 102 management staff, Tam Dao National Park with an area of 32,877 hectares has 92 management staff. Ba Vi National Park has 70 management staff for an area of 9,702 hectares, the proportion of expenditure on salaries and wages accounts for about 42-64%. In the remaining national parks, this proportion is even higher, from 60-84%.

**** Autonomy in professional activities***

Decision No. 254/QĐ-TTg stipulates activities funded by the State budget including: Forestry and Forestry Development and Conservation; conservation, rescue, ecological and forest resource restoration, forest investigation and planning, statistics, inventory in the forestry sector and museums, and sample preservation in the forestry sector (Prime Minister, 2017) . The current financial resources of national parks only meet the essential needs of human expenses, professional activities have not received due attention and are still largely dependent on the financial resources of the unit. For national parks with good revenue, the proportion of expenditure for professional activities can be increased. Ba Vi National Park has revenue from many sources outside the state budget, therefore, the proportion of professional expenses is from 22-33% of total regular expenditure; The proportion of professional expenditure is also high in Bach Ma National Park (18-25%), Cuc Phuong (28-40%), Cat Tien (10-23%), while in national parks that do not have revenue sources that depend entirely on the state budget such as Yokdon and Tam Dao National Parks, the proportion of expenditure for professional activities is very low (under 2%) because the current state budget only meets the minimum needs of forest management, protection and biodiversity conservation.

**** Autonomous investment spending:***

Currently, no national park in Vietnam has self-funded investment. Currently, all 6 national parks under study have had their sustainable forest management plans approved, including plans to mobilize financial

resources to meet the capital investment needs for infrastructure . However, in reality, the state budget investment capital in recent years has been cut, causing difficulties for national parks in building infrastructure, especially for ecotourism activities.

In summary, currently, national parks are allocating available funds for activities: salary, apparatus, professional activities, and investment. The proportion of salary expenditure accounts for the majority of total regular expenditure for national parks. Expenditure for professional activities is still low. No national park is autonomous in investment expenditure. According to current regulations, the level of autonomy in resource allocation of national parks is still low.

3.1.2. Autonomy in using financial resources

** About additional income expenditure*

In recent years, the financial results of the National Parks have not been high, so although most units have paid additional salaries to employees, the units have a modest increase in income coefficient, less than 1 time the salary of the rank and position. In particular, Ba Vi National Park is the Park with the highest additional salary income for staff, at 8 million VND/month . Ba Vi National Park has spent additional income for cadres, civil servants and workers, increasing salaries from 0.5 to 0.7 times the basic salary and allowances of the unit, which is an average of 3-7 million VND/person/year. In the period of 2022-2026, still affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and some other impacts of the economy, the Park can only plan to spend additional salaries for cadres, civil servants and workers from 0.5-0.8 times the basic salary and allowances of the unit . Cuc Phuong National Park deducts from the fee source left over from ticket and tourism services, revenue from production and business (plants, animal breeds), the income increase for staff is 3-7 million VND/person/ year .

** Autonomy in setting up and using funds*

Among the 06 National Parks studied, Ba Vi National Park is the only Park classified as a Group 2 National Park (autonomous unit for regular expenditure) in both the 2018 - 2022 and 2023 - 2027 periods. Ba Vi National Park is the National Park with the highest level of autonomy among the 06. National Park. In the period of 2018-2022, Ba Vi National Park has the highest allocation for the Development Fund of Career Activities compared to the remaining National Parks and is consistent over the years (2018-2022). In fact, due to the very narrow difference between revenue and expenditure, the allocation of funds is not uniform among National Parks.

3. 2. Factors affecting financial autonomy at National Parks

3.2.1. Objective factors

Policy and Mechanism

The summary of the results of the Assessment of the current system of policies related to the National Park TCTC is shown in the following Table.

Table 3.16: Assessment of the current system of policies related to TCTC National Parks

T T	Content	n 30	Evaluate					Average score
			1	2	3	4	5	
			Very inapp ropria te	Not suitab le	Medi um	Fit	Very suitab le	
1	System, complete	SL	0	6	18	6	0	3.00

		%	0	20.00	60.00	20.00	0	
2	Synchronous, consistent	SL	0	4	21	5	0	3.03
		%	0	13.33	70.00	16.67	0	
3	Updated, timely	SL	0	4	21	6	0	3.17
		%	0	13.33	70.00	20.00	0	
4	Practical	SL	0	8	13	9	0	3.03
		%	0	26.67	43.33	30.00	0	

(Source: Author's syndisseration from survey results, 2022)

However, the results of in-depth surveys at national parks show that policy mechanisms are still creating some obstacles to promote financial autonomy of the studied national parks. Ba Vi , Cat Tien, Cuc Phuong , and Bach Ma national parks have implemented a number of ecotourism activities to generate revenue for the park, however, activities to attract investors are very limited. The state budget is not allocated for investment activities in the infrastructure of national parks, moreover, when national parks want to attract investors, they need land or potential facilities. However, the leasing of assets according to the provisions of Decree No. 156/2018/ND-CP of the Government guiding the implementation of the forestry law must be approved by competent authorities. And according to the research results, no agency has approved these projects due to the legal risks.

State policies, standards and norms:

The State's regimes, standards and norms are the basis for public service units to develop internal spending regulations to ensure independence and autonomy as well as the basis for making annual budget estimates. The higher the level of autonomy of a unit, the more expanded the spending norms are, and even the group 3 units (partially autonomous in regular spending) have a 4-level differentiation. Units with a level of autonomy in regular spending of 70% or more can spend more than the spending norms issued by the competent State management agency, but must spend from public service revenue sources .

In fact, the process of implementing norms, standards and estimates at national parks in the past time encountered some difficulties and obstacles affecting the ability of national parks to manage their resources, such as: Technical and economic norms and professional contracts are still low and rigid ; Funding for biodiversity monitoring, museums and animal conservation and rescue activities is still very limited due to the lack of technical and economic norms to implement the ordering mechanism from the state budget .

Characteristics of operations of public service units

In the context that National Parks must comply with the same requirements as other public service providers in the agricultural and rural areas, the National Parks are obliged to comply with the reform processes outlined in current regulations: Strengthening financial autonomy, avoiding complete dependence on the State budget, aiming to increasingly be able to ensure regular and investment expenditures; mobilizing more "social contributions" (using fees and charges) to provide public services. In return, these processes are expected to give the National Park Management Board greater autonomy in management and operations, organizational arrangements, personnel, etc. resources, planning and financial management - including planning and managing expenditure and revenue, as well as pricing public services according to market mechanisms.

It is important to note that National Park Management Boards cannot be considered as other public service providers, because National Park services differ in several important respects from most other public services. Special-use forests are public assets managed by the state for the common national and global benefit

and the state is committed to ensuring resources for the management, protection and development of these forests.

Relationship and management hierarchy between public service units and management agencies

The relationship and management hierarchy between public service units and management agencies directly determine the financial management mechanism and autonomy of the unit, which is a factor affecting the financial mechanism of public service units with revenue.

Management capacity of governing bodies

This is a factor that creates an environment to promote changes in investment and development of public service provision activities in national parks. Six national parks under the direct management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. However, national parks are also located in localities and are subject to local administrative management. Therefore, the capacity and management decisions of the governing body affect the ability of the national park to provide public services.

3.2. 2. Subjective factors

Capacity of National Parks

- *Human resources*: Human resources at the National Park under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development include staff, workers and employees on the payroll, and on contracts with intermediate or higher qualifications . With qualifications and ages, it shows that human resources at the National Parks basically meet the health and professional requirements to perform the main functions and tasks of the National Park, which are forest protection and development, and biodiversity conservation .

- *National Park management capacity* : To be able to develop sustainably, national parks must improve the operational management capacity (with 3 main activities: forest protection and development; biodiversity conservation; financial sustainability) of these units. Management is a system of checking, monitoring, and balancing resources with the participation of many subjects both inside and outside the national park, including: owners, managers, workers, communities, tourists... Whether a national park operates well or not and whether it achieves strategic goals or not depends on the operational management capacity of the national park of the management subjects. At the time of the study, all six national parks complied with the regulations of the management agency on forest protection and development, biodiversity conservation, development of ecotourism activities and other activities of the national park. However, the management and operation model of national parks follows the model of public service providers, but the public goods and services provided must be able to compete with enterprises. This requires national parks to improve their management level for both public service provision activities using the state budget and public service provision activities not using the state budget.

- *Infrastructure conditions of the National Parks*: According to reports from the National Parks, most of the machinery, equipment and houses of the units of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were equipped and built many years ago and are now broken and seriously degraded, but the maintenance budget is very limited. The leasing of assets requires the development of a plan to submit to the competent authorities, but there are not enough documents guiding the implementation, so the National Parks have not implemented it. Therefore, the management and use of existing assets does not ensure the service of professional activities and does not promote the advantage of attracting tourism, so the revenue is also limited.

-Thing natural resources facts :

Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Tam Dao , Yokdon, Bach Ma, Cat Tien National Parks have the advantage of being unique nature reserves with very high biodiversity, many rare and endemic species (rarely found in any other area of Vietnam). Possessing many values of natural landscapes (caves, ancient trees, ...), diversity of ecosystems, cultural and historical values, the National Parks have long become attractive tourist destinations for domestic and international visitors .

3.3 . General assessment

**** Assessment of level of autonomy***

The studied national parks have been classified into the level of financial autonomy in Group 2 - Units with autonomy in regular expenditures (Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, Cat Tien) and Group 4 - Units with regular expenditures guaranteed by the State budget (Yokdon, Tam Dao). Although classified into the levels of financial autonomy according to the classification of Decree 60/2021/ND-CP, the level of financial autonomy is not yet sustainable for Group 2 and for Group 4 there is no financial autonomy. In the period of 2023-2027, 3 national parks Bach Ma, Cuc Phuong, Cat Tien proposed to be transferred to Group 3 - Units with partial autonomy in regular expenditures. Assessment of the autonomy contents (autonomy in mobilizing and creating financial resources, autonomy in allocating and autonomy in using financial resources) shows that the level of financial autonomy of national parks is still low and unsustainable.

Regarding exploitation and revenue generation: Currently, in the vast majority of national parks, revenue from the state budget still accounts for the majority; Investment in infrastructure and basic facilities necessary to attract new business activities and generate additional revenue from tourism services is still extremely limited; Socialized revenue sources such as revenue from payment for forest environmental services, revenue from business activities and forest environmental services still account for a small proportion. In non-state budget revenue sources, revenue from fees and charges remains mainly based on revenue and tends to decrease sharply.

Regarding the implementation of regular expenditure tasks: Regarding the expenditure structure, most of the regular expenditures are for human resources (salaries for performing forest protection and development), professional expenditures have decreased in proportion; expenditures for biodiversity conservation are very limited, expenditures for business activities and eco tourism services are almost non-existent.

Regarding fund contributions and additional salary payments: Out of 6 national parks, there are four unites (Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma and Cat Tien) have established a fund for career development and additional salary payments. Yokdon has established this fund in 2018, 2019, 2020 is 227, 600 and 800 million VND respectively.

Regarding the ability to ensure the level of financial management as classified: The national parks have not ensured a stable level of financial management as classified. Except for Ba Vi National Park, which continues to be in group 2, the national parks (Cuc Phuong, Bach Ma, and Cat Tien) all proposed to switch from self-sufficient regular expenditure units to self-sufficient partial regular expenditure units in the next budget stabilization period (2023-2027) with the proposed autonomy levels of 78%, 82%, and 84%, respectively, for regular expenditure tasks according to the functions and tasks of each national park.

*** Existence and causes**

Although the State has had many policies and strategies to open up financial resources for public service units and national parks, analysis shows that autonomy is still low, national parks have not really created sustainable sources of revenue outside the state budget, and have not yet exploited potential sources of revenue.

Based on the results-based management model to analyze the financial autonomy aspects of the national parks as follows:

Define the goal:

Every year, the National Parks develop plans to carry out the tasks assigned under Decision No. 254/2017/QĐ-TT, including: forest protection and development, conservation, rescue, ecological and forest resource restoration; forest investigation and planning; statistics and inventory in the forestry sector; museum and sample preservation in the forestry sector. These are the main goals of the National Parks in biodiversity conservation. According to regulations, the State will allocate funds to carry out the assigned tasks. However, there are no clear criteria for the level of funding allocation to ensure that the National Parks perform well the assigned tasks.

National parks also do not set targets for non-state budget financial resources to support the implementation of assigned tasks. However, in the context of the state budget being cut each year (according to the policy of cutting 10% of the allocated resources for public service providers each year), national parks are forced to have plans to increase non-state budget revenue sources and they must develop projects and plans to submit to competent authorities for approval. With the requirement to increase autonomy and reduce dependence on the state budget, a number of policies have been developed to support the achievement of this goal. However, the lack of policy synchronization, from regulations on asset leasing management, regulations on joint ventures and associations, regulations on apparatus and human resource management, are all inconsistent, even binding, leading to difficulties for national parks to increase financial resources, or ensure non-state budget financial resources in a sustainable manner, and enhance the capacity for financial management.

Monitoring and evaluating results:

There are no regulations on indicators to assess the level of completion of assigned tasks. For example, some indicators are: the number of species of animals and plants conserved and protected, the area of protected forests, the integrity (improvement) of the ecosystem, revenue from sightseeing tickets, revenue from entrance tickets, revenue from leasing forestry environment for ecotourism business, payment for forest environmental services, reduction in the number of violations of forest protection work, etc. The provision of indicators to assess the level of completion is the basis for management agencies to monitor and assess the level of completion of the work of the National Park, and at the same time have a mechanism to handle or remove obstacles if the National Parks do not achieve the set goals. When monitoring and evaluating well, it promotes the delegation of authority to the National Parks to have creative solutions, mobilize resources proactively to complete assigned tasks and enhance autonomy, including financial autonomy. The current budget allocation method has only shifted from allocation to budget allocation without being based on implementation results, leading to failure to truly promote and improve the effectiveness of the financial autonomy.

Effective management of financial resources

In the expenditure structure, most of the regular expenditures of the national parks are for human resources at the basic salary level (salary for performing the work of protection and development of forests), professional expenses have decreased in proportion; expenditures for conservation are very limited, and expenditures for business and service activities of the national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are almost non-existent. Most of the machiner, equipment and houses of the national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development were equipped and built many years ago and are now broken and seriously degraded, but the maintenance budget is very limited. The number of staff of the units is still much less than required, the budget for paying for contracts under Decree No. 68/2000/ND-CP, streamlining the payroll is not provided by the State budget, so the autonomous units with regular expenditures have great difficulty in financial solutions to solve the regime for employees, facing the lack of human resources to work according to the assigned functions and tasks.

Management capacity

Results-based management (RBM) requires national park managers to have capacity in planning (conservation and finance) as well as management capacity, information technology level. Although national parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development are allocated budget for national park activities by the State budget, however, the staff are mainly forest rangers, forestry officers, and some finance officers. The capacity to develop financial/business strategies and plans, marketing, annual and medium-term capital mobilization of national parks has not yet met the requirements; budget planning and spending have not been effective in association with sustainable forest management plans .

3. 4. Orientation and solutions to promote financial autonomy in national parks

3.4.1. General orientation on financial autonomy for national parks in Vietnam

National Parks are oriented towards Strengthening financial management, reducing total dependence on the State budget, towards increasingly being able to ensure regular and investment expenditures; mobilizing more "social contributions" (using fees and charges) to provide public services. In return, these processes are expected to give the National Park Management Boards greater autonomy in management and operations, organizational arrangements, human resources/resources, financial planning and management - including planning and management of expenditure and income, as well as pricing of public services according to market mechanisms.

Orienting public finance policies for national parks based on the specificity of the services provided by national parks, many of which are unique public services that cannot be socialized, monetized, priced or adjusted according to market principles, are very important policies .

3.4.2. Solutions to promote financial autonomy in national parks

Based on the analysis of the current financial autonomy of National Parks, assess the feasibility of increasing financial resources from existing revenue sources, especially the two main revenue sources of the Parks, which are revenue from the State budget and revenue from ecotourism activities. At the same time, it is necessary to analyze financial solutions and tools based on the characteristics of special-use forests. National parks are public assets managed by the State for the common interests of the country and the world, and the

State commits to ensuring resources to manage, protect, and develop these forests. Most of the public services provided by National Park Management Boards belong to the group of public services funded by the State budget according to the provisions of Decision No. 254/QĐ-TTg. Very few services meet the criteria of public services not funded by the State budget, that is, they are likely to have the participation of the private sector, have high potential for socialization, or are priced according to market mechanisms. National Park services are often associated with landscapes of extremely high biodiversity value, often highly sensitive to human impacts, and with concentrations of species and habitats that are vulnerable, threatened and/or of special concern. Mechanisms for mobilizing and generating financial resources for national parks should ensure that any financial mechanism or revenue source used ensures biodiversity conservation objectives and does not run counter to biodiversity conservation objectives and does not negatively impact local communities.

In that context, to ensure sustainable financial resources for national parks, improve comprehensive financial management, and achieve the main goal of national parks which is biodiversity conservation, some solutions are proposed as follows:

- Ensure stable revenue, maintain the leading role of the State budget

The State needs to ensure the provision of necessary resources and support for national parks to perform their assigned tasks based on the principle of results-based management. Goods and services provided by national parks are different from other common goods, are non-rival, non-excludable, indivisible, often indirect or intangible, have no clear market or price, or can be realized often concentrated for many beneficiaries and users over a wide geographical area. National parks are special-use forests that are public assets managed by the State for the common benefit of the country and the world, and the State needs to commit to ensuring management resources to protect and develop these forests (GIZ, 2021). Therefore, in the coming time, the State budget must still be the main source of budget. At the same time, for national parks, the financial autonomy should not be understood as requiring national parks to be completely self-sufficient in financial resources. The State assigns tasks to National Parks. The State is the subject that purchases goods and services and is responsible for providing stable financial resources for National Parks .

- Ensure the implementation of financial autonomy in national parks

Research on financial autonomy in 6 national parks shows that the national parks have not ensured a stable level of financial autonomy as classified, national parks such as Tam Dao and Yokdon are still completely dependent on the state budget to ensure regular expenditures. None of the national parks have guaranteed investment expenditures, and when there is no opportunity to invest in facilities and infrastructure, they cannot attract tourists and cannot increase revenue sources for national park conservation. To effectively implement financial autonomy, a comprehensive financial autonomy model for national parks needs to ensure that national parks are autonomous in terms of human resources, apparatus, and autonomy in professional activities. Based on the results-based management model (RBM), there must be a balance between rights and obligations, autonomy and obligations to perform tasks assigned by the state, and the results of implementation must be measured based on indicators: protected forest area, number of conserved species... and national parks need to have the obligation to complete tasks, and a mechanism to evaluate and reward national parks that successfully complete assigned tasks.

- Increase non -budgetary financial resources through: (i) maximizing the efficiency of ecotourism business and services in the form of self-employment; (ii) At the same time, reviewing and adjusting entrance fees and service prices ; (iii) Increasing revenue attraction from grants/aids from domestic and foreign

organizations and individuals; (iii) Implementing the form of leasing forest environment; (iv) Exploiting the potential to generate revenue from payment for ecotourism services from providing ecotourism services, ecotourism business, recreation, land protection, water regulation and carbon sequestration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

The dissertation has supplemented the theoretical framework on financial management, content and principles of financial management for national parks in Vietnam. From the perspective of financial management, financial management is the initiative in operating and self-determination of financial activities within the legal framework on financial management with The purpose of financial autonomy is to contribute to enhancing the initiative in mobilizing, allocating and using financial resources, proactively using assets and human resources to develop and improve the quantity and quality of public service provision activities.

The results of the assessment of the current status of financial services in national parks under the management of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development show that the level of financial services in national parks is not stable according to classification, some national parks are completely dependent on the state budget (Yokdon, Tam Dao). National parks mobilize revenue from non-state budget sources from ecotourism activities, renting forest land for ecotourism business, aid, sponsorship, and payment for forest environmental services. Some national parks have quite good revenue sources from non-state budget sources such as Ba Vi, Cuc Phuong, Cat Tien and Bach Ma. However, the revenue sources are still not stable and sustainable. Regarding revenue from payment for forest environmental services, national parks are still in the potential stage, it is necessary to continue to have activities to create new revenue sources, especially for forest carbon absorption and storage services. The heavy dependence on the state budget while the state budget only meets the minimum needs for forest management and protection and biodiversity conservation. There are many activities and fields related to the issue of forest management and biodiversity conservation that currently do not have or do not have enough funding to implement, such as: scientific research, animal rescue, monitoring forest resource developments, biodiversity monitoring, traditional education, awareness raising, etc.

In the allocation and use of financial resources, the regular expenditure structure of national parks is mainly on salaries and apparatus. The proportion of expenditure for professional activities is very low. Given the important role of national parks in protecting and maintaining forest ecosystems and forest biodiversity over large areas and scales, this regular expenditure is very difficult to cut, in the context of increasing cost needs and requirements for reducing dependence on the State budget, requiring national parks to have a strategy to maintain stable revenue from the State budget, while diversifying revenue sources.

Completing a comprehensive financial autonomy model in terms of human resources, apparatus, and expertise is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the National Park financial autonomy.

Because financial autonomy is a new issue, with profound theoretical and practical significance, it needs to be further studied in the next phase. Collecting data and documents as well as conducting in-depth research has encountered many difficulties and limitations. Some issues that the topic has not yet studied and mentioned such as approaches to sustainable strategies, financial planning, as well as determining financial

needs for national parks... will be suggestions for the author's next studies in the near future.

2. Recommendations

2.1. For the Government

There is direction from relevant ministries and branches to remove obstacles and difficulties in implementing TCTC of public service units and national parks, ensuring the goal of conserving forest ecosystems of national and global significance.

2.2. For the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has submitted to the Prime Minister Decision No. 254/QĐ-TTg dated February 22, 2017 promulgating the list of public services using the state budget in the economic and other sectors. Accordingly, in the forestry sector, there are five public services using the state budget, including: (i) Forest protection and development; (ii) Conservation, rescue, and restoration of forest ecology and resources; (iii) Investigation and planning in the forestry sector; (iv) Statistics and inventories in the forestry sector; (v) Museums and sample preservation in the forestry sector. However, up to now, the implementation of assigning tasks and ordering the implementation of public services is still facing difficulties.

- Propose that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development urge the review and development of technical and economic norms applicable to forestry services in the forestry sector as a basis for calculating adequate prices and fees for forestry services as a basis for allocating state budget estimates, improving the operational efficiency of national parks and maintaining stable state budget sources for national parks.

- Strengthen the synchronous coordination of ministries, branches, central and local state management agencies in implementing the autonomous mechanism in public service units in general and national parks in particular.

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development continues to review existing problems and obstacles in implementing the TCTC policy for national parks to make appropriate recommendations and adjustments, especially for special services of national parks.

- There are solutions to complete the payment policy for forest environmental services: Currently, the payment policy for forest environmental services has only been implemented for 2/5 forest environmental services: (i) Protecting land, limiting erosion and sedimentation of lakes, rivers and streams; (ii) Regulating and maintaining water resources for production and social life. The remaining forest environmental services are still in the testing phase. For the two services that have been implemented, the new payment level is calculated at 40 - 50% of the actual cost. Accelerate the completion of payment mechanisms for forest environmental services for the services of (i) Regulating and maintaining water resources for production; (ii) Absorbing and storing forest carbon, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by measures to prevent forest degradation, reduce forest area and develop sustainable forests; (iii) Protecting natural landscapes and conserving biodiversity of forest ecosystems for tourism services; (iv) Services providing spawning grounds, food sources and natural seeds, using water from forests for aquaculture.

LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS RELATED TO THE THESIS

STT	Articles, works
01	Tran Quang Bao, Dao Lan Phuong, Bui Thi Minh Nguyet, Nguyen Minh Dao, Nguyen Thi Hong Thanh, <i>Financial policies in business activities and ecotourism services in National Parks and nature reserves in Vietnam: issues raised</i> , Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development 6 127-134 2019
02	Tran Quang Bao, Nguyen Minh Dao, Bui Thi Minh Nguyet, Dao Lan Phuong, Nguyen Thi Hong Thanh, Nguyen Trong Cuong, <i>Solutions to create sustainable financial mechanisms in ecotourism business and services in national parks and nature reserves in Vietnam</i> , Journal of Economics and Forecasting 36 141-146 2019
03	Bui Thi Minh Nguyet, Nguyen Thi Hong Thanh, Nguyen Thanh Hieu, Pham Van Huan: <i>Ecotourism business in special-use forests in Vietnam, current situation and solutions</i> , Economic and Forecasting Journal No. 18, 158-162, 2020
04	Bui Thi Minh Nguyet, Dao Lan Phuong, Nguyen Thi Hong Thanh, <i>Financial autonomy of National Parks under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: Current situation and solutions</i> , Journal of Economics and Development, (324), 78-87. 2024