

## Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development in the Caucasus Mountains in a Context of Ongoing Geopolitical Shifts

**Deadlines:** Submit notice of intent by **9 July 2023** and full paper by **15 October 2023**

**Publication date:** August 2024 (Vol 44, No 3)

*With this focus issue, we aim to deepen the understanding of challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in the Caucasus Mountains, and to help enhance dialogue and cooperation throughout the region. We welcome papers that provide transformation, systems, or target knowledge on the topics prioritized in the Caucasus Regional Research Agenda 2020–2030.*

On the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the Caucasus ecoregion stands out with its natural and cultural heritage of universal value. Mosaics of landscapes, outstanding biodiversity levels, as well as a diversity of cultures, ethnic groups, and economic activities make this region unique. Covering the entire territory of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, as well as parts of Iran, the Russian Federation, and Turkey, the ecoregion stretches from the Black to the Caspian Seas. As a hotspot of ongoing geopolitical shifts since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the Caucasus region have led separate, widely differing paths of development. Consequently, they lack cooperation in elaborating a unified agenda toward sustainable mountain development. In addition to the various challenges faced by the region, the absence of quality scientific data and joint research presents further hurdles. Poor uptake of scientific evidence in policy- and decision-making and weak science–society interactions hinder sustainable development of the Caucasus Mountains. In this situation, urgent action is needed to protect the region’s unique natural and cultural heritage and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Gathering researchers and other actors from all Caucasus countries, the [Scientific Network for the Caucasus Mountain Region \(SNC-mt\)](#) and its coordination unit—the Caucasus Network for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions (Sustainable Caucasus)—are committed to promoting disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research on the Caucasus region and to strengthening national and international collaboration. As part of this endeavor, the [Caucasus Regional Research Agenda \(C-RRA\) 2020–2030](#) was developed and approved during the second Caucasus Mountain Forum (2019). Its aim is “to establish a collaborative process for identifying the current state of knowledge in core issue areas related to sustainable mountain development in the Caucasus region, key challenges and opportunities, and priority gaps for scientific research and development.” Underlining the aims of enhancing exchange between science and policy and strengthening research for development, the C-RRA covers the following 10 crucial topics: climate change, biodiversity, forest resources, water resources, land use, natural hazards, population and cultural diversity, tourism and recreation, socioeconomic development and planning, and the mountain cryosphere.

This focus issue of MRD is intended to help deepen understanding and knowledge of the hindering and enabling factors, as well as challenges and opportunities, for sustainable development in the Caucasus ecoregion, and to contribute to enhanced dialogue and cooperation. Authors are expected to present original research covering a wide range of critical and relevant environmental and socioeconomic aspects of sustainable mountain development included in the C-RRA.

Accordingly, MRD invites contributions from scholars and development specialists for its 3 peer-reviewed sections:

**MountainDevelopment** (transformation knowledge): Papers should present systematically analyzed and validated practice-oriented development and policy experiences in the different thematic areas underlined in the C-RRA, such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, water management, tourism development, sustainable agriculture advancement, cultural heritage protection and making, as well as regional planning and development. The primary focus of the cases assessed should be on advancing sustainable solutions under the changing political and policy agendas of the countries of the region and on solving transboundary challenges. Assessments of interventions supporting decision-making at different levels in the Caucasus ecoregion or applying trans- and interdisciplinary approaches are also welcome.

**MountainResearch** (systems knowledge): Papers in this section should present empirical research and baseline studies that are original and innovative for the region. The importance of nature conservation, socioeconomic development, and environmental sustainability in the mountain areas of the Caucasus must be explained, analyzed, and well argued. Papers can cover any topics outlined in the C-RRA or related topics.

**MountainAgenda** (target knowledge): Papers should propose agendas and priorities for future research, policies, or interventions that draw on insights gained from systematic and well-referenced reviews of scientific knowledge, development approaches, or policies on topics described in or related to the C-RRA. Articles in this section might later be used to revise the C-RRA.

### Submission details

- **Submit your full paper by 15 October 2023** using MRD's online submission platform.
- A short **notice of intent** should be submitted to [mrd-journal.cde@unibe.ch](mailto:mrd-journal.cde@unibe.ch) **by 9 July 2023**; we will provide advice if needed or requested.
- A **workshop** at the Caucasus Mountain Forum on **Thursday, 6 July 2023, 11:15–13:15**, will provide useful guidance for authors interested in submitting a paper for this focus issue. All potential authors present at the Caucasus Mountain Forum are warmly invited to attend.
- The issue is scheduled for completion in **August 2024**; articles will be published on a rolling basis, as soon as they are ready.
- Before submitting, please read our **guidelines for authors** at <https://www.mrd-journal.org/for-authors/>.
- For more information on the journal, see <https://www.mrd-journal.org/>.
- As a not-for-profit open access journal, MRD charges authors a publication fee to offset part of its production costs: <https://www.mrd-journal.org/about/publication-fee-policy/>.

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in collaboration with MRD's Editorial Office, June 2023