

EEN Forum 2009 Notes, 6/9/2009 9:45 a.m.

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

### **Richard Margoluis**

Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP)

Three fundamental questions

- Why is conservation important?
- Where should we take action?
- How do we take action and measure our progress?
  - there has been no major success in defining processes in answering this question

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 in 2002:

- Multiple systems: we all had our systems, our own ways
- Little collaboration: but very little interaction between organizations
- Lack of knowledge – what works, what doesn't
- No consensus

How did CMP form?

- It was needs-driven: GCP- USAID, SCCB 2002
- Things were similar and needed to work together.
- An organic process
- Groups of very dedicated and very committed individuals with a common interest
- Founded with US based international conservation NGO
- Inclusive, but focused: wanted to have clear purpose, strategy, and goals

**Why did we form?**

- Wanted to learn more quickly
- Wanted to learn from mistakes, successes, and fairly
- Demonstrate our effectiveness
- Learn faster
- Adopt best practices
- Make conservation more efficient

## Our Vision

- Try to transform or improve the practice of conservation by coming up with guiding principles and tools and forum in which to discuss these issues

## Our approach

- Develop new standards and tools

## Current products

- Conservation “**Rosetta stone**” coming up with common words or standards
  - Can we all speak a common language or at least be able to translate across organizations?
  - Created a consistency of terms
  - **Way to harmonize language so we could speak to each other**
- Dictionary and Thesaurus came out of this

## Common Standards

- Bring together common concepts, approaches, and terminology in conservation project design, management, and monitoring
- Provide standards for the practice of conservation
- Once got all information from other fields we then looked through all the different systems and added those and modified and came up with open standards

## The CMP Open Standards Cycle

- 1 Conceptualize 2 Plan actions and Monitoring 3. Implement Actions and Monitoring 4. analyze, use, adapt 5. capture and learning...
- Many of them have very clear guidance and documentation on how to achieve outputs for each part of the cycle

In the open standards there is a glossary on the rosetta stones

## Open Standards Software

- [www.miradi.org](http://www.miradi.org)
- Takes the open standards and puts them into a software package
- Suppose to be like turbo tax
- Moves through a complex system relatively easily

## Current issues

- Meet about twice a year maybe three times a year in order to learn something
- In last meeting looked back and wanted to know if open standards were being used
- **What were the obstacles for adoption**
  - Standards were being adopted and used by lower level management, but not higher management
  - Project beyond sites and cross scale integration: way to scale up from a small scale to larger scale and compare across projects

- **Need to work on steps 3,4,5 of standards cycle (only completing half the cycle and not going through with the whole thing)**
- **People collect data and never analyze**
- Tracking use/ success/impact of adaptive management
- Capacity assessment for individuals, team, organizations: need to be able to gauge change over time

## **Tim Reed**

The Nature Conservancy

Conservation Audit:

- want to make sure people are following the open standards cycle
- They are auditing against standards.... Not really evaluating them per say
- It can be a self audit or a peer review audit
- These are not direct evaluations: asking are they following the standards and cycle. They pay attention to impact in the audit as well
- Because open standards are scalable so are audits

Trying to do

- What want to do is to training people in adaptive management
- Visit projects and make sure following what they learned
- People evaluating their own impact

TNC has conducted 51 audits since Jan 2004

- Peer review teams
- Looking at projects as peer group
- Looked at conservation projects, “strategies”, and “programs”

**What are we seeing?**

- **Clear that doing well at the front end, planning aspect**
- **But when it comes to measure and evaluation aspect that is where they are falling short**
- **We need data and need to analyze some information**
- Currently in conservation the vast majority of projects are not collecting the data they need to analyze
- The vast majority of conservation projects are not following the standards
- Taking action but the later parts of the cycle after implementation is not happening.

## **Tess Present**

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

Audubon is a recent member of CM

Background

- Been doing conservation for a long time
- Engage people where they work and live

- Growing and centralized network of offices etc
- Strategic priorities
  - Focus on conserving birds, other wildlife, and their habitats
  - Engage people in conservation action
  - Build capacity as decentralized organization and grassroots network
- Only been in the most recent years: made 5 year goals: desired measured outcomes for integrated performance across network divisions, programs and projects

### Why adopt the open standards

- Very decentralized network
- Have a need to implement best practices
- And open standards allows them to do this
- Fairly recent organization commitment to building cohesive and integrated approach to the planning and implementation of our conservation projects
- It is to improve our conservation effectiveness
- Improve organization integration and alignment

### Network Values (**Benefits of adopting standards**)

- Network recognizing value at many levels as a result of the open standards
- Results chains demand identification of project assumptions
- Mapping of project conceptual model **facilitates team integration and engagement of partners and advisers**
- **Define priority objectives across life span of the project**
- Institutionalization of open standards implementation **building a common language for our conservation work and facilitation cross-project learning**
- **Positive donor response: helped demonstrate the effectiveness of or work**

### Emerging Issues

- Network also recognizes opportunity for customization: Certain places better to customize these standards to Audubon

### Status and next steps

- Completed training on staff
- Deploying that staff
- Using technical tools
- Working staff at all levels in organizations to raise awareness and understanding of open standards and best practices
- Customize open standards to better serve our initiatives