

Creating Common Standards in the Environmental Community: The Conservation Measures Partnership

Environmental Evaluators' Networking Forum
June 2009

Three fundamental questions facing conservation

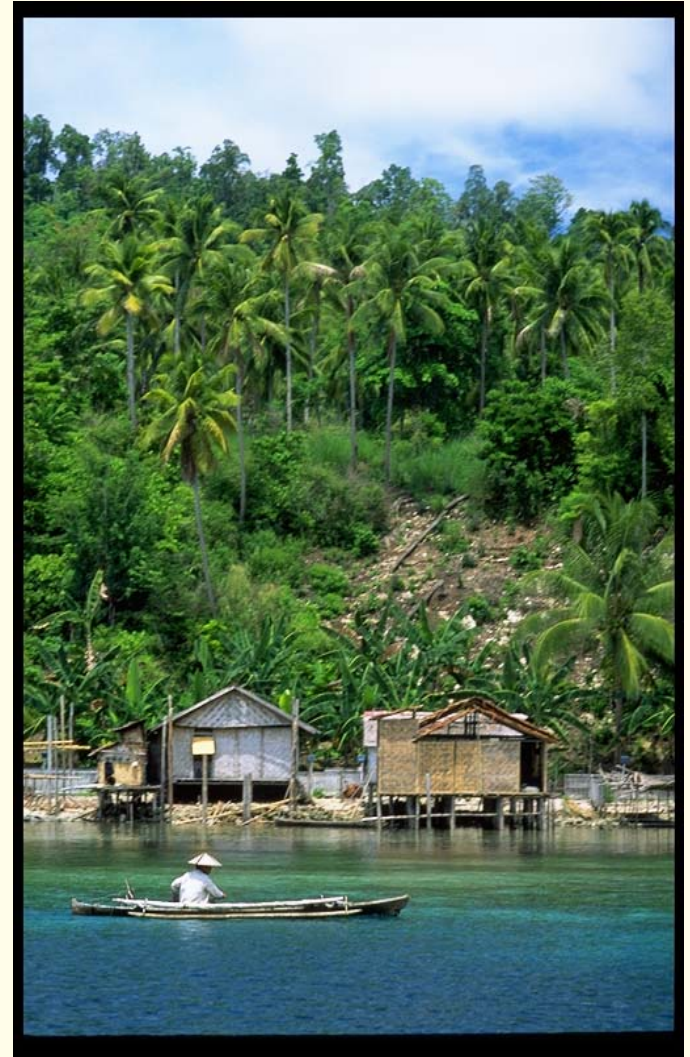
- Why is conservation important? ☒
- Where should we take action? ☒
- How do we take action and measure our progress? ??

Challenges faced by conservation practitioners

- Assess state of biodiversity
- Select the "right" interventions
- Measure the impact of actions
- Improve effectiveness
- Convince supporters
- Learn from one another

Obstacles to moving forward - 2002

- Multiple systems
- Little collaboration
- Lack of knowledge - what works, what doesn't
- No consensus on frameworks



How did CMP form?

- Needs-driven
 - GCP-USAID, SCB 2002
- Organic
- Committed individuals
- Common interests
- US-based international conservation NGOs
- Inclusive, but focused



CMP Members

- African Wildlife Foundation*
- Cambridge Conservation Forum
- Conservation International*
- Enterprise Works *
- Eurosite
- Foundations of Success*
- National Audubon Society
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Rare
- The Nature Conservancy*
- World Commission on Protected Areas
- Wildlife Conservation Society*
- World Conservation Union (IUCN)
- World Wildlife Fund/World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)*

Why did CMP form?

- Demonstrate our effectiveness
- Learn faster
- Adopt best-practices
- Make conservation more efficient
- Avoid duplication of effort



Transform the practice of conservation by developing, testing, and sharing tools to credibly assess and improve the effectiveness of conservation investments.



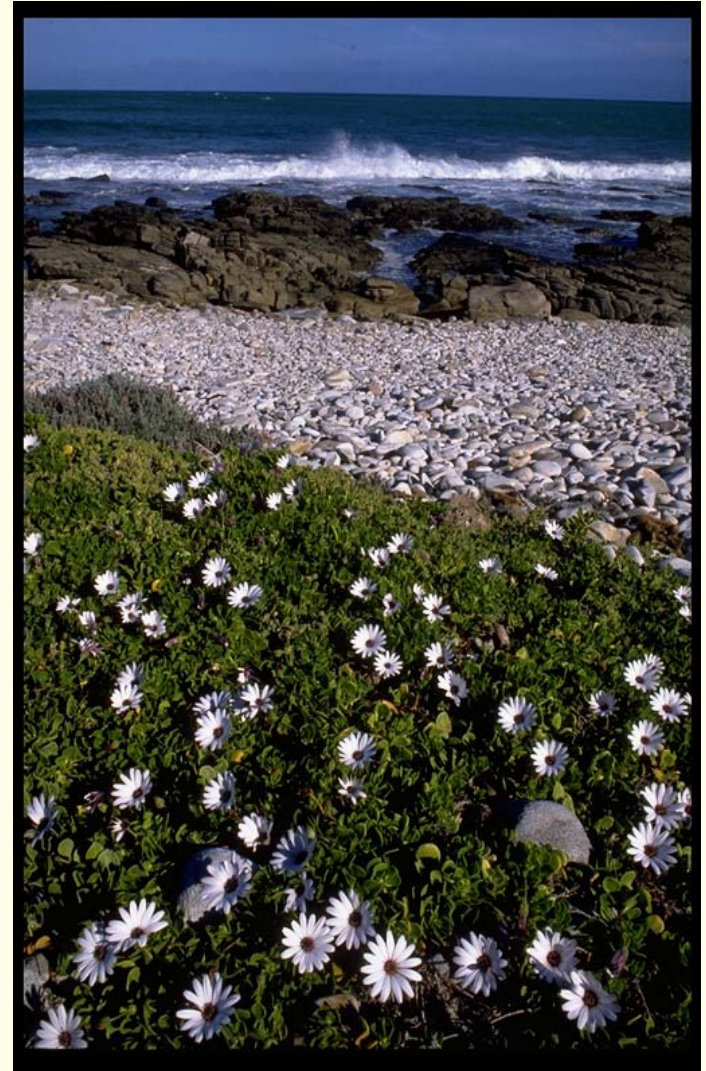
Our approach



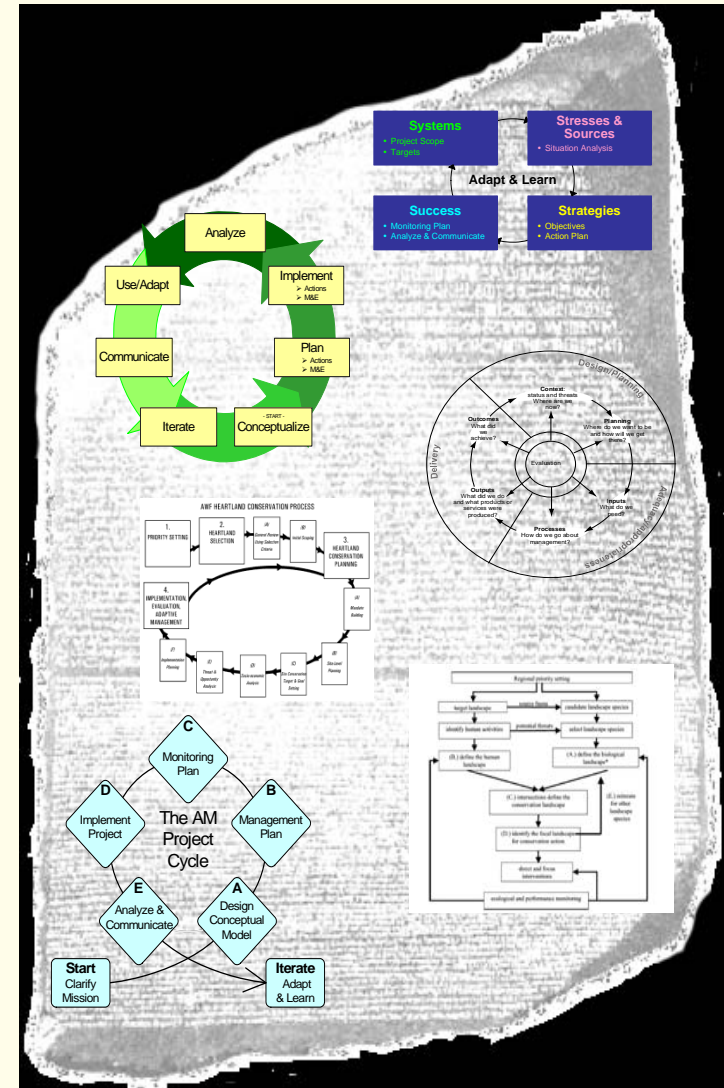
- **Develop common standards**
 - Harmonize language
 - Strategic planning and management processes
- **Develop new tools**
 - Conservation audits
 - Adaptive management software
 - Cross-project sharing and learning

Current products

1. Conservation "Rosetta stone"
2. Open standards for the practice of conservation
3. Audit standards
4. Miradi - Adaptive management software
5. Online cross project sharing and learning



Can we all speak a common language - or at least be able to translate across organizations?



Management systems – Aligned on CMP Open Standards

CMP	AWF	CI	TNC	WCS	WWF
Biodiversity targets	Focal targets	Conservation outcomes	Focal Conservation targets	Landscape species	Long-term goals
Threats	Threats	Pressures	Sources of stress	Threats	Threats
Objectives		Milestones	Objectives	Targets	Project targets

Dictionary & Thesaurus

Biodiversity targets

***AWF:* Focal targets**

The biodiversity situation you intend to influence through your project activities. Impact of your project can be measured at the biodiversity target level.

The elements of biodiversity at a site and the natural processes that maintain them. Includes species, communities, or large-scale ecological systems. Targets are assessed in terms of size, condition, and landscape context using TNC Excel Workbook.

***CI:* Conservation outcomes**

The effective conservation of species, areas, and corridors which are conservation targets necessary to ensuring the long-term persistence of biodiversity within our global priority areas.

***TNC:* Focal conservation targets**

The elements of biodiversity at a site and the natural processes that maintain them. Includes species, communities, or large-scale ecological systems. Targets are assessed in terms of size, condition, and landscape context using TNC Excel Workbook.

***WCS:* Landscape species**

Species that use large, ecologically diverse areas and have significant impacts on the structure and function of natural ecosystems.

***WWF:* Long-term goals**

Targets that encompass: (1) representation of all distinct natural communities; (2) maintenance of ecological and evolutionary processes; (3) maintenance of viable populations of species; and (4) resiliency in the face of large-scale periodic disturbances and long-term change. On a 50-year time frame.

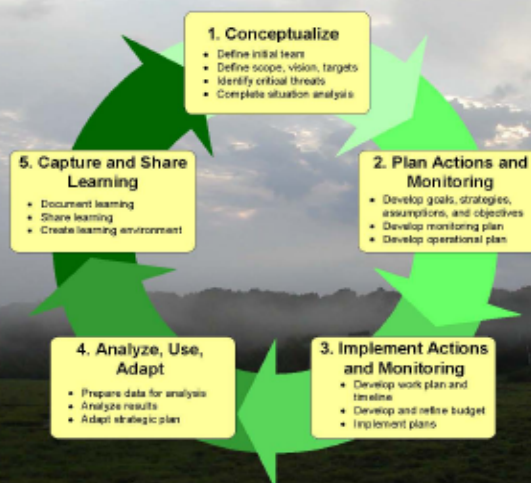
Common Standards: Our Approach

- Bring together common concepts, approaches, and terminology in conservation project design, management, and monitoring
- Provide standards for the practice of conservation



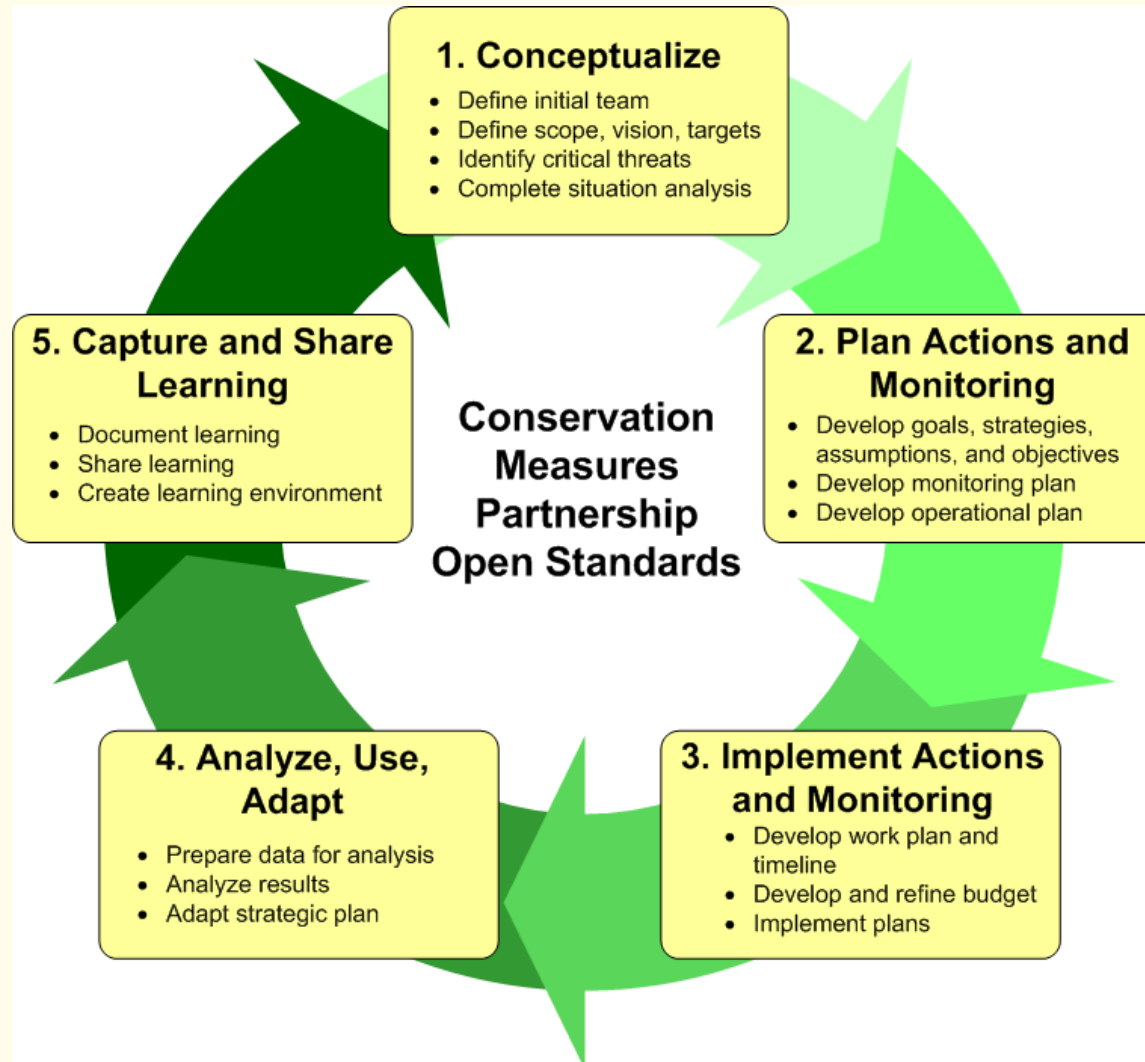
Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation

Version 2.0
October 2007



The Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) is a joint venture of conservation NGOs that seek better ways to design, manage, and measure the impacts of their conservation actions. Partners include the African Wildlife Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the World Wide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund. Collaborators include The Cambridge Conservation Forum, Conservation International, Enterprise Works/VITA, Foundations of Success, The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Rare, the World Commission on Protected Areas and the World Conservation Union/IUCN.

The CMP Open Standards Cycle



3. Implement actions and monitoring

This is the most important step....

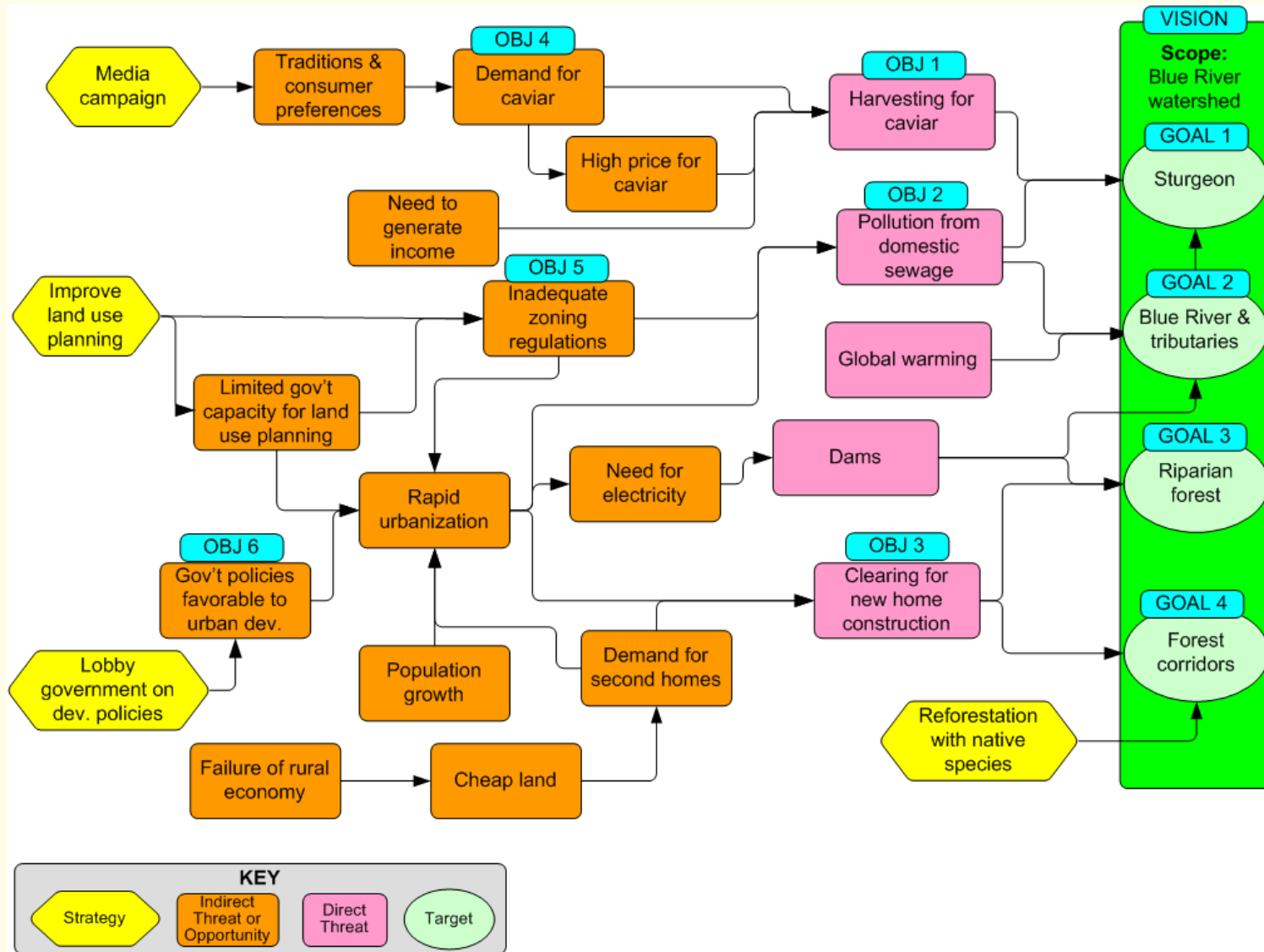
3A. Develop a detailed short-term work plan and timeline

In the previous steps...

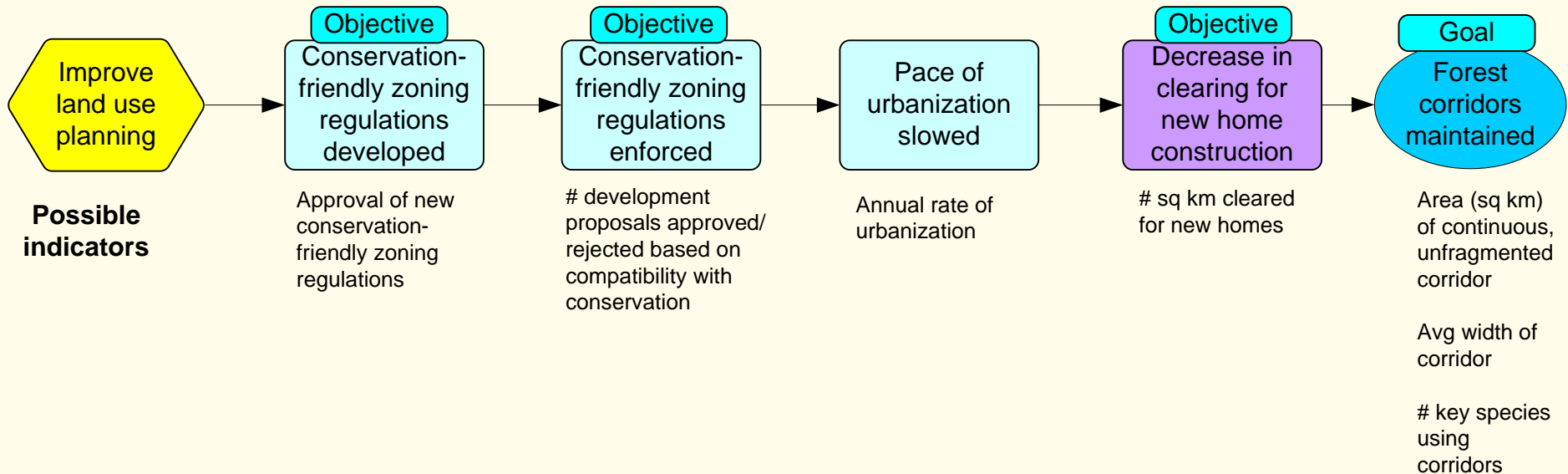
Outputs for this standard practice include:

- *Work plan detailing....*
- *Action Plan, Monitoring Plan, and Operational Plan Project timeline....*

Conceptual Models



Results Chains



Annex 1. Glossary

- **Action Plan** – A description of a project's goals, objectives, and strategies....
- **Activity** – A specific action or set of tasks undertaken....
- **Adaptive Management** – The incorporation of a formal learning process into conservation action....
- **Assumption** – A project's core assumptions are the logical sequences linking project strategies to....

Open Standards Software



MIRADI™

Free Trial

Adaptive Management Software
for Conservation Projects

www.Miradi.org or info@Miradi.org

Visit the Miradi booth at the Cafe this PM!

Current Issues

1. Top Down Mandate/Culture Change (Donors, Senior Scientists)
2. Projects Beyond Sites & Cross-Scale Integration
3. Mesh with Social Change Strategies/Social Marketing
4. Standards for Protected Areas
5. Work on Steps 3, 4 & 5
6. Sharing Training Materials, Coaches, Methods, etc.
7. Tracking Use/Success/Impact of Adaptive Management
8. Capacity Assessment for Individuals, Teams, Orgs
9. Thresholds in Project/Program Evaluation & Risk Assessment
10. Work with Scientists - Integrate Biological/Social

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Get Involved!

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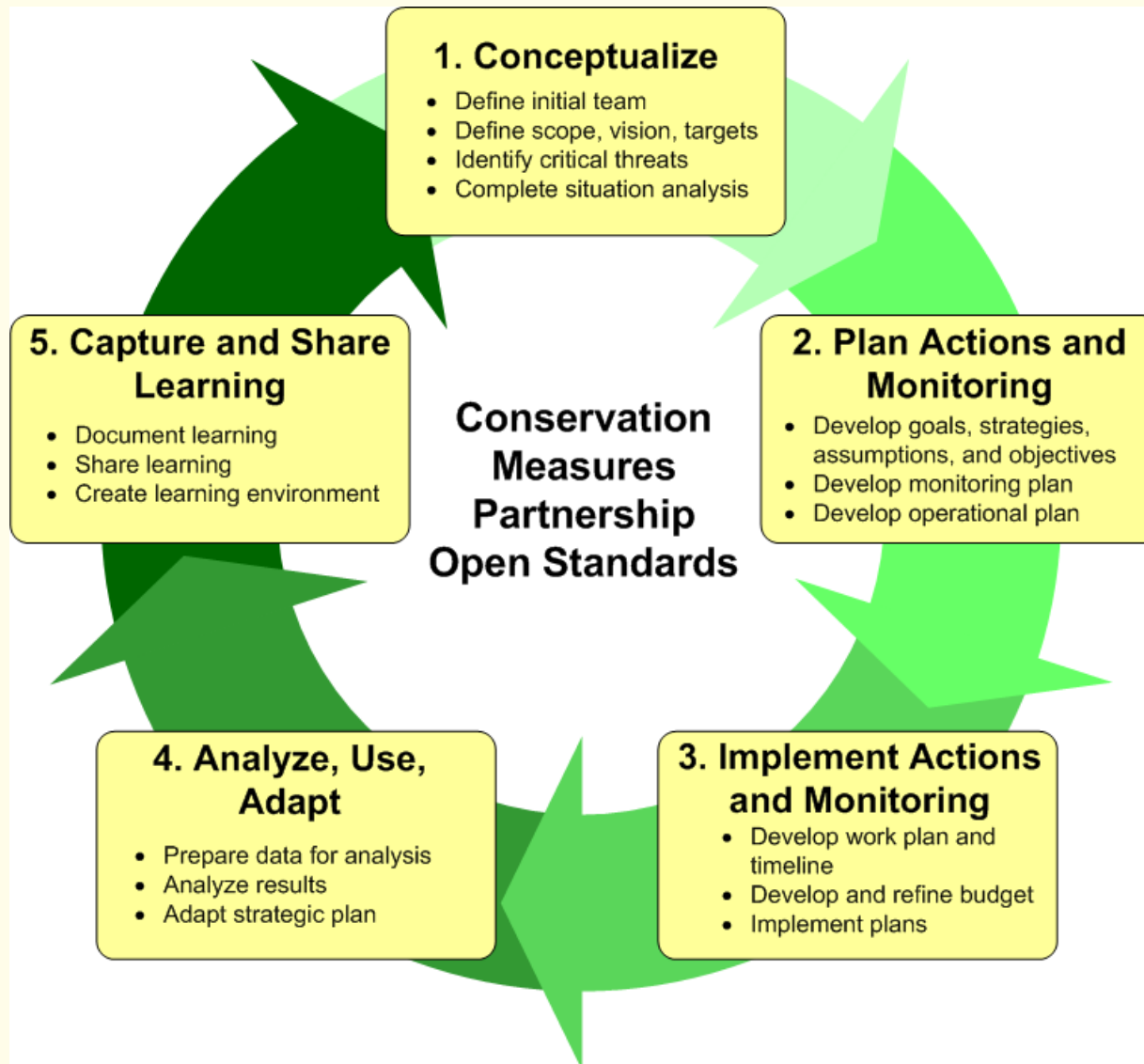
- Experience us:

Check out Miradi at the Cafe

Conservation Audits: Changing a culture

The Conservation Measures Partnership

The Open Standards: Just sound Project Management



A Tool for Assessing and promoting sound Adaptive Management

- Auditing the use of The Open Standards for Conservation Practice
 - Self-audit and peer-review
- These are not direct evaluations of biodiversity conservation impact, but rather, through systematic assessment, incentivize Conservation Project teams to utilize the Standards and thus utilize M&E themselves

Think of TNC as an organization making soup in 1000 kitchens...

What we want to know is, "are we making good soup?"

- Could send "tasters" (evaluation teams) around to each kitchen; or....
- Could make sure our "cooks" are trained and following good cooking practice (i.e. adaptive management)
- Auditing projects puts the onus on "evaluation" (i.e. impact measurement) on the project teams themselves

In 5yrs, we've audited a range of Programs, Projects, and Strategies

- TNC has conducted 51 since Jan 2004
 - 35 Conservation Projects
 - 8 "Strategies"
 - 8 "Programs" (Operating Units)
- Another 12-15 or so by other CMP members (WWF, WCS, AWF, etc)
 - And have "cross-peers" on many audits
- Because the Open Standards are scalable, so too are Conservation Audits

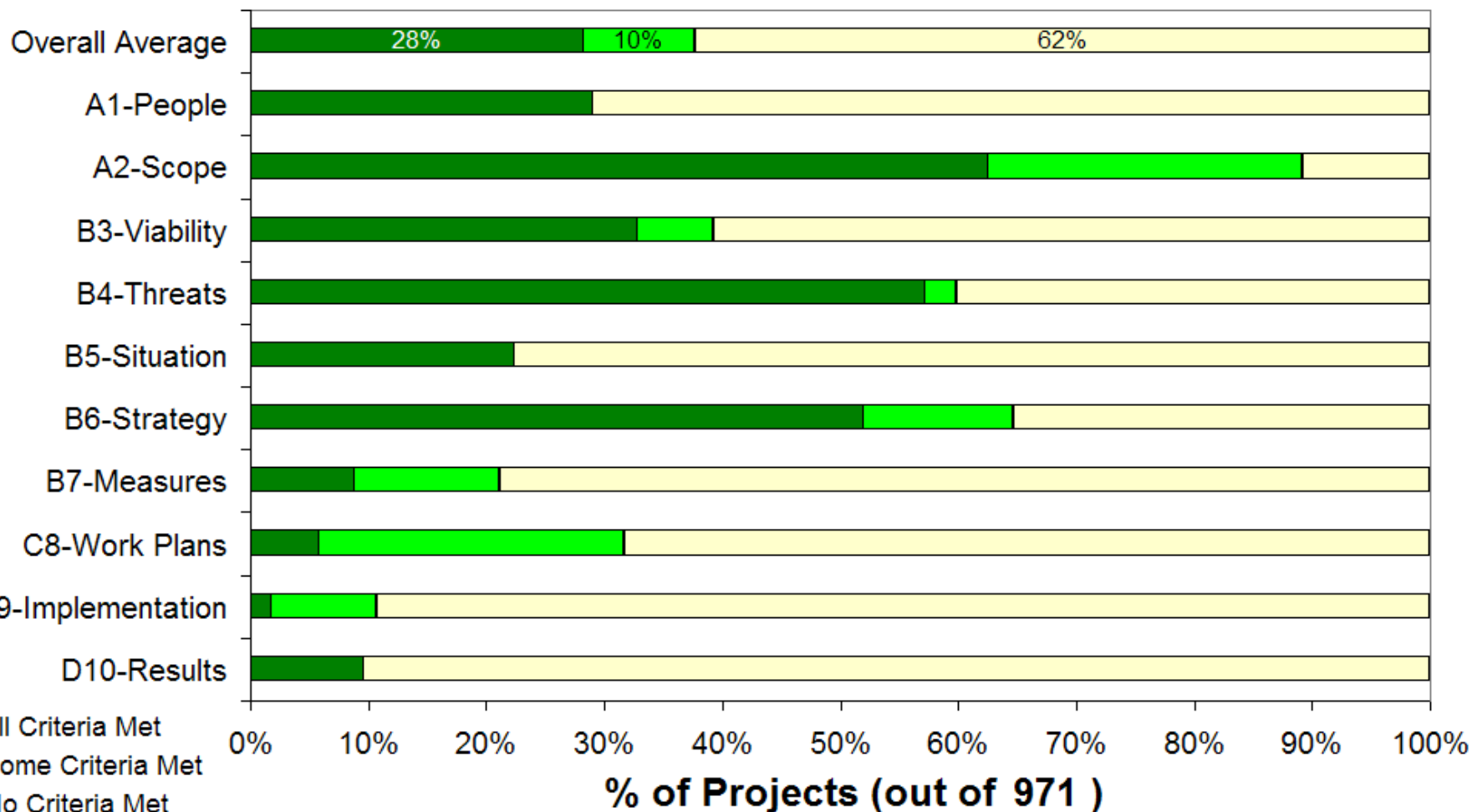
What are we seeing out there?

Percent of 971 ConPro Projects that Meet CAP Tracking Criteria

Region All Regions

Operating Unit: All OU's

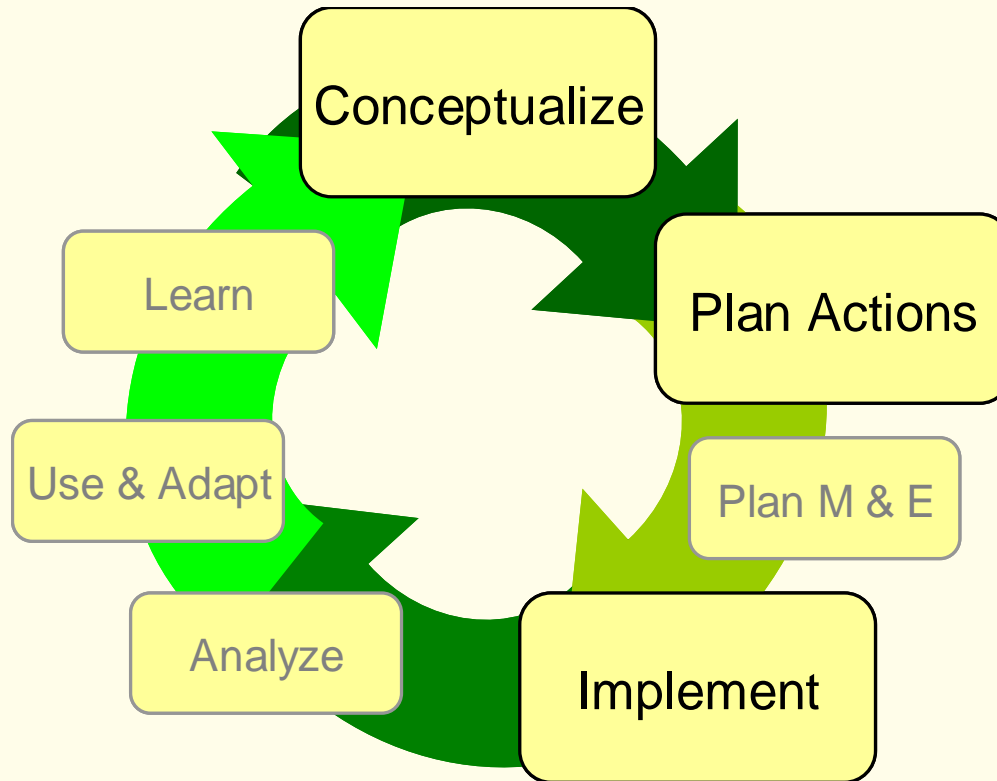
All or CAP wkbk: All Projects



In order to really evaluate conservation impact, we need data!

- Vast majority of Conservation Projects are not following the standards and rarely have good M&E practice in place
- If we want to know if a business is profitable, their accountants first have to have "the books" (i.e. the accounting) ready
- Financial auditors then verify that the numbers are what they claim to be

In practice: Action, action, action... but few Projects are applying M&E



The majority of Conservation Projects have been rigorously conceptualized and actions are planned and are being implemented. However, few projects monitor their results or, correspondingly, analyze, use to adapt, or learn from monitoring data.

Audubon Adoption of the Open Standards: Need, Value, & Challenges

Tess Present, Ph.D.
VP, Conservation Planning Support
National Audubon Society



The Conservation Measures Partnership

Audubon – Background & Context

Over 100 years of conserving birds & habitat ...



...by engaging people in conservation action through a growing decentralized network.

Network snapshot

- ✓ 22 state offices
- ✓ > 460 local Chapters
- ✓ > 80 nature centers operated by NAS or our Chapters
- ✓ 19 BirdLife partners in the Americas

Audubon – Background & Context

Strategic Priorities

- ✓ Conserve birds, other wildlife, & their habitats
- ✓ Engage people in conservation action
- ✓ Build capacity as a decentralized organization and grassroots network

5-Yr Organization-wide Goals

Each defining desired measurable outcomes for integrated performance across network divisions, programs, & projects.

Conservation Goals

- ✓ Stabilize & increase populations of at-risk species
- ✓ Prevent persistent declines or range contractions of common native birds
- ✓ Protect & restore sites essential for vulnerable species
- ✓ Improve & protect the health of landscapes that support or could support birds of the Americas

WHY ADOPT THE OPEN STANDARDS?

- ✓ Fairly recent organizational commitment to building cohesive & integrated approach to the planning and implementation of our conservation projects
- ✓ Awareness, expertise, and experience of adaptive management approach scattered throughout network
- ✓ Communication & sharing of best practices in adaptive management primarily opportunistic



WHY ADOPT THE OPEN STANDARDS?

To improve our conservation effectiveness

- ✓ Are we improving the status of our bird, habitat, & landscape targets?
- ✓ Are we engaging people in fulfilling our conservation mission?
- ✓ Are we building the capacity needed to accomplish our mission & goals? “Are we doing the right things and doing them well?”

To improve organization integration and alignment

- ✓ Are we pulling in the same direction?
- ✓ Are we leveraging all of our programs and capacities?
- ✓ Are our decentralized efforts adding up to greater conservation impact?

Audubon – Network Values

Network recognizing value at many levels

- ✓ Mapping of project conceptual models facilitates team integration and engagement of partners and advisors
- ✓ Results chains (~ logic models) demand identification of project assumptions and definition of priority objectives across life span of project
- ✓ Institutionalization of OS-implementation building a common language for our conservation work and facilitating cross-project learning
- ✓ Positive donor response



Emerging Issues

Network also recognizing opportunity for customization

- ✓ Approaches to nesting projects – aligning goals & indicators across projects of different scale
- ✓ Integrating emerging work on best practices for using social strategies
- ✓ Integrating longer-term education & other strategies
- ✓ Integrating BirdLife IBA site assessment needs



OS-Rollout Status & Next Steps



- ✓ First comprehensive training for staff completed
- ✓ Opportunistic deployment of trained staff
- ✓ Continued and expanded use of WebEx and SharePoint for continuing training and project support
- ✓ Continuing efforts to build shared awareness and understanding of Open Standards throughout network – Staff/Chapters/Partners; National Board/Senior Management/conservation AND support staff
- ✓ Customize Open Standards to Audubon network needs
- ✓ Fundraising for further training & resources

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Conservation Audits by Region (with Peer Count by OU represented)			
TNC Conservation Region	# of Audits	Total # of Peer-Reviewers participating	...representing how many Operating Units
Meso-America & Caribbean	11	66	15
Central US	8	51	20
Asia-Pacific	8	43	14
Eastern US	6	46	15
Pacific North America	4	27	10
South America	4	23	11
Southeast US	4	20	14
Rocky Mountain	2	7	8
N/A [USFS, AWF]	3	14	12
<i>Totals</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>297</i>	<i>47 Unique</i>