

# Kenyan park is focus of political fight

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A dispute is flaring between the Kenyan government and a group of conservationists and environmentalists regarding Amboseli National Park.

Located at the base of Mount Kilimanjaro, the park is home to one of Africa's largest elephant populations and one of most fragile ecosystems left on Earth, the Times of London reported Thursday.

The conservationists and environmentalists have joined to fight a Kenyan government decision to downgrade Amboseli from a national park to a reserve.

The decision takes park management -- and gate receipts of about \$4.4 million annually -- from the Kenya Wildlife Service and gives it to a local county council, run by Masai, who for years have wanted to graze their cattle on land reserved for wildlife.

"It is unbelievable. They are taking this iconic sight, one of the crown jewels of Africa, and -- instead of cherishing it -- handing it over to an organization incapable of managing it," Brian Jackman, a respected British wildlife writer told the Times.

The government is apparently vying for Masai support on a referendum that would strengthen the government of President Mwai Kibaki.

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