



## ● *Petroleum Development Oman in the Omani desert*

### Working to protect the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary—a UNESCO World Heritage Site

*The Arabian Oryx Sanctuary (AOS) was established by Royal Decree in 1996 and declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site later the same year. The Sanctuary, part of which overlaps with one of Petroleum Development Oman LLC's (PDO's) areas of operation, is located in the central plateau of the Omani desert, some 500 kilometres south of the capital Muscat. It is home to a wide variety of wildlife species including the Arabian Oryx (Oryx leuoryx), which was re-introduced to the wild in 1982. The area also contains important archaeological sites, geological formations and areas of scenic beauty.*



#### **Sanctuary management**

Overall responsibility for the management of the AOS lies with the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources, while the project for reintroduction of the Arabian Oryx comes under the Diwan of Royal Court. The AOS is of significant national and international importance. Following its inclusion in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the authorities initiated the required studies to enable plans to be drawn up for the appropriate management of the Sanctuary. A

land-use study was carried out from which a management plan was produced. Under the plan, the area would be divided into five separate administrative zones to facilitate the management of the Sanctuary (see map, below left).

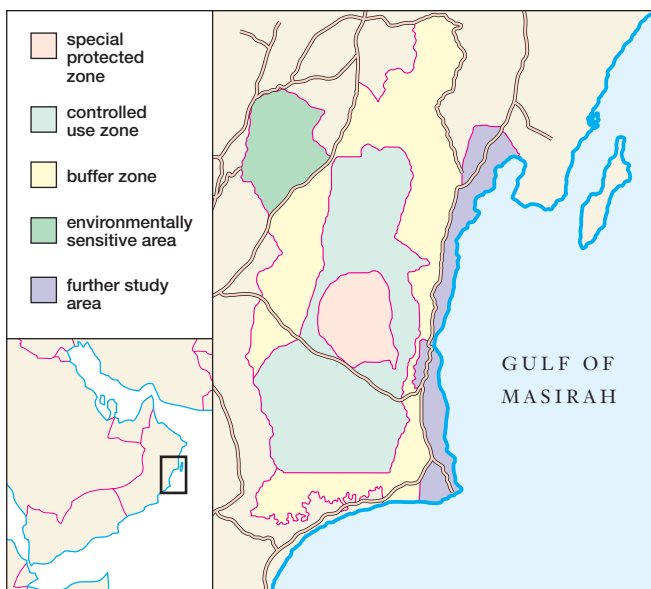
#### **PDO's biodiversity policy**

PDO maintains a high reputation in the Sultanate of Oman as an environmentally responsible operator. Society increasingly expects business to accept greater responsibilities in the areas of environmental protection, resource management and social justice. The case for action is therefore driven by PDO's commitment to both biodiversity and the sustainable development aspirations of the Sultanate of Oman. To reinforce this, in 1999 PDO was the first exploration and production company to obtain the ISO14001 environmental certification.

PDO's operations extend over large and remote areas of Oman. About 1000 kilometres separate the Company's southernmost field from its marine export terminal at Mina al Fahal, Muscat. Biodiversity, a common heritage of mankind, is an important aspect of PDO's operation. In this respect the company has worked closely with the authorities on the conservation of the AOS with the following outcomes:

- cessation of activities in the core sanctuary area;
- guidelines established on how to operate in controlled zones of the Sanctuary; and
- partnership in environmental education with AOS management to enhance environmental awareness.

#### **The sanctuary's five administration zones**





The Arabian Oryx (*Oryx leuorox*) is one of a number of species present in the sanctuary.

### Cessation of activities in core area

In accordance with UNESCO guidelines, core zones of protected areas have to be exclusively reserved for the conservation of, and as a refuge for, the Arabian Oryx, Gazelle, Ibex and other wildlife in times of drought or other adverse conditions, thus ensuring their long-time survival. In support of the company's commitment to the guidelines, PDO has signed an agreement with the Ministry of Oil and Gas not to carry out exploration and production activities in the core protected area for a period of five years from 2000 to 2005.

### Guidelines to operate in the controlled use zone

The controlled use zone encompasses tracts of land containing other important biological resources (including habitat regularly used by the Oryx), wilderness areas, scenery of exceptional beauty, and sites of geological and archaeological interest. Access would be allowed, but controlled, and the nature of development activities would need to be compatible with achieving conservation aims.

Guidelines have been developed for oil and gas exploration and production activities on a sustainable basis, and address issues such as accommodation and office camps, operations and general activities, as outlined below.

#### Accommodation and office camps

- No long-term camps or permanent office buildings.
- Temporary camps may be established with approval.
- Domestic waste must be collected and either incinerated at the camp site or disposed of at approved sites.
- Vehicle and machinery waste must be removed and disposed of in official rubbish dumps.
- Latrines and soak-away pits must be covered to prevent access by wildlife, and must be properly closed before departure.
- No grading or levelling of camp sites without approval.

#### Operations in the controlled zone

- No earth moving without approval.
- No road construction without approval.
- Domestic movement only on existing tracks.
- No removal, damage or cutting of vegetation allowed.
- Seismic activities must avoid areas of vegetation.
- Pipelines should not restrict animal movements.
- Contact WOP immediately if Oryx herds are in the area of seismic activities, and ensure every effort is made to avoid disturbing them.
- Avoid creation of multiple tracks—i.e. use existing tracks.
- All rubbish, signs and markers to be removed on completion of operation, and rubbish to be disposed of at approved sites.

#### General and observation

- No interference with or disturbance of wild animals at any time.
- No pollution or removal of water from standing pools or wells.
- Report Oryx sightings and other threatened species. These include: Sand Gazelle (Reem); Houbara Bustard; Sand Cat; Nubian Ibex; Arabian Gazelle; Caracal; Rueppell's, Sand Fox; and Spiny-tailed Lizard.
- The sanctuary is home to sunken woodland of *Cordia sinensis* shrubs, located in the sinkhole of Teygit Hamiyat. This plant species is nationally exclusive to Oman, and activities in the area should be restricted.
- Oil companies shall be totally responsible for the activities of any contractors or subcontractors employed by them, and shall ensure adequate and effective supervision of these contractors and subcontractors to ensure compliance with the above.

**PDO has implemented strict guidelines to ensure the Sanctuary's threatened species are protected.**





### Partnership in environmental education

PDO has been involved in, and actively continues to develop, environmental education and awareness through projects and publications. Working with the AOS has significantly enhanced the general level of environmental awareness. Some successful partnership activities jointly launched by PDO and AOS are described below.

#### *Visitor information centre*

The most significant project was upgrading the existing visitor centre with interpretation facilities that can be used by visitors with minimum supervision. The facility will be used to promote eco-tourism, and as an educational tool for school children and students visiting Jaluni at the AOS field headquarters.

#### *Arabian Oryx Sanctuary poster and booklets*

The poster was another successful joint project, which resulted in the publication of an illustrated educational booklet, not only for the AOS project but for the desert environment as whole.



**PDO is actively involved in education programmes which promote environmental awareness.**

#### *Desert ecology training*

A desert ecology course has been developed, aiming to raise the awareness of field staff, such as the seismic crew, flow line construction teams and drill-site preparation crew. The two-day course includes lectures, videos and exercises, followed by site visits to an ecologically sensitive area such as the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary or desert woodlands.