

RESERVAS PARTICULARES DO PATRIMÔNIO NATURAL

Future Vision – Private Natural Heritage Reserves (RPPNs) of Chapada dos Veadeiros 2050

1. Introduction

Chapada dos Veadeiros is one of the most symbolic and biodiverse regions of the Brazilian Cerrado. Located in northeastern Goiás, its landscapes bring together mountain ranges, wetlands, and springs that feed important river basins, sustaining ecosystems, cultures, and diverse ways of life. However, the region has been facing increasing pressure from the expanding agribusiness frontier across the Cerrado. Habitat loss, the decline of fauna and flora species, and the alteration of water bodies have become recurrent threats affecting both human and non-human communities in recent years.

In this context, the *Reservas Particulares do Patrimônio Natural* (Private Natural Heritage Reserves – RPPNs) have become essential instruments for conservation on private lands, integrating the efforts of landowners, civil society organizations, and public institutions.

Over the past decades, Chapada has established itself as a living laboratory of socio-environmental innovation, where conservation intersects with nature-based tourism, scientific research, and cultural appreciation. The creation of 51 RPPNs, along with the steady rise of new proposals for recognition, reflects a growing movement of commitment to protecting the Cerrado. These private reserves not only safeguard ecosystems but also help strengthen a sustainability-driven local economy.

The Network of RPPN Owners of Chapada dos Veadeiros thus emerges as a space for coordination, learning, and belonging, connecting people and territories around a shared vision for the future. This synthesis seeks to articulate that collective horizon, weaving together the insights gathered in participatory workshops,

the technical assessments conducted, and the inspiration drawn from the voices of those who care for the Cerrado.

2. Territorial Context and Transformations

The microregion of Chapada dos Veadeiros comprises eight municipalities – Alto Paraíso de Goiás, Campos Belos, Cavalcante, Colinas do Sul, Nova Roma, Monte Alegre de Goiás, São João d'Aliança, and Teresina de Goiás – and includes a set of protected areas such as the Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park, the Águas do Paraíso State Park, the Chapada de Nova Roma Ecological Station, the Pouso Alto Environmental Protection Area (APA), and the RPPNs, which together safeguard more than 26,000 hectares of native vegetation.

Historically shaped by cycles of mining and livestock production, the Chapada has been undergoing an economic and social transition for several decades. Ecotourism – intertwined with spirituality, well-being, and environmental education – has become one of the region's main drivers of development, fostering local businesses, capacity-building initiatives, and new sustainable production models.

This dynamism, however, coexists with social inequalities, limited infrastructure, and territorial management challenges.

A variety of factors have been driving changes in the territory, some positive and others negative:

- **Natural factors**, such as climate variability, ecosystem disturbance, and an increase in wildfires;
- **Economic factors**, linked to the expansion of tourism and real estate speculation;
- **Social factors**, resulting from population growth and the cultural strengthening of the Kalunga communities;
- **Political-institutional factors**, associated with advances in conservation policies and land regularization;
- **Technological factors**, driven by new tools for monitoring, communication, and scientific research.

Despite progress in environmental protection, the region continues to face intense pressure from deforestation, agricultural expansion, and illegal land subdivision, all of which threaten ecological connectivity and water resources. Recent studies¹ indicate that rivers in the Cerrado may lose up to 34% of their water flow by 2050 if current degradation rates persist – placing Chapada in a state of alert and highlighting its strategic responsibility for national water security.

3. Potentials and Challenges

Chapada dos Veadeiros brings together a unique set of ecological, social, and economic assets that make it a national and international reference. The distinctiveness of its natural and cultural heritage, the multiplicity of traditional knowledge systems, and the presence of important educational and research institutions form the foundation of a vibrant and resilient landscape. Within this context, the RPPNs operate as bridges between public and private conservation efforts, strengthening ecological connectivity, biodiversity monitoring, and the sustainable use of the territory.

However, efforts to strengthen private conservation still face persistent challenges: land tenure and registry regularization continue to pose obstacles in some reserves; financial resources and technical capacity remain limited; and institutional communication needs to expand in order to reach new audiences and allies. The expansion of agribusiness in surrounding areas, the irregular use of fire, and the presence of invasive exotic species impose constant threats to environmental integrity and social well-being.

On the other hand, the region offers concrete opportunities for innovation. Community-based tourism and responsible ecotourism continue to gain momentum, valuing sociobiodiversity and generating sustainable income for part of the population. Initiatives focused on payment for environmental services, nature-based credits, and Integrated Fire Management (MIF) have emerged as promising pathways to unite environmental conservation with a fair

¹ “The Cerrado may lose one-third of its water supply, study shows.” ISPN, 2022. Available at: <https://ispn.org.br/noticia/cerrado-pode-perder-um-terco-da-agua-aponta-estudo/>

economy. The consolidation of networks – such as the Chapada dos Veadeiros RPPN Network² – represents a crucial step toward transforming these potentials into lasting policies grounded in collective action.

4. Future Vision 2050

Drawing inspiration from the socio-environmental profile of Chapada dos Veadeiros, the region's RPPNs aspire to become, by 2050, a global benchmark for a new dawn in Cerrado conservation. They will be recognized as models of regenerative conservation and applied research, economically valued and socially integrated – places where biodiversity protection is woven together with the appreciation of people, animals, territories, and the ancestral knowledge of the Cerrado.

The landscape will be restored and interconnected, with protected waters, balanced ecosystems, and communities leading an economic model based on science, innovation, and cooperation. The RPPNs will form a mosaic of governance, research, and continuous learning, supported by transparent practices, strong partnerships, and effective environmental policies. They will also serve as laboratories of innovation and examples of engaged citizenship, standing as symbols of pride and belonging – not only for their owners, but for society as a whole.

As a result, Chapada dos Veadeiros will become an inspiring place, a testament that it is possible to harmonize conservation, economic development, and well-being for all forms of life. This vision rests on recognizing the essential role of RPPNs in safeguarding biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem services, and promoting a fair and collaborative economy.

Ultimately, in 2050, Chapada dos Veadeiros will be globally recognized as a symbolic territory of balanced coexistence between human and non-human beings, with conservation as the guiding axis for development, science, and spirituality. The Cerrado –

² “Chapada dos Veadeiros RPPN Network.” Funatura. Available at: <https://funatura.org.br/rede-de-rppns-da-chapada-dos-veadeiros-e-oficialmente-criada/>

restored, respected, and valued – will pulse in harmony with its waters, grasslands, and wetlands that so deeply define its identity, protected through participatory management and ways of living that unite traditional knowledge with ongoing innovation.

5. Guiding Principles

The construction of this future is grounded in values and principles that capture the spirit of conservation in the Cerrado. Connection and persistence express the aspiration to see restored landscapes linked by ecological corridors capable of sustaining the flow of life and the integrity of ecosystems. Belonging and collective action emerge from the joint efforts of communities, landowners, and institutions that recognize themselves as part of the same territory and share the responsibility of caring for it. The recognition and leadership of these actors ensure environmental balance and the ecosystem services essential to human well-being through conservation.

Joy and purpose transform love for nature into everyday practices of care and regeneration, reinforcing the feeling of coexisting with the Cerrado. Innovation and cooperation drive creative and collaborative solutions to collective challenges, integrating scientific knowledge with traditional wisdom. Finally, equity and diversity reaffirm the strong leadership of women and the respect for local cultures and ways of life.

These guiding principles reflect a Cerrado strengthened by unity, solidarity, and shared responsibility – a biome that finds, in cooperation and care, its path toward the future.

6. Intermediate Milestones (2030–2040)

The journey toward 2050 will unfold through gradual achievements, aimed at concrete results and cultural transformations that will consolidate the coexistence between society and nature. Based on the outcomes of the workshops held with RPPN landowners, and aligned with the goals defined by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and Brazil's National Biodiversity Strategy

and Action Plan (EPANB), the following intermediate path has been outlined:

- Ensure that private conservation gains full public visibility, with RPPNs recognized as exemplary units of management and sustainability.
- Increase the number of established and regularized reserves, strengthening the network of protected areas with implemented management plans and continuous monitoring.
- Promote territorial integration between reserves and other protected areas, securing functional ecological corridors and landscape connectivity to maintain species flow and ecosystem services.
- Consolidate scientific research and environmental education as pillars of knowledge production and social engagement, fostering a conservation culture that weaves together science, citizenship, and environmental awareness.

7. Connection and Belonging

Beyond its rich biodiversity, what makes the region truly unique is the relationship people have with the territory of Chapada dos Veadeiros – a relationship marked by deep emotional and spiritual ties. The Cerrado is more than a landscape: it is home, refuge, and a source of inspiration. It is a place of connection and renewal.

For landowners, communities, and partners who inhabit and care for it, conserving the Cerrado is an act of love and reciprocity – a way to ensure that the waters keep flowing, that the forests remain standing, and that the birdsong never falls silent.

The RPPNs and other protected areas are therefore sanctuaries where alternative ways of coexistence can flourish, where humans and nature complement one another. Each reserve is a link in a chain that unites different histories and worldviews.

This profound connection reinforces the collective commitment to keep the Cerrado as a space of life, memory, and future – where to conserve is also to exist.

8. Pathways to 2050

Achieving this future vision requires walking a path founded on commitment, planning, and courage. It calls for coordinated efforts, stronger public policies, and expanded alliances among governments, civil society, communities, and the private sector.

Key strategic actions include:

- Implementing and consolidating the Chapada dos Veadeiros RPPN Network;
- Expanding Integrated Fire Management (MIF) as a tool for ecosystem care and regeneration, promoting prevention, training, and knowledge-sharing among reserves;
- Advancing tools for payments for environmental services, such as CRA, PSA, and nature-based credits;
- Carrying out joint initiatives and celebratory events to strengthen the Network's identity and raise the public visibility of RPPNs;
- Building new partnerships with universities, public agencies, and environmental funds, reinforcing the scientific and institutional foundation of these actions;
- Investing in communication and cultural appreciation of the Cerrado through campaigns, educational materials, and the dissemination of inspiring narratives;
- Strengthening cooperation and knowledge networks, promoting technical improvement, exchanges, and innovation;
- Increasing the number of Private Natural Heritage Reserves;
- Developing and implementing management plans and public-use plans for existing RPPNs;
- Reinforcing the role of RPPNs as key links in the consolidation of ecological corridors and mosaics.

This set of actions represents the shared commitment of RPPN landowners, partner NGOs, and public institutions to safeguard one of the last strongholds of the Cerrado.

9. Final Considerations

The integrated implementation of conservation actions for Chapada dos Veadeiros – particularly through the potential of the Chapada RPPN Network – represents a new conservation paradigm for the Cerrado, grounded in cooperation, landowner leadership, and the transformative power of collective action. To achieve this, it is essential to consolidate the Network as an advocacy hub, strengthening RPPNs as conservation units and contributing to the protection of Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park.

Private reserves have shown that conservation is not only a technical act but also a gesture of love and environmental citizenship. Building this Future Vision 2050 means envisioning a territory where RPPNs are recognized as beacons of conservation, connecting nature and humanity, science and spirituality, economy and ethics.

Step by step, the Network will reaffirm that caring for the Cerrado is caring for life itself – and that the desired future begins now, through the cooperation of those who have chosen to conserve.

This is therefore a call to dream and build together a Cerrado that is protected, interconnected, diverse, and respected. We will join efforts and work toward a territory where conserving means thriving, and where caring for the land is inseparable from caring for life in its fullness.

Realization



Support



CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.



The International Institute of Education of Brazil (IEB) acts as the Regional Implementation Team for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). IEB's mission is to strengthen social actors and their leadership in building a fair and sustainable society through training people, strengthening and coordinating institutions and community groups, and generating and disseminating knowledge.