



RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS SERIES



Protected Area Conservation Coalitions: A Guide for Evaluation and Strengthening



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PROTECTED AREA CONSERVATION COALITIONS

A GUIDE FOR EVALUATION AND STRENGTHENING



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Resources for Success Series

Volume 5

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Preface

One of the greatest challenges facing The Nature Conservancy and its partner organizations is the need to develop a large number of solid and lasting relationships with strong conservation organizations that are able to achieve greater impact together. This is evident in the Conservancy's ongoing work with approximately 500 organizations in 30 countries throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific and Canada. In the last few years, the Conservancy has participated in and supported the creation of coalitions with conservation organizations and diverse sectors of civil society.

Conservation coalitions are faced with considerable challenges which arise from associating with organizations of differing cultures, sectors, influence levels, constituent bases, financial resources, leadership styles and purposes. Achieving a strong, lasting coalition requires using appropriate tools and committing adequate resources. For example, many conservation coalitions have been established to address the challenges resulting from the 7th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP7).

During COP7 (February 2004), 188 national governments adopted the Global Program of Action on Protected Areas to support establishment of comprehensive, ecologically representative, and effectively financed and managed regional and national protected areas. It is hoped that this goal will be reached by the year 2010 for terrestrial systems, and by 2012 for marine systems.

The Conservancy considers conservation coalitions a key vehicle to facilitate implementation of the Global Program of Action on Protected Areas and related initiatives. To support nationally established goals, the Conservancy promotes the signing of National Implementation Support Partnership (NISP) agreements between governments and conservation organizations to outline actions that will be supported by the signatory coalition members.

The Conservancy also supports developing tools to strengthen these coalitions.

The NISP agreements have greatly increased the number of partnerships in which the Conservancy participates. Through these agreements, coalitions have been established with more than 200 organizations to promote biodiversity conservation around the world. The success of the NISP agreements would mark significant national-level progress toward protecting national parks and protected areas. But this success would be impossible if organizations did not act together through coalitions.

To strengthen coalitions, the Conservancy is strategically expanding its series *Resources for Success*. The series has published four important tools: *Institutional Self-Assessment*, *Four Pillars of Financial Sustainability*, *Integrated Strategic and Financial Planning*, and *Human Resource Management*. The Conservancy presents a new volume: *Protected Area Conservation Coalitions: A Guide for Evaluation and Strengthening*.

This volume contains a practical, accessible and easy to use methodology for evaluating and delineating actions needed to strengthen conservation coalitions. It serves as a guide to provide both objective and collective input to help the coalition identify its current capacity, effectiveness, strengths and areas needing improvement. Use of the tool will support a coalition to more effectively reach its ultimate conservation objectives.

The Conservancy hopes this new publication will assist in your coalition's development towards achieving its potential, and that you can share your experiences with others so your actions achieve a wider global conservation impact.

*Department of External Affairs
The Nature Conservancy*

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- Pronaturaleza and SINANPE in the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve (Peru).
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1. The Institutional Development Network Alliance Fortaleza (www.fortalezaonline.org) offers institutional development resources (products, services and service providers) for diverse sectors in the sustainable development arena (including biodiversity conservation). In addition, it promotes information exchanges through a learning community that shares experiences in a dynamic and productive manner. Its members include organizations with solid institutional development experience: Fundación Acceso (Costa Rica), PACT-Perú (Peru), Fundación COMPROMISO (Argentina), Iniciativa Mexicana de Aprendizaje para la Conservación – IMAC (Mexican Initiative for Conservation Learning), The Nature Conservancy (USA), the Red de Información para el Tercer Sector-RITS (Brazil) (Information Network for the Third Sector), and the Red de Fondos Ambientales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe – REDLAC (Network of Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Funds).

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Introduction

For more than a decade Latin American protected areas (PA) have been the setting for the development of conservation coalitions. This new conservation strategy promotes communication between all parties to improve PA management and achieve greater conservation impact. Participants in protected area management usually include government agencies and conservation organizations, as well as socio-economic groups and interested private organizations. Collaboration among the different participants is the fundamental core of these conservation coalitions.

The purpose of this document is to help assess if a management strategy and its PA conservation goals can be improved by consolidating the work of various organizations and sectors that generally work separately through a coalition. There are many implied assumptions about coalition relationships that facilitate participatory decision making

for a PA's management and positive conservation impact. However, in reality there are some cases where a coalition contributed to improved PA management, while in others the coalition did not improve PA management, notwithstanding significant time and resource investments.

In general, we think coalitions can contribute to conservation, but it is necessary to define the relationship that exists between the coalition's goal, PA management, and threat reduction (see Figure 1).

In order for the coalition to be successful, a clear link should exist between the coalition's goal (or goals) and the desired impact (see Figure 2).

In some cases, creating a coalition based on these assumptions may be viable, while in other cases it may not. It's very important to understand the assumptions and conditions that should be met

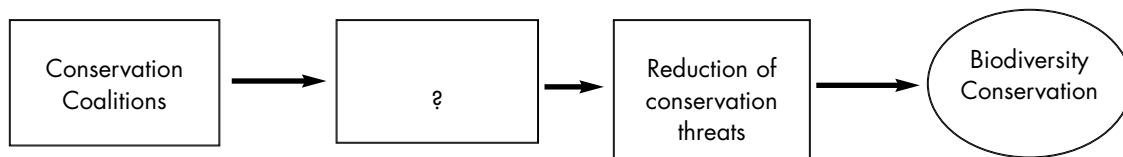


Figure 1

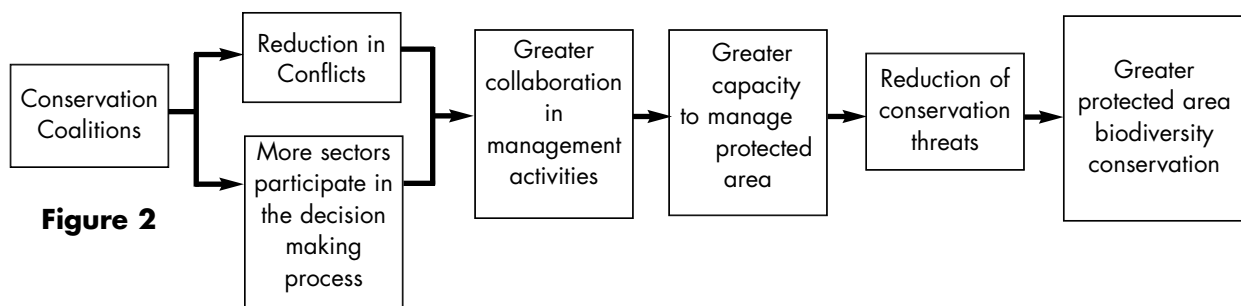


Figure 2

in order for the coalition to be successful. In addition, it is valuable to visualize the added value of working collaboratively, utilizing a logical process.

While developing this manual, many of the lessons learned from the “Conservation Coalitions” project have been utilized as examples for creating or strengthening coalitions. The document is comprised of two sections. The first section describes experiences and lessons learned about Latin American coalitions, presented at the XXIII International Congress of LASA (Latin American Studies Association) on September 6-8, 2001. This portion of the manual includes a guide to evaluate a coalition’s feasibility. The second section presents a tool for self-assessment of an established coal-

tion. This portion was developed to promote more efficient coalitions that would be able to improve protected areas management and achieve conservation objectives. Finally, a section is included in the Appendix with recommendations (examples) on how to conduct an efficiently facilitated self-assessment.

This document is primarily geared towards government and non-government entities considering forming a coalition, or organizations that are currently members of a coalition. In addition, the document can be utilized by other organizations working in PAs and buffer zones, or other sustainable development sectors.

2. With the financial support of the Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation, The Nature Conservancy began analyzing and supporting the development process of five conservation coalitions in 2000. The project included activities such as technical assistance, institutional analysis, support for strengthening work plans, training workshops and development of the “Coalition Self Assessment” tool. The different experiences (strengths and weaknesses) of working with these coalitions during the years 2000-2003 have contributed significantly to the development of this self-assessment tool. The five primary project coalitions were: Madre Laguna Reserve (Mexico), Bastimentos Island National Marine Park (PNMIB) in the Bocas del Toro Province (Panama), Pacaya-Samiria National Park (Peru), Canaima National Park (Venezuela) and the Serra do Divisor National Park (Brazil).

Coalition Building for Conservation: Latin American Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships³

By Larry Fisher, Vance Russell, and Jenny Ericson

Introduction

Throughout the world multi-stakeholder coalitions are forming to address the growing complexity of managing biodiversity conservation programs. Conservationists have come to recognize the value of working with a wide range of stakeholder groups – local and national government agencies, scientists and research institutions, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private businesses — in developing and sustaining these collaborative initiatives. The new face of conservation is as diverse as the communities and societies in which these programs take root; program leaders are exploring new approaches and organizational structures as they pursue the challenging tasks of managing critical watersheds, protecting unique and threatened habitats, and preserving the world's biodiversity.

Emerging experience illustrates that building new coalitions of actors is an essential tool of the conservation practitioner. These coalitions can incorporate diverse perspectives and harness the energies and resources of a broad range of constituents. New alliances of stakeholders offer a forum for creating a common, guiding vision about land use, and they can anticipate and address conflicts that often emerge in decision making over conservation and development issues. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) voices the view of many international conservation organizations in recognizing that “coalition building is a mandatory and fundamentally necessary undertaking for any conservation project to have a realistic chance of long-term success” (TNC, 1999). At the Conservancy coalition building is closely linked to the institutional framework, Conservation by Design, and is regard-

ed as an important mechanism for achieving tangible lasting results at scale through leverage.

But the experience with collaborative groups remains somewhat mixed. While there are many advocates, there are also strident critics of these processes, and there has been limited objective or comparative analysis of the international experience with conservation coalitions. Given the tremendous costs and new demands implicit in these approaches, many are asking: What are the tangible benefits of coalition building? As one author, writing about environmental coalitions in the United States, noted: “These efforts at collaboration haven't exactly transformed the Western landscape. They're slow, tedious, fragile processes that seem to fail at least as often as they succeed. And the status quo is still strongly in evidence: Senators still get called into action to knock down obstacles to natural resource development; environmental lawsuits get filed in droves” (Jones, 1996). So what does experience tell us about the contributions of coalitions and how these collaborative approaches fit into an overall strategy for biodiversity conservation?

The emerging trend toward coalition building as a key component of conservation management challenges us to be more reflective and more deliberate about facilitating these approaches. Many of the experiences with coalitions have been rather ad hoc, isolated examples of conservation organizations moving toward collaboration in a very opportunistic, instinctive way. While case literature about these approaches is becoming a common feature of international conservation, there is still little objective analysis, critical reflection, organized training events, or systematic assessment of this strategy. Therefore, this introductory concept paper is being offered as a means for synthesizing best practices,

3. Paper presented at the XXIII International Congress of LASA (*Latin American Studies Association*), on September 6-8, 2001, held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, Washington, DC.

raising important questions for discussion, and offering some practical means for strengthening organizational capacity to work within this more complex, multi-institutional setting.

Efforts to improve understanding of coalitions in support of biodiversity conservation goals began as a collective effort of a small group of organizations each actively involved with conservation-related coalitions — in encouraging their development and in managing key programs where coalitions are a central feature. This group also focused considerable energy on monitoring the course of these coalitions and in analyzing, comparing, and synthesizing lessons from their experience and from the growing literature on collaborative approaches to conservation. A preliminary manual of case studies, was produced in 1999, *Coalition Building for Conservation* (Russell et al., 1999), and was used during The Nature Conservancy's biannual Conservation Training Week in June of that year. The Nature Conservancy, in collaboration with partner organizations in five Latin American countries, and with support from the Mitsubishi International Corporation, has also launched a

major new program to develop an approach to coalition-building in Latin America.

Coalitions: What Are They?

Attempts at encouraging broad-based stakeholder collaboration have resulted in a wide array of organizational structures. While we have chosen to use the general term “coalition” to describe these collaborative groups, it is important to recognize that many terms are being used, somewhat interchangeably and with varying definitions, to describe collaborative, participatory processes: partnerships, alliances, associations, networks, consortia, power circles, task forces, federations, and confederations. Very often these terms (some offered here in translation) have grown out of local languages and histories in which words carry unique meanings. Many of the terms used for collaborative groups have frequently been chosen in order to avoid negative connotations (as an example, the English term ‘collaborator’ can have both a positive and negative meaning, depending on the context).

Coalition Building and Conservation of Large Landscapes

Covering more than 2 million hectares, the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve in Peru, includes some of the highest priority ecosystems in the hemisphere — most especially the Amazonian flooded forest. Pacaya is home to giant river otters, manatee, pink river dolphins, macaws, nearly a dozen species of monkeys and other natural wonders. In addition nearly 100,000 people (50,000 living inside the Reserve's boundaries and another 50,000 in the immediate buffer zone) depend on the Reserve as a source of fish, wild game, fruits, thatch and agricultural lands.

In 1999 a collaborative process involving a diverse group of stakeholders, representing approximately ten different organizations (including national and international NGO's and government agencies) was initiated to develop a conceptual, technical and legal framework for regulating activities inside the Pacaya Samiria reserve. The same institutions that participated in this coalition provided the necessary donors to contribute funds to complete the process. The national institute of parks (INRENA) assumed leadership while key member organizations such as The Nature Conservancy and ProNaturaleza provided the

necessary momentum to ensure progress. A Master Plan for management of the reserve was completed earlier this year.

In Peru, participatory processes are strongly encouraged in protected area management, however specific mechanisms for carrying out these processes have not yet been established. In the initial stages of the development of the Master Plan for the Pacaya Samiria Reserve grassroots social organizations and local residents were widely consulted. Regional meetings were held to ensure input and discuss local concerns. Unfortunately, given the broad scale of the Plan and the multitude of concerns raised many of them fell out during the process. Since the completion of the Plan a second collaborative process, this time at the level of the community. A second coalition has formed to assist selected communities in the development of community-based natural resource management plans that will focus on management targets identified by the communities themselves. In addition, the advisory committee of the coalition that drafted the Master Plan is working on a proposal for dissemination of the Plan to local groups.

Given the variety of terms and forms assumed by these collaborative groups, we will resist the pull toward a constraining definition or typology based on terminology. Instead, we offer here some of the key features that characterize coalitions and discuss some of their various forms and the diverse functions they seek to serve.

Some of the common (though not exclusive or universal) characteristics of coalitions are:

- **Broad inclusivity of stakeholders.** Many coalitions are public-private (government-NGO) partnerships that facilitate balanced representation of agency and community perspectives. They are often “coalitions of the unlike” (Snow, 2000) — deliberate attempts to bring together constituents of very different viewpoints.
- **Problem-solving orientation:** Most coalitions are focused on specific problems or decisions. These may be either site-based (the management of a

Latin American Coalition Network

The Latin American Network of Environmental Coalitions (Red Latinoamericana de Coaliciones Ambientales — RLCA, www.coaliciones.20m.com) is a broad-based network of practitioners interested in building and maintaining coalitions for biodiversity conservation, watershed and natural resources management. The principal objective of the network is to build and strengthen multi-stakeholder coalitions that support biodiversity conservation goals. A web site (put the web address here rather than below) provides an electronic forum for exchange of experiences, diffusion of information (e.g., publications, trainings, events, and case studies), debate of key issues, and capacity building through the analysis of case studies and best practices.

Created during the Nature Conservancy’s Sixth Conservation Training Week (CTW) in June 2001 as a vehicle for continued learning, the network’s membership is open to all. A list of current members is available on the web site.

CTW 2001 was the second time conservation practitioners from Latin America came together to share experiences working with coalitions. This opportunity allowed the group to update earlier learning materials in light of growing experience. The principal goals for the CTW workshop and for the next edition of resource materials were to:

- Document emerging experiences and lessons related to coalition building in the context of biodiversity conservation;
- Challenge some of the underlying assumptions and develop an analytical framework for examining the use of coalitions and collaborative approaches to biodiversity conservation;

4. At this time, RLCA is being relocated within the Fortaleza network (www.fortalezaonline.org); this relocation is expected to be completed by mid-2005.

- Identify tools and skills necessary for building and evaluating conservation-related coalitions; and
- Provide effective learning materials for training events on coalition building.

The RLCA is closely aligned with an effort initiated in 1999 by The Nature Conservancy and its partners in collaboration with the Mitsubishi International Corporation Foundation to develop an approach to building multi-stakeholder coalitions that support biodiversity conservation goals. The core of the program revolves around a series of site-based case studies carried out at the following locations:

- Isla Bastimentos National Marine Park, Bocas del Toro, Panama
- Serra do Divisor National Park, Brazil
- Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, Peru
- Canaima National Park, Venezuela
- Laguna Madre, Mexico

The roots of the case study program and the RLCA network go back to the fall of 1997 when conservation practitioners began to focus on management of large-scale landscapes and ecoregions. At that time, an informal group of Latin American and U.S. colleagues from conservation and development organizations (the Biodiversity Support Program, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute, Interamerican Foundation, Conservation International and Cornell University) formed a working group to consider the utility of multi-stakeholder coalitions as a vehicle for implementing conservation goals at larger scales.

protected area), regional (eco-regional planning), or policy questions (land use issues). They often emerge as a response to crisis, inertia, or inability of the agency of jurisdiction to achieve sought-for outcomes.

- **Integrative perspectives:** Coalitions are frequently created as a means of facilitating more integrated, multi-disciplinary, and multi-sectoral analysis of public policy or site-based problems; they are attempts to provide a forum that integrates various scientific disciplines, agency jurisdictions, and citizen perspectives.
- **Informality and flexibility:** Coalitions are often convened as an alternative to formal agency or judicial decision-making processes. Many have open-ended and voluntary membership, lack a formal legal status, promote shared leadership, and uphold consensus as the primary form of decision-making. These flexible and non-binding aspects of coalitions are particularly important in situations where there is a strong history of distrust among participants.
- **Non-proprietary:** Most coalitions, whatever their origin, are formed outside of existing agencies. They are non- (or extra-) governmental, and rarely limited to, or defined by an individual agency - governmental or non-profit. Their primary value is often in being perceived as outside the purview, and beyond the control, of any given organization.

Because coalitions take many forms, it is also helpful to find ways of distinguishing among them. Key distinctions emerge for important historical and function reasons. These distinctions are useful in comparing coalitions and in drawing lessons from their varied forms and experiences. As we will explore later, these aspects can also be helpful in evaluating coalitions' effectiveness:

- **Goals and objectives:** Coalitions are formed to address a variety of issues, some pro-active and preliminary, others more reactive and as a response to controversy or conflict. A coalition may be focused on specific management decisions, address long-term management planning for given conservation areas, or focus on broad-scale policy questions. Coalitions may have strong emphases on research, education, or management — and they may be formed to fulfill all of these functions. For the most part, coalitions are advisory and consultative in nature; however, there are many examples of collaborative deci-

sion-making bodies with institutional authority and legal mandate.

- **Size and composition:** Coalitions vary widely in terms of their size and in the number and type of their membership. Some coalitions are dominated by one or more constituencies (government, NGO, academic, or local communities), while others may encourage more balanced representation among stakeholders. And of course participation in a coalition may vary greatly over time. In any case, the composition of a collaborative group is important in terms of defining its vision and purpose, and in determining its ability to achieve its objectives.
- **Geographic range:** As indicated above, coalitions extend from very localized, community-based groups to organizations that address larger protected area, watershed, ecosystem or eco-regional concerns. Collaborative groups focusing on policy questions may be national or even international in scope. Many coalitions seek to transcend geographic scales by working with both site-based groups and broader regional alliances.
- **Degree of formality:** Many coalitions are voluntary in form, and allow considerable flexibility in participation, with no formal membership or leadership structure. At the other end of the extreme, coalitions may consist of appointed or elected representatives who serve specific terms and have defined functions. Decision-making processes may include either strongly consensus-based approaches or various forms of voting.
- **Leadership and management:** Coalitions also vary in terms of the type of leadership (individual and/or organizational) and in their organizational cultures. While some coalitions do have strong individual leaders guiding their development, given their collaborative nature, many coalitions are built upon principles of shared leadership and open, participatory management.

Why is Coalition Building Important?

During the past two decades, efforts at biodiversity conservation have increasingly shifted from a focus on individual species and sites to an emphasis on ecosystems. This eco-regional approach incorporates “portfolios of conservation areas” — native species, natural communities, and ecological systems — as the unit of analysis and management (TNC, 2000a). Similarly, as conservation agencies translate conservation science into conservation

practice, they have come to recognize the enormous complexity — ecological, social, and political — involved in implementing successful biodiversity conservation programs. Conservation practitioners have come to appreciate that their work must be positioned within a broader range of interests, issues, and institutions in order to achieve their objectives. And collaborative partnerships are an obvious way of incorporating the diversity of interests and the range of skills and resources needed to make these programs successful.

The move toward coalition building in conservation management programs has grown out of recognition of these general trends and of several associated factors:

- **Managing biodiversity crosses traditional political and agency boundaries.** Successful conservation programs must find ways to build new alliances among local and regional government entities, as well as with public service organizations, NGOs, commercial interests, and with local communities.
- **No one agency can do this complex, challenging work alone.** The scale and complexity of managing landscape-level conservation programs assumes that strong science, effective public policies, good enforcement capacity, ongoing education efforts, and active public involvement require the participation of a variety of organizations and perspectives.
- Recognition of the diverse social environments in which conservation programs will be implemented. Many program settings include localized traditional communities, migrant settlers, and mixed rural and urban settlements in which are found a variety of cultural traditions, values, social norms and organizations, and educational levels. Coalitions can be an effective means of bringing together diverse perspectives for discussion of land use, development, and conservation issues.
- As a means of pooling scarce resources — technical, human, and financial — in order to improve program implementation. Whether in industrialized countries or in lesser developed nations, the costs of long-term biodiversity conservation programs cannot ultimately be carried by a single organization. Coalitions can improve sharing and coordination among actors so that their efforts are complementary and cumulative, and so that duplication is avoided.
- As a response to an increasing trend toward decentralization and devolution of state authority.

Internationally, the political shift toward greater local control presents new challenges and opportunities for conservation managers. Stronger local government and local community involvement means more direct participation of those closest to critical resources and habitats. However, these more local views may also overlook broader landscape or regional environmental considerations, and they can also be prone to focus on shorter-term economic interests.

All these considerations suggest the need for working at multiple scales and with a range of agencies and organizations. Effective eco-regional programs have found innovative ways of linking local level, site-based conservation with broader landscape management goals. This work is generally accomplished through broad-based partnerships that include both community-based and agency approaches.

What Are the Benefits of Coalitions?

Claims for the advantages of collaborative approaches are considerable. Including a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints can lead to more creative and responsive solutions; collaborative forums can incorporate an array of experience and perspective into the decision-making process. If stakeholders feel a stronger sense of involvement in the decisions, they will show greater commitment for implementing them. And coalitions can offer an effective organizational mechanism to improve coordination and sharing (Gray, 1989).

Of more practical concern, broad-based coalitions offer the following direct benefits (Moeliono and Fisher, 1991):

- Improved technical assistance to partners and communities
- A structure for exchange of skills, knowledge, and experience
- A stronger framework and capability for public education and advocacy on key policy issues
- Improved coordination of activities to avoid duplication of efforts, leading to wider overall impact
- Ability to address large, complex problems that cannot necessarily be resolved through site-based, grass roots initiatives
- Greater access to financial and human resources,

No One Agency Can Do Conservation Alone: Laguna Madre

Pronatura del Noreste, an NGO responsible for the conservation of Laguna Madre, decided that working with a coalition of NGO's, government agencies and communities was the only way to effectively carry out landscape level conservation. Laguna Madre, a 2,000 km² natural area in northeastern Mexico and Texas, is isolated and remote; it spans two countries with vastly different economies and contains a variety of terrestrial, wetland, and marine habitats.

Pronatura is currently developing the long term strategy for how to best develop a regional conservation coalition, but already partnered with the Texas Center for Policy Studies (TCPS) in a binational coalition that coordinates scientific studies and information sharing across the binational protected area. Coalition building has greatly increased the flow of information, collaboration on field studies, success in fundraising activities, and in awareness raising about the reserve.

Their accomplishments are already numerous. In May, 2001, 21 sustainable development and conservation organizations signed the Binational Declaration on US/Mexico water negotiations to promote sustainable development and equitable water use as well as hold the Mexican and US governments accountable to their binational water agreements. The Binational Advisory Committee for the TCPS/Pronatura led coalition has members in Texas and Mexico from policy, conservation, government and sustainable development organizations. The international coalition has also a common strategic plan among the participants, sustainable development plans, and water use analysis. In this ecoregional and transboundary setting it would be impossible for a lone agency to do this work alone. In fact, coalitions are needed both at the international and regional levels to conduct the amount of work needed to reduce threats and achieve sustainable development in Laguna Madre and ecoregions elsewhere.

including the ability to leverage funding and in-kind contributions from coalition participants

What Are the Downsides of Coalitions?

While there are many strong advocates of collaborative approaches, there are skeptics who question whether these approaches are either appropriate or effective in developing biodiversity conservation programs. Critics of broad-based coalitions have challenged their relationship to traditional agency-based decision-making; they have also asked whether these diverse groups can in fact achieve improved decisions that retain fundamental environmental concerns. Recent assessments of conservation coalitions have highlighted the following general concerns over these approaches (McCloskey, 1994; Kenney, 2000):

- Public institutions represent the “public good” and are more effective stewards of the environment. This assumption reinforces conventional agency-based decision making — that trained professionals with a broad perspective of public policy issues can make more informed decisions that take into account scientific perspectives, policy and regulatory concerns, as well as the benefits for the widest possible public.
- A strong regulatory framework is necessary to

safeguard the public interest. Strong institutions and legal mechanisms are needed not only to determine public policies; they are also critical in ensuring implementation and compliance. Critics of collaborative groups are concerned that they may be seen as a substitution, rather than a complement, to existing agencies, policies, and laws.

- Collaborative processes can be expensive and time-consuming, and they can lead to lowest common denominator compromises. Public involvement requires fundamental shifts in agency priorities and approaches, and they can be tremendously demanding of time and resources that could better be used to develop effective site-based programs. In addition, given the diversity of public perspectives and the varied levels of knowledge and education, it is often impossible to satisfy all constituencies. The end result may simply be a compromise that leaves everyone unfulfilled and marginalizes critical environmental concerns.
- Strongly environmental viewpoints are compromised in collaborative groups. In situations with critical habitat or species preservation concerns, there are questions about how much compromise (i.e., between conservation and development interests) is acceptable.

- There is a high potential for cooptation of collaborative groups (especially those with a strong community-based orientation) by stronger political and commercial (pro-development) forces. Since many collaborative groups are local and advisory, there are many opportunities for powerful interests to influence decisions at higher decision-making levels, discounting the efforts of these localized coalitions. There are often few guarantees that decisions reached by these coalitions will in fact be implemented by government institutions or respected by commercial interests.
- Participation of multiple organizations may lead to greater uncertainty in project management. Collaborative processes may require multiple organizations to approve coalition activities. Approval could lead to increased time to carry out projects. Over the long run, however, coalitions may actually reduce time to complete projects if and when participants establish streamlined processes for their activities.

The Sierra Club's Michael McCloskey has offered this summary challenge to environmental coalitions: "...the burden is on the promoters of [collaboration] to demonstrate that it can work; that it can be fair and involve all stakeholders, especially where broad issues are at stake; that it can respect agency legitimacy; that it can get beyond good feeling to produce management solutions; and that it can be worth the time it requires" (McCloskey, 1998). Indeed, effective environmental coalitions must demonstrate that they can hold true to democratic principles and encourage broad public involvement of citizenry; achieve sound and practical environmental outcomes, and that they are a more efficient and effective complement, or alternative, to conventional agency-based approaches.

Key Ingredients and Attributes of Successful Coalitions

There is considerable evidence to suggest that effective collaboration is neither coincidental nor universal (Cigler, 1994). There are certain contextual factors that tend to favor the development of collaborative partnerships. These enabling contextual factors are critical in providing the setting in which collaboration can emerge and prosper. Several authors have focused attention on identifying the most important pre-conditions for the establishment of collaborative conservation management efforts (Lee, 1993; Cigler, 1994; Cordova, 1997):

- There is a shared sense of crisis, stress, need or opportunity: While crisis is often the precipitating factor in the development of collaborative groups, there are many other pro-active causes that bring stakeholders together: the perception of a future threat, a sense of opportunity to act in the face of impending change or institutional inertia. At the very least, there is an acknowledgement of common purpose and interdependence among stakeholder groups — and that their collective action is the most effective means to achieving a shared goal.
- Leadership exists to promote collaborative processes: In many cases an "honest broker," a trusted individual, or group of individuals, emerges to provide a vision and the skills for collaborative processes. In most cases, this leadership arises from within — i.e., an individual or a group of participants who see the value in bringing together diverse constituents. However, in many documented cases (particularly those with long histories of intense conflict) an outside facilitator or mediator may be identified to provide the catalyst, skills, and the sense of trust to foster a collaborative process.
- Supportive policies and institutions: With few exceptions, effective collaborative groups generally thrive within a favorable political and policy context. Thus we see the emergence of collaborative groups in democratic systems where public involvement is encouraged and where institutions are either supportive, or at the very least accepting, of broad-based participation.
- Balanced power: In many settings, unequal power dynamics are a major obstacle to collaboration. Imbalances may occur in stakeholders' access to resources and to political and decision-making authority; in addition, various stakeholder groups may feel unable to participate, or at a distinct disadvantage, by virtue of their educational background, language facility, lack of identified representatives, or other internal organizational considerations. Stakeholders are certainly more likely to become involved in collaborative processes when these power differentials can be mitigated through a variety of preparatory activities, structural considerations, or process strategies.
- Availability of resources: Access to human and financial resources is often a key factor in the development of coalitions. Aspects of leadership have been mentioned above; intellectual and scientific capital are also important in the establish-

ment of collaborative groups. Funding (often very small amounts of funding) can often provide the initial catalyst, or incentive, that helps bring stakeholders into a process.

There are certainly exceptional circumstances in which coalitions have arisen in the absence of these enabling conditions. However, it is also true that collectively, these enabling factors are important in providing the proper context within which a collaborative process can develop. They are therefore helpful in conducting initial assessments to determine the potential for collaborative action within a given setting.

As we consider these general contextual factors that favor the emergence of collaborative groups, we also look for program experience that suggest common ingredients, or best management practices, that encourage success. Here again, these elements are not necessarily absolute or predictive; they do, however, represent a general framework for assessing the health and effectiveness of given

coalitions (see, inter alia, McNeely, 1995; Zube and Busch, 1995; Larson et al., 1997; Margoluis et al., 2000; Russell et al., 1999; Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000):

- Common vision: Clarity of conservation goals and objectives helps focus the work of coalitions so that participants rally around a common agenda. Quite often coalitions are in fact formed out of a visioning process that identifies shared goals and defines a collective purpose for the effort. In any case, early work on negotiating, and documenting, goals and objectives may be a slow and painstaking process, but it pays off in the long run. Clear vision provides a clarity of purpose that guides the work of a coalition and helps participants define their involvement over time.
- Holistic, systemic perspective: Coalitions can achieve many specific objectives, and embrace a broader constituency, if they endorse an integrated program that is well grounded in context. A more holistic perspective sets the tone and frame

Elements of Success: Strategic Alliances

The El Triunfo Biosphere Reserve is located in the central part of the Sierra Madre mountain range in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. In 1990, the federal government designated the area as a Biosphere Reserve and in 1993 it was included as part of the International Network of Biospheres in the Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB) sponsored by UNESCO. The reserve covers a 119,177-hectare area that is divided into two management zones: the Core Area (25,343 hectares) and the Buffer Zone Area (93,834 hectares).

The complexity of the problems and the institutional limits faced by the National Ecological Institute and the Natural History Institute, the quasi governmental organizations in charge of administering the site, have led both to develop strategic alliances to accomplish conservation goals. Many of the proposed strategies for threat reduction are beyond the area of influence of both institutions and, as a result, the participation of various local groups as well as national and international organizations is necessary for conservation management. As both managing institutions formed strategic alliances, however, the increased participation in the coalition by governmental organizations, grass roots organizations, research institu-

tions, and other stakeholders became a particular challenge due to the disparity between the objectives, missions, and interests of the participant groups. The key issue for the reserve was how to guide the participation of the different government and NGO programs while at the same time encouraging participation from the local communities so that a coherent, well organized management plan is developed? The coalition members were able to face this challenge by forming a Technical Advisory Council of key stakeholders and development of a common set of conservation plans by the Council.

The collaborative relationships that evolved were the first time in the history of Chiapas conservation management that an effective collaborative relationship has existed among state and federal agencies and environmental NGOs. Information sharing and collaborative activities assisted in the development of new working relationships between all active stakeholders. Their accomplishments include improved fundraising, management of agricultural conflicts, reduction of forest fires, establishment of a sustainable coffee cultivation program, and improved coordination of reserve management.

work for a collaborative approach, since a wide range of viewpoints is considered relevant.

- Flexibility and responsiveness: Effective coalitions often exhibit a very opportunistic and entrepreneurial character; they accept change and respond quickly in adapting their agenda, incorporating new activities and approaches, encouraging new membership, and altering their organizational structure.
- Long-term commitment: Biodiversity conservation programs necessarily assume extended time scales and continuity. While coalitions are not necessarily formed for permanence, a long-term view helps define a wider agenda and position the group within a broader working framework. Long-term commitment of a core group of participants is important in establishing this extended vision and in providing the leadership and continuity of effort.

Dam Conservation Crisis in Bolivia and Argentina

In 1996, the governments of Bolivia and Argentina proposed construction of three dams: Cambarí, located on the Río Grande de Tarija, with a surface area of 3,600 hectares; Arrazayal, on the Río Bermejo, with a surface area of 2,776 hectares and Las Pavas, also situated on the Río Bermejo, with a surface area of 2,974 hectares. The Cambarí Dam will be constructed in the Tariquía Reserve and the Las Pavas Dam will flood part of the Baritú National Park as well as part of an ecological corridor situated between the Tariquía Reserve and Baritú National Park. The Tariquía National Flora and Fauna Reserve (Reserva Nacional de Flora y Fauna Tariquía), Cordillera de Sama Biological Reserve (Reserva Biológica de la Cordillera de Sama), are located in the state of Tariquía in Bolivia, and the Baritú National Park (Parque Nacional Baritú) is found in the province of Salta, Argentina. The Tariquía Reserve, Baritú National Park, and Sama Reserve are located in what is known as the northern sub-watershed unit, located in the upper basin area of the Bermejo River which covers an area of approximately 25,000 square kilometers. If the area of the Tariquía Reserve, the proposed area of the ecological corridor in the Bolivian sector, and the size of the Sama Reserve (the corresponding basin area) are taken into consideration, the protected area covers approximately 399,500 hectares. This represents 36% of the area of the sub watershed unit and is of enormous ecological importance. On the Argentine side, the Baritú Park represents 5.18% of the sub watershed unit. 350 local resident would be forced to relocate due to flooding.

As a result of future social and environmental impacts, but primarily because of the uncertain economic benefits that Bolivia in general and the Tarija region in particular may realize, public

opinion in the state of Tarija objects to the construction of the dams. The coalition that arose in opposition to the dams intended to operate at national and international levels to persuade the governments to halt construction, or, at the very least, include just socioeconomic and conservation payments, environmental impact reports, and proper representation on the binational committee heading the dam project. The Civic Committee of the State of Tarija, Bolivia (Comité Cívico del Departamento de Tarija) primarily drove the coalition. This Civic Committee unites civil society institutions in Tarija and is recognized by both local and national governments as the organization that represents the voice of the population from the region by stating the issues and presenting complaints to government agencies. In Bolivia, civic committees have historically been the institutions that presented regional requests and made sure that the legitimacy of the issues were recognized at higher decision making levels.

The crisis that arose from the project shows how public reaction through a broad based coalition could influence governmental actions that can greatly affect protected areas. Coalition efforts, together with lack of funding due to the economic crisis in Argentina, resulted in a halt to dam construction. The formation of the coalition also shows the importance of having policy level actions to change actions which may entirely negate local conservation activities. In other words, effective local conservation organizations could have been entirely in vain had the decision of building the dam, likely made in the country capital, far from the sphere of the protected area, taken place.

- **Good science linked to adaptive management:** Effective coalitions maintain strong links to field-based realities. This can be achieved through solid initial characterization and analysis, coupled with an adaptive management, learning-by-doing approach that accepts change as a central feature of management. Good coalitions use scientific information carefully in planning, monitoring, and adjusting their programs. A commitment to strong scientific inquiry and ongoing monitoring provides the accountability and the adjustment mechanism to keep biodiversity goals in constant view.
- **Ongoing public involvement and education:** Coalitions are formed as a representative grouping of stakeholders, but they cannot of course be all inclusive, all the time. Effective coalitions find ways to build wider awareness and support beyond the core group of participants. They offer varied opportunities for participation and recognize the importance of educating the public at large: through the media, local schools, various task groups, and a range of events and activities.
- **Simple, equitable decision-making processes:** “Keeping it simple” appears to be a common theme of collaborative processes. Coalitions are often formed as a response to crisis and/or conflict, and they are frequently created as an alternative to traditional institutions. For this reason, many coalitions focus on establishing simple decision-making procedures that are often more egalitarian and consensus-based; they work to clarify roles and responsibilities of participants while maintaining an open, transparent, and equitable working style.
- **Clear and tangible benefits:** The continuity of coalitions is largely a function of their ability to meet participants’ needs and achieve tangible results. Successful coalitions are judged on their accomplishments — they can only abide if they serve the interests of their constituencies in resolving existing conflicts, addressing participants’ individual and common interests, and, ultimately, in providing clear conservation impacts.
- **Core group of actors:** Creating a core group of actors that maintain and establish the coalition is critical from the outset since this group defines the vision of the coalition and ensures its goals are achieved. An effective core group will also provide “leadership of leaders” (sometimes described as akin to herding cats) and maintain the momentum and equilibrium of the coalition.

- **Complementary strengths:** Having a diversity of technical organizational strengths among coalition members is fundamental to addressing complex conservation problems. Skills may range from policy dialogues, biological surveys, management planning, community development, and regional to national networking, just to name a few. It is impossible for one organization to be effective at such a broad base of skills. As a result, the strategic alliances formed within a coalition should reflect the skills needed to accomplish conservation goals.

Strategies and Tools for Developing Effective Coalitions

As we learn more about the key elements of successful collaborative efforts, we have also begun to identify the essential skills necessary for establishing and maintaining effective coalitions. Training events, including TNC’s Conservation Training Week, and the development of appropriate learning materials, are essential in building the capacity of conservation practitioners to establish and work with effective collaborative groups. Skill-building opportunities should be built into the fabric of program activities within any collaborative working group. The following strategies and tools are viewed as foundations for good practice:

- **Stakeholder and situation analysis:** Conducting a thoughtful preliminary assessment of stakeholders and issues is frequently seen to be the first step in planning collaborative processes. A strong sense of the varied stakeholders, their perspectives, positions, interests, and relationships to other constituents, is invaluable in thinking through an appropriate convening process and structure for the coalition.
- **Information gathering:** Accurate, timely, and accessible information provides participants with a common understanding for more deliberative judgements. Good information helps to educate stakeholders about systems and issues, and the viewpoints of other stakeholder groups. Information will also be critical for identifying and establishing criteria for negotiating agreements, and in providing references for monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of these agreements.
- **Creating a common vision:** A common vision provides the glue that binds participants to a goal and process. There are many creative and structured ways (e.g., design charettes, strategic plan-

ning meetings, vision galleries, search conferences) of bringing disparate stakeholders together to define common ground on which they can proceed.

- **Process design:** Effective coalitions are built on good process. Coalition leaders must work to clarify the goals of the overall process, but also define a common road map for key events and decision points. The design of these decision-making processes will identify external factors (e.g., legal or institutional frameworks, organizational deadlines) and various opportunities for public involvement that allow for different levels of participation and appropriate ways to inform the wider public.
- **Building and maintaining coalitions:** Coalitions are unique organizations that require special leadership qualities and skill development. Basic organizational management skills must be augmented with capacity building in group dynamics, team building, facilitation, mediation, and negotiation skills. A range of public involvement and communication strategies is also helpful in developing successful coalitions.
- **Assessment, learning, and adaptation:** Monitoring and evaluation provide the navigational tools to keep coalitions on track, both in terms of achieving sound ecological management as well as addressing the varied expectations of stakeholder participants. The development of sound criteria for evaluation, effective monitoring programs, and integrating this learning into decision-making are critical in keeping the coalition and its agenda from straying from its purpose.

Emerging Questions

As coalitions become a more common feature of biodiversity conservation management programs, and as they are both promoted and criticized, it is even more important that they be subjected to more thoughtful and objective analysis. Several recent reviews have sought to assess the tangible impacts of collaborative groups and to determine the key elements of successful environmental coalitions (Kenney, 2000; Margoluis et al., 2000; Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000). Some of these assessments have relied upon considerable case material for their conclusions; many of these conclusions are certainly instructive and have already been referenced in the discussion above.

We continue to draw on this existing analytical material while exploring further some of the

important questions related to the benefits of coalitions, the conditions under which they are most appropriately developed, and the best means of assessing their impact. The key questions we seek to answer include:

- What are the tangible conservation-related impacts of effective coalition-building efforts?
- What are the enabling conditions for helping coalitions succeed?
- What are effective alternatives to coalitions, and when should these alternatives be pursued?
- What are the challenges, costs, and risks of coalition-building?
- What are the most effective strategies for overcoming these challenges?
- What are appropriate methods for evaluating successful coalitions?

Conclusions

While we press forward in developing innovative and exciting programs, we must also pause to reflect on our practice and experience and avoid offering simplistic, magic-bullet solutions. We must also eschew a creeping orthodoxy that seems to say that coalitions are the only appropriate means to achieving conservation objectives. As Donald Snow has written, “the two C words (‘collaboration’ and ‘consensus’) have become so anointed with sanctity that anyone who refuses to embrace them is thought to be a troglodyte, a traitor, a stick-in-the-mud, or (God forbid!) a purist....” (Snow, 2000).

In examining case studies and the growing literature on environmental coalitions, we have learned the importance of a solid understanding of the context and challenge. Coalitions work when the opportunity is right, when the goals and decision-making process have been clearly defined, and certainly when key pre-conditions for collaboration are present.

We recognize that coalition-building can be one of several, often complementary approaches to achieving conservation objectives (Yaffee and Wondolleck, 2000). Strong public agencies are essential in defining programs, convening public involvement processes, in informing and validating critical decisions, in implementing programs, and in enforcing regulations. Broad-based public participation and rights of challenge and appeal are crucial in maintaining agency accountability and

encouraging continued education, a critical element of successful conservation efforts. Finally, the role of independent science must not be undervalued — baseline research, and continued monitoring are essential elements of keeping policies and programs on track.

Collaborative approaches offer a new path for building mutual accountability into biodiversity conservation. The involvement of diverse stakeholders can help focus the issues, raise the level of dialogue, and define a common sense of purpose that provide the necessary criteria for evaluating programs. This stronger accountability respects agency legitimacy while challenging its every decision and action. It recognizes that within the public there are diverse perspectives that must be aired and considered as decisions are made about managing our environment. And, it acknowledges that there is no substitute for good science and performance measures that help us assess, learn, and adapt our decisions to changes in the environment as a whole.

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Conservation Coalition Self-Assessment Tool

Introduction

Similar to other implementing instruments, coalitions require periodic assessments to measure efficiency and improve capacities. In order to do this, it is important to understand coalitions' goal is to improve the negotiation process for Protected Areas (PA) (including problem solving). As such, coalitions are a vehicle to reach a larger PA conservation goal.

The self-assessment is an innovative institutional development strategy that allows coalition members to reflect on strengths and weaknesses and verify if the coalition is complying with its goal. This is accomplished through a small guide and appropriate tools to allow internal self-reflection. The final result should be development of an action plan that details the best methods to achieve the coalition's improvement by capitalizing existing strengths and fortifying weaknesses.

This document provides a guide for coalition self-assessment, and is based on the structure of the *Institutional Self-Assessment, A Tool for Strengthening Nonprofit Organizations*, developed and published by TNC in 2001. Both documents provide similarities in their introductions, indicator structure and references. However, the indicator content selection has been adapted to conditions found in coalitions, which differ from an individual organization. The indicators were chosen through an aggregate of institutional self-assessment experiences and interviews with coalitions members cooperating with TNC (keeping in mind successful and unsuccessful experiences), subsequently corroborated through learning networks such as the Fortaleza and the Mexican Conservation Learning Initiative (IMAC).

Why Should a Coalition Assess Itself?

A coalition open to constructive criticism and adapting to change can benefit from the following key areas:

- Clarify priorities and correct weaknesses
- Improve efficiency to meet its goals
- Improve its work plan (strategy)
- Demonstrate professionalism for donors and national authorities
- Improve funds mobilization
- Optimize monitoring and evaluation capacity
- Learn through a systematic process

Who Should Utilize this Tool?

This tool has been designed for existing coalitions working in protected areas and natural resource management, or other similar groups working in sustainable development sectors. The tool is useful regardless of the coalition's development level or legal structure. Ideally, all coalition member groups and organizations should participate in this exercise, especially their leaders (directors, board members) and individuals directly participating in the coalition's work. When possible, it is advisable to include selected non-coalition individuals or organizations that work with or are related to the coalition's work; this will bring an external perspective to the self-assessment.

When Should this Tool be Used?

This tool can be utilized by a coalition that has been up and running for a period of at least a year (preferably) conducting some type of protected areas project management or similar activity, when it has determined the need for a self assessment. It will be easier to clearly establish the assessment's objectives and reach, and application of the tool's indicators.

The decision to conduct an evaluation may be the result of either internal or external issues. The exercise can be conducted before or after a specific

project or activity, before or after a strategically important decision, due to changes of context that caused the coalition to be formed, or based on a donor's suggestion. It's important to be clear on the assessment's purpose and how the results will be utilized.

Facilitation

In order to maintain impartiality and quality of process, it is important to utilize an external facilitator (one not affiliated with any of the member organizations), at least the first time the self assessment is conducted. If this is not possible, the facilitator could come from one of the member organizations if s/he has the necessary experience (capacity) and the other members are in agreement. It is hoped that in the medium term, coalitions can develop the capacity to facilitate their own self assessments.

Based on their experience in similar processes, the facilitator can help adapt the assessment methodology (adjusting to the coalition as needed) and plan the exercise. In addition, s/he is the catalyst for discussions on self-assessment topics related to the coalition's state and efficiency. Throughout the process the facilitator: provides information on indicators and references, facilitates and documents work sessions, pushes the process to be completed and assists in defining the action plan parameters (coalition strengthening) based on the self-assessment results.

The coalition self-reflection objective and formulation of appropriate recommendations for improvement are the result of good planning and facilitation. The Appendix contains "Examples for the Facilitator."

Methodology

The evaluation process can include individual or collective interviews, small work groups, and single or multiple workshops with all coalition members. It is usually possible to complete application of this self-assessment tool in a single day, if everyone can attend and participate. Additional time will be required if separate sessions are held or if external participants are included or interviewed. When

coalition members cannot meet due to extenuating circumstances, telephone conferences can be arranged or e-mail can be utilized, thus extending the process.

This tool suggests a series of nine thematic areas, each with a series of indicators. Each indicator contains five benchmarks that serve to estimate the coalition's actual situation at the time of the assessment. Each of these benchmarks is assigned a score between one and five. A score of five corresponds to the best possible situation for that indicator, while a one shows a more critical situation. Coalition members participating in the exercise should agree and select benchmarks, taking into account the description most closely describing the coalition's reality.

To maintain internal consistency and as in the previously referenced "Institutional Self-Assessment" tool, the value scale in this tool is designed to analyze the coalition's capacity over its lifetime. Since coalitions are comprised of diverse organizations with different development levels and distinct goals, it is not recommended these indicators be used to compare individual members. If necessary, each coalition can structure this tool in the best possible manner to identify its strengths and key areas that still require strengthening by designing its own complementary indicators adjusted to its own reality. Within each indicator an "explanation" section is included where the group can document qualitative aspects or comments that help explain the circumstances used to select the benchmark. The nine indicator categories are:

- 1. Strategic vision and planning*
- 2. Structure*
- 3. Leadership*
- 4. Participation*
- 5. Implementation and impact*
- 6. External communications*
- 7. Financial management*
- 8. Human resource management*
- 9. Evaluation and programmatic adjustments*

5. Given its historical commitment and knowledge about protected areas and the partner organizations working there, The Nature Conservancy has provided facilitators for many self-assessments. However, since in many cases the Conservancy is a donor to certain protected areas, this can generate a conflict of interests.

Not all the above mentioned indicator categories and benchmarks presented in this document are applicable to all coalitions. Before utilizing this tool it is important for the coalition to define which indicators and references are applicable, which can be adjusted, and which are unnecessary. As needed, additional indicators and benchmarks should be developed to adapt this tool to the needs of the specific coalition.

Beginning with the viable recommendations resulting from the self-assessment analysis, it is hoped an action plan will be developed with the support of all members to strengthen the coalition. Ideally, after the assessment and work plan are developed, the coalition should initiate an adjustment and improvement process.

Coalition Performance Indicators

i. Strategic Vision and Planning

As coalitions are comprised of actors from diverse sectors, it is important to have a shared vision and strategy. This section presents indicators regarding the coalition's origin, ecological and socioeconomic context, mission, principles and values, goals and objectives, and strategic and financial planning.

a) *Origin and History*

What was the problem or issue that caused the coalition to be formed? This aspect may appear obvious to the coalition founders, but may not be at all clear to members who join at a later time. It is important to recognize external factors that acted as the process catalyst. These can be positive (a development project, community initiative, planning for the protected area) or negative (a natural disaster, political crisis, threat to the protected area). Coalition members can interpret this history in different ways, making it important to review and prevent potential disagreements. Each group's specific history is unique and a motivating force; it should be kept in mind to help unify the group. It is also important to frequently review if a need still exists for the coalition's work, taking into account the coalition's objective may be short, medium or long term (such as resolving an immediate issue, or facilitating a continuous process such as management of a protected area (PA)).

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	All members understand the coalition's origin and the process involving its establishment. This has been jointly discussed and documented. There are still clear reasons for the coalition to exist, and this is periodically discussed.
<input type="radio"/> 4	Most members understand the coalition's origin and the process involving its establishment. This has been jointly discussed and is partially documented. There are still good reasons for the coalition to exist, and the topic is occasionally discussed.
<input type="radio"/> 3	All members understand the coalition's origin and are somewhat familiar with how it was established. There still appears to be a reason for the coalition to exist, but the topic is not discussed.
<input type="radio"/> 2	Some members are aware of the coalition's history, and occasionally share this information. Some members are clear on why the coalition should be maintained while others are not.
<input type="radio"/> 1	No one has a clear idea of how or why the coalition was established.

Briefly explain how this reference was selected. _____

ADESBO, the Bocas del Toro Sustainable Development Alliance. This alliance arose from the planning process for the Bastimentos Island National Marine Park. "The coalition began in conjunction with a financing opportunity from the PROARCA/Costas project, and based on the overriding need for a protected area and buffer zone management plan. The process was initiated by PROARCA/Costas, and consisted of consultations with the National Environmental Authority, environmental organizations and some

of the archipelago's community representatives" (ADESBO 2002).

In this case, as with others, the coalition's creation was not based on a single factor but on a series of critical conditions. These included the need for a National Park strategic plan, development of a natural resource project and a previous relationship between the local, national and international organizations.

b) Ecological and Socioeconomic Context

What are the principal ecological, social and cultural characteristics of the region where the coalition works? The coalition's success is closely linked to an appropriate interpretation of the local context where it operates. Understanding the local social actors, pressure groups and current opportunities and threats helps to define how to direct its actions. One of the singular characteristics of conservation coalitions is the link with the natural area or ecosystem. However, knowledge of the natural context may be extremely varied among civil society or non-governmental organizations. The coalition members should share information and fully understand the conditions and threats to ecological integrity. At the same time, it is important to understand the social, economic and cultural aspects.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The social, economic, cultural and biodiversity characteristics and threats are understood and periodically discussed. The characteristics are documented and serve as the basis for the coalition's actions. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The social, economic, cultural and biodiversity characteristics and threats are understood and discussed. These issues are occasionally reviewed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Social, economic, cultural and biodiversity aspects are sometimes discussed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Some members fully understand while others have a very limited knowledge of the regional social, economic, cultural and biodiversity characteristics. The coalition does not review these topics. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Understanding of the regional social, economic, cultural and biodiversity characteristics are not clear and are not part of the coalition's purpose. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) Mission

A clear and shared mission is important for a coalition, and a key factor in achieving its objectives. In addition, it is indicative of an effective group and promotes the coalition's image with other social and institutional actors. The mission should be concise, accepted by all members, and periodically reviewed. The coalition's work, as well as organizational structure should be derived from the mission.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | A clear mission is readily articulated by all members, directs the coalition's activities, is widely recognized and reviewed periodically. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | A clear mission is readily articulated by all members and directs the coalition's activities. It is occasionally reviewed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | A clear mission is readily articulated by all members and directs a portion of the coalition's activities. It has not been reviewed since originally developed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | An imprecise mission exists, but is not readily articulated by all members and is disconnected from the majority of the coalition's activities. It has not been reviewed since originally developed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | There is no clear or shared mission. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

d) Principles and Values

What are the coalition's most important work related principles and values? In this section we are trying to recognize not necessarily what we do, but how and under what principles we wish to work. Ethical values are the foundation of our work and relationships with others. In general, we have to assume that all individuals or participating groups share our value scale. However, the more diverse the member groups, the easier it is for values or perception of values to differ, which can lead to disagreements. Explicitly stating values that distinguish us from other groups provides a set of guiding principles for the coalition's work.

References:

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|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has sufficient stated ethical principles, updating them as needed to guide its work. These have been developed through a participatory process and are applied in all of its activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has sufficient stated ethical principles to guide its work. These have been developed through a participatory process and are applied in the majority of its activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has various stated ethical principles. These guide its work and have been developed through a participatory process. The principles need to be reviewed. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not have explicitly stated ethical principles, but recognizes and applies certain common values in the coalition's activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition lacks commonly shared ethical principles, which has caused conflicts among members. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

e) Goals and Objectives

To ensure the coalition achieves its mission, it is important to establish the coalition's goals and objectives. Ideally, these goals should meet the following criteria:

- Impact oriented: represent desired change to critical threats that affect the protected area and its management.
- Measurable: can be verified through a predetermined scale.
- Concise: clearly defined so all involved individuals understand them.
- Realistic: achievable and appropriate given the site context.
- Explicit: all members should understand and agree with the goals and objectives.

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	The coalition has explicitly stated goals and objectives that were developed through a participatory process. They guide the coalition's work and comply with the above-mentioned criteria. All members understand the goals and objectives and their individual roles in achieving them. An up-to-date work plan exists that incorporates the goals and objectives, and is revised periodically.
<input type="radio"/> 4	The coalition has explicitly stated goals and objectives that were developed through a participatory process. They guide the coalition's work and comply with the majority of the above mentioned criteria. A work plan exists and is occasionally revised.
<input type="radio"/> 3	The goals and objectives are not very clear, although developed through a participatory process. They are not incorporated into a work plan.
<input type="radio"/> 2	The coalition does not have clear goals and objectives, but the members seem to understand the importance of their activities.
<input type="radio"/> 1	The coalition does not have clear goals and objectives, but the members seem to understand the importance of their activities.

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

f) Strategic and Financial Planning

Coalitions are comprised of a variety of groups and organizations that include government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and volunteer and community associations. Each member has its own organizational culture. It is fundamental to respect this diversity when working together, while at the same time recognizing the need for the coalition's own activities, financial management, and creation of "organizational culture." One tool designed for this purpose is strategic and financial planning, based on the mission and working principles that identify the coalition's necessary activities and resources. In some cases financial planning is conducted separately. It should be noted that some coalitions have been established to co-manage a PA, and their operations are strictly dictated by the PA's management plan (strategy). In section 7, additional financial management indicators are presented.

References:

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|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | A clear strategic plan exists, including a long term financial plan (3 – 5 years). It is periodically revised and was the result of a participatory planning exercise with the coalition’s members. The administrative and financial goals are largely met. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | A strategic plan exists and includes a long term financial plan (3 – 5 years). The plan is occasionally revised and was developed by some of the coalition members. There is some degree of difficulty meeting the administrative and financial goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | A strategic plan exists and includes a short term financial plan (1-2 years). After being developed, the plan has been reviewed. Administrative and financial goals are partially met. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | A strategic plan exists but does not include a financial plan or long-term operations plan. The administrative goals are partially achieved and a financial deficit exists. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition has not created or completed a strategic plan. Neither operations goals and objectives, nor financial projections have been developed. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

<p>The OSA Coalition was created to consolidate a biological corridor between the Corcovado National Park and the Peñas Blancas National Park in southern Costa Rica. Given the complex regional socioeconomic and political conditions</p>	<p>there is high demand for this coalition’s work. Through the strategic planning exercise and its continual review, it has been possible to identify priorities, define roles and responsibilities, and to begin achieving its mission.</p>
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2. Structure

This section includes only one indicator on organizational structure. Given that coalitions are the result of a highly diverse set of local contexts, they tend to have different organizational structures. The coalition’s structure should respond to its mission and purpose.

A coalition’s degree of legal formality could influence its structure. The coalition may or may not be a legally incorporated entity, and its legal standing may be indicative of its degree of development. Generally, a more formalized structure is determined by external circumstances, for example based on donor or government requirements. It is important to consider the coalition’s goals in order to define the degree of formalized structure needed. A legally recognized coalition may be secondary to developing its constitution and getting the coalition up and running. In some cases, coalitions function better under a more informal legal status.

References:

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|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has a sound organizational structure (implementing, executive and coordinating bodies) of which its members are fully aware. The structure permits flow of information and efficient implementation needed to achieve the coalition's mission. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has a sound organizational structure (implementing, executive and coordinating bodies) of which its members are fully aware. The structure permits flow of information and efficient implementation needed to achieve the coalition's mission. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has only one formalized body. Coordination and implementation are not permanent functions. The structure is not completely aligned with the goals or needs. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not have defined roles and is organized around activities it plans to implement. The structure is not aligned with the coalition's goals or needs. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition does not have defined roles and is organized around activities it plans to implement. The structure is not aligned with the coalition's goals or needs. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

Structures and Operating Procedures

The Bastimentos Island National Marine Park (BINMP) Consultative Council, located in the Bocas del Toro province of Panama, is comprised of two bodies: the Consultative Council and the Executive Committee. The Consultative Council is comprised of 26 members representing the 10 local government entities, 10 local communities, one private sector representative, three NGO representatives, and one Smithsonian representative. The Executive Committee is comprised of 10 individuals representing the different institutions involved in managing the BINMP. The Consultative Committee cannot meet regularly as the community members live throughout the disperse archipelago and the cost and time involved in meeting is prohibitively high. As a result, the Executive Committee assumes implementation leadership, meets frequently and guides the coalition's work.

The Honduran Gulf of Fonseca Verification and Control Commission (CVC) operates through periodic meetings with all participating members,

under the direction of the president and support from an individual who has taken on the role of secretary. During each meeting, work group commissions are created to address specific issues such as reviewing reported pollution infractions, or to conduct a specific activity such as halting illegal harvesting or overexploitation of specific species of crabs or the black iguana.

"The Talamanca Caribbean Biological Corridor Association of Organizations in Costa Rica initially operated as an informal negotiation round table, where all members would meet to make joint decisions. At that time not all the organizations were sure they wanted to be coalition members. In later years it continued operating with all members participating in regular meetings (once or twice a month). All the organizations wanted to participate and did not want to delegate decision making, even when this required significant time commitments from the representatives" (taken from L. Monge, 2001, *Coalitions Manual*, Proarca-TNC).

3. Leadership

One important aspect of coalitions is shared leadership based on the trust developed between the coalition's participants. Coalitions are typically created through an opportunity that motivates everyone to take action (for example, an environmental crisis or a management plan). During this phase, the participants tend to be very positive; however, keeping this spirit alive and converting it into a permanent characteristic is a challenging task for its leaders.

In this section indicators reflect leadership, decision making and managing change.

a) Leadership

Coalitions often have a charismatic individual (or several individuals) who brings the other participants into the group. During the initial stages, these people are vital as a coalition is still a novelty and needs to move past social inertia to create this new group. These social entrepreneurs represent part of a coalition's initial capital, and their personal leadership style is imprinted on the group. However, work in a coalition is much broader than what one individual proposes to achieve. Coalitions that have charismatic leaders but also provide space to invite open participation tend to consolidate more quickly. In addition, they depend less on one individual and can better adapt to change. While it can be a delicate discussion, it is important to be honest and objective.

References:

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|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has shared leadership, which promotes collaboration and a sense of belonging within the group. Group members take the initiative for activities beyond those linked to their primary role. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition uses a collaborative leadership approach that promotes a sense of belonging within the group. Group members take initiative for activities based on their primary role. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition is lead by a few members who tend to take initiative for activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition is lead by a small group of members. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition is lead by an individual or organization. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Decision Making

Coalitions are groupings of different types of organizations and therefore require a balanced and efficient decision making process. It is recommended that decision making encourages learning between coalition members. The best process requires existence of adequate information, means to access information, communications channels and opportunities for internal and external consultation and analysis. These elements facilitate decisions based on a solid and knowledgeable foundation. When working with coalitions, a high degree of participation is important to ensure decisions are made with the support of the majority of its members and respond to the coalition's goals. It is important the decision making process be dynamic, timely, and immediate actions taken. What is commonly known as "analysis paralysis" should be avoided.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has information and access to appropriate communications channels and creates time for internal and external consultations. Situations are analyzed through a participatory process and decisions are documented. Decisions are timely and respond to the coalition's goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has access to basic information and creates time for internal and external consultations. Generally the situations are analyzed through a participatory process, and decisions are documented. Decisions are relatively timely and respond to the coalition's goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has little information and has not defined internal or external consultation time frames. At times situations are analyzed through a participatory process, although the process is slow. Decisions are occasionally documented. Decisions do not always respond to the coalition's goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition has little information. Some room exists for communication and analysis, but not all decisions are made during these times. The process is not very participatory and does not motivate members. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition's decisions are made behind closed doors, by one person or a group of its members, or decisions are not made. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) Management of Organizational Change

Coalitions go through clear stages of development, face constant changes that can be addressed internally among members, or unexpected external situations that require redirecting the coalition's efforts. For this reason, it is necessary to adopt a positive attitude towards change, which is indicative of the coalition's ability to function. Many times an open and flexible attitude is evidenced through explicit policies and mechanisms, and drives the change process.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has a very open attitude towards innovation and is predisposed to adapting to change. The mission, structure and procedures are periodically revised and updated when necessary. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition recognizes the need for innovation and is predisposed to adapting to change. The mission, structure and procedures are occasionally revised and updated when necessary. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has an undefined attitude towards innovation and change. The mission, structure and procedures require revision and the topic is being officially discussed within the group. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not have a defined position on the topic of innovation and change and has implemented changes since its inception. Although the group has not yet discussed the topic, its members perceive a need for change. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Coalition members maintain a rigid (closed) attitude to necessary innovations and change. This situation is generating a crisis that can paralyze the coalition or has already done so. Some defensive attitudes and conflicts exist. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

4. Participation

The diversity of coalition participants (groups or individuals) and the quality of relationships between members are critical elements of success. This section includes indicators on composition and participation, relationship and conflict management, communication, openness and growth, and membership satisfaction.

a) Composition and Participation

A coalition's strength is not derived from the quantity of its members, but from the quality of their participation. Participation levels are dependent on member diversity and participating groups' feeling of ownership. Greater diversity implies greater legitimacy and validation when making decisions. Coalition members' diversity should reflect the local context and ideally include beneficiary actors as well as those affected by the PA's conservation activities. Composition and participation should be considered from many angles and should respond to the coalition's goals. Participants' individual characteristics can be taken into account, such as gender and participation level. Individual organizational aspects such as type of entity, its role and level of participation should also be considered. It is important that the coalition's membership composition directly supports achieving its goals.

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	The composition of the coalition (individual or institutional) responds to its needs and goals and includes all key groups or organizations. Horizontal decision making is promoted within the membership. Gender and diversity aspects are analyzed.
<input type="radio"/> 4	The coalition's membership base (individual or institutional) responds to the majority of its needs and goals, and includes a large portion of key groups or organizations. Horizontal decision making is promoted within the membership. Gender and diversity aspects and the need to include non-representative groups are occasionally analyzed.
<input type="radio"/> 3	The coalition's membership base (individual or institutional) partially responds to its needs and goals, but does not include several key groups or organizations. Horizontal decision making is promoted within the membership. The need to include non-representative groups is occasionally analyzed.
<input type="radio"/> 2	The coalition's membership base (individual or institutional) does not respond to its needs and goals or original purpose for which it was created, and includes few groups. Concern is shown on inclusion of key groups not represented in the coalition.
<input type="radio"/> 1	The coalition's membership base is not consistent with its needs and goals or original purpose for which it was created. It has not analyzed nor promoted inclusion of key groups not represented in the coalition's core. This lack of inclusion causes conflicts.

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Relationship and Conflict Management

Some coalitions are created after a long history of conflicts related to a protected area. Many times, the different social and institutional actors realize conserving the PA requires co-existence and collaboration amongst actors. Although in cases where no previous conflict exists in the PA, the coalition can be a conflict avoidance strategy by providing a space to address differences. For this reason, a close relationship exists between a coalition's development and the level of socio-environmental conflicts in a PA. It is recommended that a coalition develop strategies to manage conflicts, optimize communication and strengthen existing institutional relationships.

References:

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|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has a strategy to maintain excellent inter-institutional relationships and has skills or strategies that can be adapted for managing conflicts. Conflicts are analyzed and resolved by the organization's core group in a timely manner. Relationships amongst member groups are continually evaluated. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition resolves the majority of conflicts in an improvised but dynamic manner and good inter-institutional relationships exist. Some ability exists to manage conflicts. The organization's core group analyzes conflicts in a timely manner, and relationships among member groups are occasionally revised. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition resolves certain conflicts in an improvised and slow manner, and inter-institutional relationships are fragile. Little ability exists to manage conflicts. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not explicitly address the topic of internal relationships. Slow conflict resolution places the coalition's existence at risk as it cannot resolve the issues for which it was established. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition "unearths" conflicts without having a way to resolve them; lack of a strategy or skills has increased conflicts among its members. Weak inter-institutional relationships produce a progressive paralysis within the coalition. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

The Osa Peninsula in southern Costa Rica is a priority conservation zone. The Corcovado National Park is an emblem of the country's conservation efforts. In the past, various governmental organizations and NGOs executed a diverse array of dispersed and uncoordinated conservation initiatives. To ensure the region's conservation and the viability of its populations, creation of a biological corridor was proposed to connect Corcovado with the Peñas Blancas National Park and the Sierpe-

Terraba National Wetland. This effort signified a challenge and opportunity to unite all the social and environmental organizations working in the Osa Peninsula. While the conservation goal was the creation of the biological corridor, the coalition also served as an instrument to neutralize possible conflicts of interest and achieve a sound level of articulation and integration of implementation efforts that had been dispersed throughout the Peninsula.

c) Communications

The origin of many internal and external conflicts in coalitions is linked to inadequate information management. For this reason, it is fundamental to develop strategies and mechanisms to maintain available information, and internal and external dissemination mechanisms. Appropriate internal and external communication promotes participation, transparency and credibility, increases the sense of belonging among members, and helps to consolidate the coalition. In section 6 more detailed indicators are provided on external communication.

References:

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|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has complete and available information and necessary mechanisms for internal and external communication. Open and multi-directional communication is promoted to reduce incidences of conflicts and increase learning between members. The coalition has an excellent public image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has information available and uses some internal and external communication mechanisms. Open and multi-directional communication is promoted to reduce incidences of conflicts, and learning exists between members. The coalition has a good public image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has some information available, and internal and external communication channels exist to distribute some information in a relatively timely manner. The coalition has some degree of a public image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition has some information available and internally communicates through an occasional and improvised format. No external communications mechanism exists and the coalition does not have a public image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Internal and external communications problems exist. No communication information or strategy is available. This creates conflicts that affect activities within and outside the coalition. There is a negative public image. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

d) Openness and Growth

As with any social system (community, organization), a coalition is sensitive to changes in the context for which it was originally established. This can create a need to incorporate new actors to address new threats, or those threats current members have not been able to address. To accomplish this, it is recommended that a coalition have an appropriate mechanism to facilitate timely actions on this subject.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Clear policies and procedures exist for addition of new groups. The decision on whether or not to add a new member is based on a periodic needs analysis. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | Clear policies and procedures exist for addition of new groups. The decision on whether or not to add a new member is based on a periodic needs analysis. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Addition of new members is based on a needs analysis, although no criteria or rules exist to guide the process. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Policies or procedures for incorporation of new members do not exist. The coalition has not added new members since its inception, although there is clearly a need to do so. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Policies or procedures for incorporation of new members do not exist. The coalition has not added new members since its inception, although there is clearly a need to do so. To the contrary, the coalition has lost members and vacancies have been generated. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

e) Degree of Satisfaction

It is important that member organizations clearly identify benefits their group receives from belonging to the coalition. As a second tier structure, the coalition should not duplicate and/or compete with its member organizations' efforts, but should instead provide a more efficient manner to access different services, such as financing sources, communications, or political and social influence.

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	All members can clearly identify benefits received and complete information exists on the benefits. Member services and support are periodically revised and updated. There is a high degree of member satisfaction.
<input type="radio"/> 4	The majority of members can clearly identify benefits received, although the information is incomplete. Membership services and support are occasionally revised and updated. There is a medium degree of member satisfaction.
<input type="radio"/> 3	Some members can identify benefits received from the coalition; others do not have a clear idea of the benefits. Membership services are occasionally reviewed but actions to improve them have not been taken. There is a low degree of member satisfaction.
<input type="radio"/> 2	Benefits are not very clear to members and services are not reviewed. Members are dissatisfied.
<input type="radio"/> 1	Benefits are not clear. The coalition runs the risk of disintegrating as members do not see its benefit.

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

5. Implementation and Impact

The indicators in this section examine administrative and programmatic aspects. In regards to administration, different levels of management within the coalition are evaluated, including the board, coordination groups and working groups. On the implementation side, monitoring and impact are evaluated. This section includes indicators on efficiency and management, coordination of working groups and mitigating conservation threats.

a) Managerial Efficiency

Every coalition is a deliberate entity that provides an opportunity for dialogue where visions and goals from different social actors can be discussed and managed in a collaborative manner. This dialogue promotes actions that are coordinated, concrete and effective. To achieve this, it is important to employ different coordination and leadership levels to manage the coalition and ultimately the PA. In general, coalitions have management levels such as a board, management group and/or working groups.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Various management levels exist, with determined and agreed upon functions. Communication is promoted, including a balance of power between members and transmitting clear and timely decisions. Management levels facilitate achieving goals and results. All members recognize management levels. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | At least one management level exists, with specific functions. Communication is promoted among members, clear decisions are made, and this helps facilitate achieving goals and results. All members recognize the different management levels. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Various management levels exist but functions are not clear, and decisions are not always made in a timely manner. The management levels generally help to achieve goals and results. Not all members recognize the different management levels. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Various management levels exist but functions are not clear, and decisions are not always made in a timely manner. The management levels generally help to achieve goals and results. Not all members recognize the different management levels. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition has not clearly identified the management body. This makes work difficult and seriously limits impact. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Coordination

Given the collaborative nature of coalitions, it may require taking on a “coordination manager” rather than an “executive director.” This person should be in charge of bringing together the management level (or levels) as discussed in the previous indicator, and to generally supervise implementation of the coalition’s work plan. As the coalition becomes consolidated, its administrative and technical needs can grow, making a coordinator’s role essential for the dynamic work at hand.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Permanent coordination exists, with clear functions. Highly constructive relationships exist within the different management levels. The coordination definitely helps in implementing the work plan and achieving goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | Permanent coordination exists, with some clear functions. Good relations exist within the different management levels. The coordination generally helps in implementing the work plan. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Coordination exists but functions are not well defined. Limited relations exist within the different management levels. The coordination occasionally helps in implementing the work plan. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Coordination is improvised among the different management levels. It is unclear if this coordination helps in implementing the work plan. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Coordination is improvised, lacking clear functions that are not directly related to the different management levels. The lack of coordination is perceived to create difficulties in implementing the work plan. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) Working Groups

Coalitions generally develop their actions through small working groups comprised of the coalition's members. These groups may have a geographic or thematic focus. In some cases, the area being managed is very large (or difficult to access), forcing the coalition to develop its activities based on geographic sectors. In other cases, the coalition's agenda may be very extensive, requiring the work be divided by themes or activities. The mandate, autonomy and the permanence of working groups are different within each coalition. These groups report to the board or other management level(s). The structure should help promote the coalition's work in an efficient manner and should reflect each coalition's needs.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has various working groups to cover its needs. The working groups function independently and report to the coordinating body. Their presence helps the coalition achieve its work plan and goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has at least one working group that reports to the coordinating body. Its presence helps the coalition achieve its work plan and goals, but not sufficiently. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has at least one working group that reports to the coordinating body. Its presence helps the coalition achieve its work plan and goals, but not sufficiently. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition appoints working groups, but they do not achieve the coalition's goals. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Although necessary, the coalition does not use working groups. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

The Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve coalition in the Peruvian Amazon covers an extensive geographical area (two million hectares). It has a broadly formed coalition comprised of organizations representing various different social/economic levels, including: local communities, NGOs and the government. Access to most of the local communities in the area (coalition members) is very costly and only possible via waterways. Because of this, the coalition's work has been divided into three geographic sectors with corresponding working groups established for each sector. The working groups autonomously plan and implement actions, but coordinate with other coalition members tasked with maintaining the reserve's central operations in the city of Iquitos. Coordination is

accomplished through all sectors participating in periodic meetings.

The Osa Peninsula Biological Corridor coalition began as a platform for NGO information exchange and planning. The majority of members are based in Costa Rica's capital of San Jose. However, since its inception the coalition has emphasized the importance of local organization participation. To accomplish this, the local coalition committee was formed with a corresponding coordinator and independent board that include local leaders and organizations involved in the Biological Corridor. Local committees and the San Jose group engage in permanent information exchange and participatory decision making.

d) Conservation Threat Mitigation

In general, if the objective of establishing a coalition is to optimize the PA's management in order to achieve established conservation results, it is important to measure the coalition's contribution in terms of threat reduction (mitigation) and re-establishment of an ecosystem's balance. The percentages indicated in the following references can be adjusted based on what the coalition considers most logical for its situation. If the coalition's objective is something other than optimizing PA management, it is recommended that this indicator be adapted or new, more appropriate references developed.

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	Through the coalition's management, it has accomplished at least 75% of the planned objectives for the evaluation period in terms of reducing the most serious conservation threats for the PA.
<input type="radio"/> 4	Through the coalition's management, it has accomplished 50 – 75% of the planned objectives for the evaluation period in terms of reducing the most serious conservation threats for the PA.
<input type="radio"/> 3	Through the coalition's management, it has accomplished 30 – 50% of the planned objectives for the evaluation period in terms of reducing the most serious conservation threats for the PA.
<input type="radio"/> 2	Through the coalition's management, it has accomplished 15 – 30% of the planned objectives for the evaluation period in terms of reducing the most serious conservation threats for the PA.
<input type="radio"/> 1	The coalition is not achieving even a minimal percentage of its planned objectives during the evaluation period. The coalition's management has drifted from its conservation goals.

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

6. External Communications

The coalition's prestige (positive public image) is critical to its management success and is based on results, the impact of its work, and information dissemination on these results and their impact. Promoting the coalition is vital to achieve social validation in the area of influence and to stimulate interest from new groups to participate in the coalition. It is also essential for securing political and financial support from both public and private entities. To achieve this, communications and external relations play a key role in consolidating the coalition and the PA. In this section, indicators on external communications, exchange of technical materials and external relations will be addressed.

a) External Communications

External communication refers to strategic information (reports on activities or achievements) the coalition prepares for different audiences with the purpose of disseminating information to the local, national and international audiences. Different channels are utilized including traditional means such as the press, publications, radio, as well as the Internet.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Ample information is prepared on the coalition's work and permanently disseminated to different audiences. The coalition has an excellent public image in different circles (local, national and international), has the capacity to draw the public to meetings it convenes, and its image helps the organization achieve planned results. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | Sufficient information is prepared on the coalition's work and frequently disseminated to different audiences. The coalition has a good public image at the local and national levels, has the ability to draw the public to meetings it convenes, and its image helps to achieve planned results. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Basic information is prepared on the coalition's work and disseminated with some degree of frequency. The coalition has some capacity to draw the public to meetings it convenes and is in the process of creating its image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Some information is prepared on the coalition's work, when solicited. The coalition has limited ability to draw the public to meetings and is in the process of creating its image. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition does not prepare information and does not have a way to work with the press. The coalition is unknown. The coalition's core group has not addressed the topic. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Exchange of Technical Material

Coalitions can produce technical material related to its programmatic and management activities. In addition, coalitions can receive technical information on coalition management for PAs or other related topics. This two-way communication can be an integral part of the learning strategy.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition promotes the permanent preparation, publication and exchange of technical material between its members, and works with a variety of national or international organizations that support this initiative. The coalition has its own technical material that is disseminated through different channels and technical material from a diverse array of coalitions. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition occasionally promotes preparation, publication and information exchanges of technical material between its members, and works with at least one national or international organization to achieve this. The coalition has some of its own technical material that is disseminated through different channels and has some technical material from other coalitions. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition promotes technical material exchanges between its members. The coalition does not have its own technical material but does have technical material from a diverse array of PA coalitions. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not have its own technical material but does have some technical material provided by other PA coalitions. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition has not published or divulged its work in any manner, nor does it have technical material from other PA coalitions. Technical information exchange is not of concern. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) External Relations

External relations are important for a coalition's success as this allows the group to strengthen its impact and attract additional assistance and financial, technical and political resources. This indicator assesses the relationships, levels of collaboration the coalition maintains with other institutions and related groups, and its methods of interaction.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition serves as the link for development of a diverse array of inter-institutional relations at the local, national and international levels. Through these relationships it has accessed considerable financial resources, technical support and political support. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition serves as the link for development of inter-institutional relations, through which it has accessed some financial resources, technical support and political support. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has developed at least one inter-institutional relationship, through which it has accessed some technical and political support. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition has initiated a process to develop inter-institutional relations at the local, national and international levels to mobilize financial resources, technical support and political support. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition has not developed inter-institutional external relations. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

7. Financial Management

Although some coalitions do not manage financial resources or directly execute activities, these are generally two important aspects of a coalition. The coalition's work (operations) has a cost, and mobilization of PA financial resources is typically a critical element in the coalition's success. For this reason, it is necessary for the coalition to have clearly defined financial needs for both itself and the PA. It may be that the coalition requires medium term funds, while the PA generally requires long term financing. For both cases, it is advisable to have clear financial goals and diversified financing sources.

For the operations, existence as a second tier collective entity means the coalition's financial management is complex. Financial policies should have the consensus of all members, and this requires a high degree of coordination and transparency. In some cases, coalitions are financed through its membership; in others, it accesses external funding sources that may or may not be related to its membership. At times a coalition's operating funds (management committee) is included in the area's management plan and are administered by the government agency administering the PA. In other cases, operations funds financial management is handled by a member organization with existing capacity. This responsibility can also be rotated within the coalition membership. Efficient and transparent funds management is extremely important for donors as well as the coalition itself, and should be evaluated.

The indicators presented in this section are appropriate for coalitions involved in mobilizing and managing funds and includes: financial system, sustainable financing, effectiveness and transparency.

a) Financial System

Existence of an appropriate financial management system is indispensable for a well run coalition. Generally, not all member organizations will have the capacity necessary to administer financial resources through a dedicated financial management system. The financial system normally includes platforms for administering information on salaries, benefits, budgets and accounting, with the last two (budgets and accounting) being most useful to a coalition.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | A large number of the coalition's member organizations have financial management systems that support budget management and medium to long term financial planning. The budget and financial projections are developed annually through a participatory process. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | At least one of the coalition's member organizations has a financial management system that supports budget management and medium to long term financial planning. The budget and financial projections are developed annually through a participatory process. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition's financial management system requires revision and updating. The budget is revised annually through a participatory process. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not have a financial management system. The budget is developed with little member involvement each time there is a possible financing opportunity. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition does not have any type of financial management system, and financial monitoring is a problem. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Financial Sustainability

To achieve financial sustainability, it is important that the coalition's financial plan take into account both operational goals and members' responsibilities. This indicator includes operational resources and resources for the PA; however, it is recommended these costs be separated (if necessary) to achieve a greater degree of precise detail on the specific financial needs. In addition, the suggested percentages can be adjusted based on the coalition's financial goals.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition's work plan (strategic) includes a fundraising strategy for operations and mobilizing resources for the PA. It has raised more than 75% of the planned goals for the evaluation period based on the fundraising plan. Financial reports are produced and a positive external audit has been performed. The coalition has established diversified financing sources. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition's work plan (strategic) includes a fundraising strategy for both operations and mobilizing resources for the PA. It has raised between 50 – 75% of the planned goals for the evaluation period based on the fundraising plan. Financial reports are produced and a positive external audit has been performed. The coalition has a few diversified financing sources. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The work plan includes fundraising for operations and the PA. It has raised between 30 – 50% of the planned goals for the evaluation period. Financial reports are produced. The coalition does not have diversified financing sources. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The work plan includes fundraising for operations and the PA. It has raised between 15 – 30% of the planned operations goals for the evaluation period. Financial reports are produced. The coalition does not have diversified financing sources. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The work plan does not include fundraising for operations or the PA. The coalition does not yet have funds necessary for operations or to contribute to the PA's financing. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) Effectiveness and Transparency

Effectiveness and transparency are essential financial management conditions for any donor interested in supporting a PA coalition. In addition, these conditions need to be corroborated by external audits, which are indispensable for a consolidated coalition.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has complete, professionally prepared financial information available to its members and donors. Operations costs are minimal compared to overall costs. Annual external audit reports are available to corroborate the situation. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition has professionally prepared financial information available to its members and donors. Operations costs are reasonable compared to overall costs. Annual external audit reports are available to corroborate the situation. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition has professionally prepared financial information available to its members and donors. Operations costs are reasonable compared to overall costs. Annual external audit reports are available to corroborate the situation. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition has some financial information available for donors. Operations costs are excessively high compared to overall costs, or cannot be determined. Audited reports do not exist or have not been updated. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition does not have financial information or existing audited reports. Its operations costs and statements are not available. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

8. Human Resource Management

A coalition's primary resource is its membership, integrating diverse and differing capacities that complement each other. To maximize this resource, it is necessary to be fully aware of each member's capacities in order to fully develop, manage and periodically adapt them.

To develop members' capacities a coalition needs to facilitate training processes, in conjunction with its members, to serve as a learning platform or to capture needed resources to do so. The indicators in this section cover: volunteer work, representative rotation and capacity development.

a) Volunteer Work

The organizational members' representatives "voluntarily" lend their time for the coalition's work. However, the term can be relative as "inter-institutional coordination" is an integral function of an organization's administrative and technical personnel, regardless of whether or not a coalition exists. At the same time, coalition's members' work normally produces serious institutional commitment that requires significant time from the technical and administrative staff. Taking advantage of the coalition's inherent human resources requires evaluation.

References:

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|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Coalition members promote and motivate its representatives to dedicate necessary time so the coalition can achieve its goals. Job descriptions of key organizational members specifically include inter-institutional coordination. Commitments acquired through the coalition are treated as institutional priorities and taken into account during strategic planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The majority of the coalition's members support their representatives dedicating time to the coalition's work. Commitments acquired through the coalition are treated with some degree of institutional priority and generally are taken into account during strategic planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Several coalition members accept that their representatives dedicate time to the coalition's work. Commitments acquired through the coalition fall within bounds the members are willing to undertake and occasionally take this into account during strategic planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The majority of coalition members are not convinced its representatives should dedicate time to the coalition's work. Commitments acquired through the coalition are secondary to each organization's work. This is not taken into account during strategic planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition's membership does not facilitate the representative's coalition work. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Representative Rotation

Rotation is healthy for a coalition and allows for a more horizontal capacity development, although much of this depends on the size of the member organization and the coalition's size. In a small organization, few opportunities exist to rotate representatives. However, within a coalition there should be an established rotation for the roles or functions of each representative. When the member organization's size permits, attention should be paid to retaining the coalition's institutional memory during periods of change.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition has a clear (but flexible) policy on representative rotation among its members. The coalition's institutional memory is maintained and documented; the policy is consistently applied and includes gender and diversity aspects. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition applies some guidelines on rotating representatives from member groups. The coalition's institutional memory is maintained and is documented. Gender and diversity aspects are considered. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Although no clear guidelines exist, rotation occurs. Part of the coalition's institutional memory has been lost and part is documented. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | A rotation policy exists among the member group's representatives, but is not applied. The coalition's institutional memory is not documented. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | No criteria or guidelines exist for rotation. Institutional memory exists within the permanent members, but has not been documented. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

c) Capacity Development

Forming a coalition can be an efficient strategy to increase institutional capacity of weaker members. This strategy capitalizes on the process and the coalition's actions as an organizational learning mechanism. Many times, this capacity development function is converted into the most obvious benefit for member organizations.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | All coalition members, including lesser developed ones, participate in the systematic approach to skills development and sharing lessons learned. The coalition is rapidly consolidating based on balanced growth that progressively equalizes capacities of the weakest members. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The majority of coalition members, including lesser developed ones, participate in a systematic approach to skills development and sharing lessons learned. The coalition is initiating a consolidation process based on balanced growth that progressively equalizes capacities of the weakest members. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Although several coalition members are conscious of the need and invest time in systematically providing skills development and sharing lessons learned, this information is scarcely utilized by the member organizations that most need it. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Some interest exists on the topic but lessons have not been gathered to systematically address or share them. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition has not identified its internal capacity development needs. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

9. Evaluation and Programmatic Adjustments

A coalition's added value should be tangible and measurable. Many times, this type of coalition work is conducted in areas difficult to measure and, consequently, assessing "value added" is not easy. Efforts to identify and quantify (where possible) benefits is an inevitable task. The following indicators cover evaluation and programmatic adjustments.

a) Evaluation

In the best case scenario, an evaluation is incorporated into strategic planning through quantitative and qualitative performance indicators on management and progress towards achieving goals and objectives. Monitoring is conducted from the outset of an activity and continues with information accumulated over time for the evaluation (or self-assessment). Evaluations should be periodically conducted.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | Based on the strategic plan's defined indicators and a defined policy, the coalition members periodically evaluate activities and progress towards achieving goals, in a participatory manner. Results are utilized to improve plans, address changes or unexpected occurrences, and develop a new vision. Monitoring is included in each activity. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | Utilizing some indicators, the coalition members periodically evaluate the majority of its activities and progress towards completing planned goals. Results are utilized to adapt to changes or unexpected occurrences. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | Coalition members evaluate progress towards accomplishing goals when donors request they do so, but do not involve all coalition members. The evaluation is focused on specific activities. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | Coalition members sporadically evaluate activity results achieved during the evaluation period. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | Coalition members have not evaluated the coalition's work, impact or result of its activities. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) Programmatic Adjustments

This indicator's objective is to analyze how the coalition utilizes information it receives and derives from evaluations.

References:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> 5 | The coalition utilizes adaptive management with the participation of all members. Recommendations from the evaluations are incorporated into planning in a timely manner in order to generate expected changes. |
| <input type="radio"/> 4 | The coalition utilizes adaptive management with participation of most of its members. Key recommendations from the evaluations are generally incorporated into planning in a timely manner in order to generate expected changes. |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 | The coalition is beginning to utilize a new adaptive management through which it hopes to achieve participation of the majority of its members. At present, some important recommendations from the evaluations are taken into account in strategic planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 | The coalition does not use adaptive management, nor do members participate in the evaluation. Key recommendations resulting from evaluations are occasionally incorporated into planning. |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 | The coalition does not have evaluation recommendations. |

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

After achieving its original mission of developing a management plan for the Bastimentos Island National Marine Park (BINMP), the Bocas del Toro Archipelago coalition in Panama, conducted an extensive evaluation. As a result, the group was transformed into a grass roots organization to support the BINMP, with its reach extended to

the entire ecoregion. Its influence area was extended from the BINMP to the entire Bocas del Toro Archipelago. This was a natural evolution, as the BINMP threats and opportunities responded to the context of what was happening throughout the Archipelago.

10. Other Indicators

In order to ensure appropriate indicator focus, each coalition can identify additional indicators, sub-indicators and References. This tool should be adapted to reflect the conditions which promoted the coalition's development in order to maintain participants' interest and commitment.

a) _____

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	_____
<input type="radio"/> 4	_____
<input type="radio"/> 3	_____
<input type="radio"/> 2	_____
<input type="radio"/> 1	_____

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

b) _____

References:

<input type="radio"/> 5	_____
<input type="radio"/> 4	_____
<input type="radio"/> 3	_____
<input type="radio"/> 2	_____
<input type="radio"/> 1	_____

Briefly explain how this reference was determined. _____

Appendix Facilitator Guidelines

(Adapted from *Institutional Self-Assessment*, The Nature Conservancy 2001)

As mentioned in the introduction, the first time the coalition self-assessment is conducted, it is most effective—and most objective—when facilitated by a professional from outside the coalition. The facilitator assists the coalition in designing the most appropriate self-assessment process for its specific situation. This can be conducted using a variety of different approaches, which might include individual interviews, work in small groups or a workshop with the entire coalition. The overall focus is promotion of a coalition-wide discussion on the actual stage of development as well as future steps. The facilitator acts as a resource throughout the process, providing contextual information on specific indicators in the tool, facilitating the exercise itself, documenting the assessment process and

assisting the coalition to identify approaches for meetings its improvement targets. Objective reflection and clear directions to guide strengthening efforts are products of a well-planned and well-facilitated assessment.

When choosing a facilitator, keep in mind that Institutional Development professionals are well suited to play this role. They have experience in both evaluations of a coalition's development stage, as well as planning for how it can best go about strengthening its core competencies. The Nature Conservancy's Institutional Development staff can potentially provide support as facilitators in the coalition self-assessment process. However, if the Conservancy is a member of the coalition or the

In 2002 The Nature Conservancy analyzed approximately 50 institutional self-assessments and their respective facilitation, including 17 facilitated by Conservancy staff. Of the 17 organizations, more than half classified themselves as "above average" or "high." A possible reason is that the Conservancy is seen as a donor that may base future interaction with the groups on the scoring of assessment indicators. One partner organization could not bring itself to classify the NGO as "below average" in the Conservancy's presence. Another possible explanation is that the Conservancy may have a long term relationship with the partner and the Conservancy Institutional Development specialist may feel more inclined to give the organization a higher score in recognition for its past institutional development work. Organizations in this group had mixed participation—in some all personnel participated in the exercise, while in others only some representative personnel participated, and in others a member of the Board of Directors participated. There were no external participants in the assessment exercise.

The assessments where external facilitators were utilized appeared to be more realistic. Groups facilitated by external consultant facilitators (non-Conservancy) or external consultants marginally supported by Conservancy specialists had a tendency not to classify themselves as "above average" or "high." One possible explanation is that the organization utilized an assessment process that did not feel "threatening" when an external facilitator was involved. In other words, external facilitation is seen as neutral and this can lend itself to organizations conducting a more critical self-examination without fear of negative consequences. Another factor to keep in mind is that at least one Board member participated in the majority of these assessment exercises. Members of the Board of Directors can offer an external point of view that can influence the assessments precision. In the same way, when external organizations were interviewed a similar effect was seen.

donor, it may produce a conflict of interest. In this case it is recommended that the Conservancy play only a marginal role in facilitating the process.

Cultivation and Approach

More so than with any other type of intervention, it is important to build trust and confidence within the coalition in order to conduct an effective self-assessment. The issues surrounding a coalition's performance (strengths and weaknesses) are delicate and often emotional. It is important to define the degrees of confidentiality that will be used with the resulting information.

- The facilitator can coordinate with Conservancy staff or other organizations supporting the coalition's assessment to choose the appropriate time to conduct the exercise.
- The facilitator can work with the Conservancy's country program staff who are knowledgeable on the protected area and the coalition's activities, as well as provide tips on use of this tool. The Conservancy can play a key role in cultivating the coalition and providing the facilitator with contextual information.
- The coalition assessment should be conducted for the right reasons. Cultivation of coalitions should emphasize assessment benefits of strengthening relationships among the coalition's member organizations. Every effort should be made to ensure the coalition is not conducting the exercise simply to comply with a donor requirement.

Before the Exercise

It is important to work closely with the coalition to clarify the goals of conducting the self-assessment and jointly design an implementation process that fits within the coalition's culture. In preparation the facilitator should:

- Spend time with the coalition's key actors to ensure they understand the process, benefits and expected results.
- Allow the coalition to formally convene the session and determine who should participate in the assessment, including internal and external participants.

Confidentiality

Prior to initiating the exercise, subsequent use of the information generated during the assessment should be discussed with the coalition to determine the degree of confidentiality required to satisfy all parties involved. In the event the Conservancy wishes to use specific information, such as coalition ratings or progress measured over time, this should be discussed and agreed upon before the exercise is conducted.

Introduction to the Exercise

When initiating the exercise, the facilitator should explain to the participants the background and overall objectives of the assessment and review the process that will be utilized. In addition, the facilitator should cover the following topics in the introduction:

- Specify the coalition's potential benefits from conducting an assessment: identification of gaps and priorities; improved effectiveness in achieving mission, demonstrated professionalism to donors; progress documentation and monitoring; highlight areas of disagreement within the organization that can lead to rich discussion and learning.
- Specify the Conservancy's interests in the assessment, if the organization is involved in any manner.
- Explain why the tool is most effective if the process is externally facilitated the first couple of times it is utilized, but restate the goal of institutionalizing the process within the coalition.
- Emphasize the value of mutual learning and shared vision the assessment can provide internally, even though the assessment is an external evaluation.
- Explain the assessment tool format and how the references are used to rate an organization. Emphasis should be made that references are not scores; they describe natural phases of a coalition's development.

Facilitation Methodology

The facilitator can use different methods. Some facilitators conduct individual interviews with participants, some use the tool with groups, and oth-

ers use a combination of both methods. The following are suggestions to the facilitator for maximizing the learning and benefits of the assessment process.

- Broad participation throughout the coalition provides rich information and discussion and is crucial in understanding the coalition's true capacity.
- The tool is flexible and can be adapted to the individual needs or preferences of a specific coalition. The facilitator can work with the coalition to develop additional indicators the coalition feels will help more effectively gauge its capacity.
- During the exercise, the facilitator is most effective when acting as a resource to the group, not as an evaluator. He or she can often draw upon previous assessment experiences with other organizations or coalitions to help enrich the discussion. If the coalition has invited Conservancy staff or other outsiders to participate, they should offer their opinions, but the facilitator should remain neutral.
- During the discussion of specific indicators, the facilitator can raise participant awareness by making linkages to specific conservation examples directed towards coalitions and support design of sub-indicators and references.
- The facilitator can use disagreements to raise participants' awareness and reinforce the reason for conducting the assessment. Discussions about the lack of consensus on indicators can lead to some of the best learning opportunities for a coalition. Emphasize the importance of reaching group consensus on the references.
- The facilitator can underscore the value of intuition when reflecting on the coalition's strengths and weaknesses. Everyone can contribute to the discussion, whether or not they have direct knowledge about specific indicators.
- The facilitator can encourage the group to document its thinking on each indicator. He or she can use the space for notes below each indicator to document the group's discussion and divergence. These notes will be valuable information during progress reviews.
- Discussions should be focused on the future. The goal is to identify and solve problems, not dwell on past complaints.

After the Exercise

The goal of the self-assessment is to institutionalize a periodic cycle of self assessment and learning within the coalition for its continued improvement. Therefore what happens after the assessment is as important as or more important than the exercise itself.

- The first assessment should establish a baseline for measuring the coalition's progress over time.
- Based on the results, the coalition should develop an action plan for improving priority indicators during the next year. In the action plan, the coalition should set target references it wishes to achieve within a specified timeframe, as well as establishing the individuals responsible for meeting those references.
- Ideally, the facilitator should work closely with the coalition to help it conduct periodic checks on the action plan, and an annual review of progress on priority indicators. The annual review should set new priority indicators and target references for the following year. Conservancy country program staff should also be engaged in following up on action plan progress.
- Aggregate assessment results can serve as the basis to guide institutional strengthening programs in protected areas and national protected areas systems.

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

