EASTERN DIVISION WHOLE SYSTEMS
FORMAT FOR PEER REVIEW 1

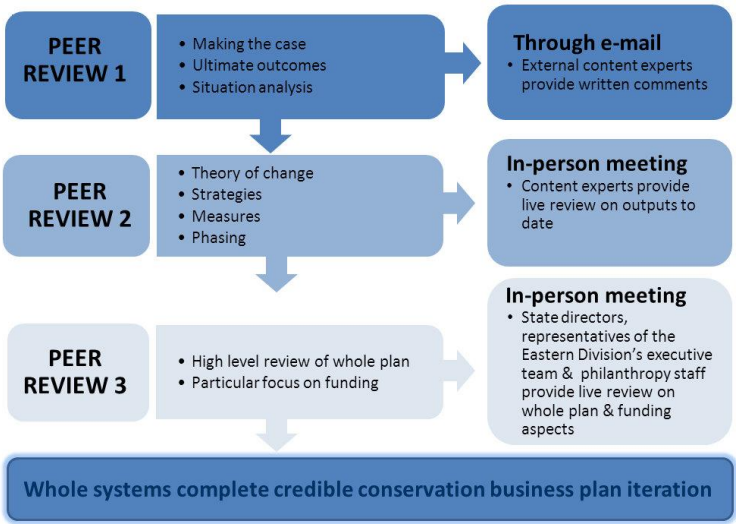
"None of us is as smart as all of us."
~ Japanese Proverb

We write to you because you have kindly agreed to serve as a reviewer for one of the Eastern Division's Whole Systems that is currently completing its conservation business plan.

A total of twelve whole systems are developing their conservation business plans this year, and external review is an important part in this process. The Conservancy sees peer review as a highly important vehicle for sharing knowledge and increasing our conservation impact. While your active and constructive participation as a peer reviewer will provide the XX project with enriched perspectives and suggestions to improve their plan, we also hope that by probing and exchanging ideas, you gain something that is useful to advance your own practice.

Comment [CL1]: Insert project name

The overall review process looks like this:



- **Peer review 1:** 3 external reviewers provide written feedback – takes place after completing the situation analysis (covering context, outcomes, situation analysis).
- **Peer review 2:** 6-8 reviewers (content experts) provide feedback in an in-person meeting – takes place after phasing and major activities (covering theory of change, strategy progress & effectiveness, phasing & major activities).
- **Peer review 3:** 6-8 reviewers (state directors & members of Division's executive team) provide high-level feedback on plan & focus on funding – takes place after capacity & funding portions are completed.

Your feedback will be contributing to PEER REVIEW 1.

To facilitate things for the project teams, I am coordinating the reception of feedback, and to be able to get your comments to the XX project team in time, we ask that you please use this form to send your findings and recommendations in bullet form to me, Lise Hanners, by **COB on day & date**. If in addition to this format you'd like to make notes directly in the project's document, feel free to do so, simply use the *track changes* option. then you can make reference to more detailed notes in the format we

Comment [CL2]: Insert project name

Comment [CL3]: Insert due date

So, what is your role as a peer reviewer? As an external reviewer and/or content expert you can reflect on and provide input to a conservation business plan with an objective perspective. While you are not necessarily expected to provide detailed technical feedback on a given strategy (unless that happens to be your area of expertise, of course), your critical eye should help identify strengths and weaknesses in the way a project is being presented. On one hand you are expected to step back and provide feedback on the team's overall conservation business plan design (how things look as a whole), and on the other hand we expect you to make recommendations on specific parts of the plan that could be strengthened. In a nutshell, we need your help to identify three things: **issues you have identified** and **recommendations for their improvement**, and **good practices** that you've identified in the plan. In this phase of the review process, we will ask you to focus on the initial steps of the conservation business plan: the portions that relate to the overall context, the outcomes, and the situation analysis.

The review format follows the structure of the Interim Conservation Planning Guidance v.1.2. To get you started, below each section we provide some ideas for things you may want to probe for (for more detailed suggestions on what constitutes a good answer you can also refer to the original guidance - https://connect.tnc.org/teamsites/conservation/conservationplanning). These ideas are just to get you going; skim them and take what is helpful as you review each section. They should by no means constrain you, and we encourage you to use your own critical thinking criteria.

We see the whole system teams as pioneers in the Conservancy, since they are the first ones to use the Interim Conservation Planning Guidance to develop conservation business plans for complex large systems. We hope to learn important lessons from this process, and look forward to sharing them so we can improve our practice across the Conservancy. We highly value your role as a peer reviewer in this process.

Thank you! We look forward to your recommendations!

Lise Hanners and Cristina Lasch

Name of project that is being reviewed:	
Peer reviewer:	**Name:** **Program:**

A. MAKING THE CASE

1. **Why is this project or strategy important and relevant?**

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Do you find the statement compelling and yet realistic (meaning it doesn't overpromise)? How will it resonate with key audiences?*
- *Does it convey why the strategy/project is important for a target audience in plain, clear English – or is it using planning jargon that might offend or confuse people?*
- *Is it brief?*
- *Does it tell you what TNC will be accountable for?*
- *Does it state TNC's niche or value added?*
- *Does the underlying plan, or at this early planning stage, do the critical aspects identified in the situation analysis, back up what we are promising?*

Issues you have identified for improvement	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

B. OUTCOMES

Ultimate outcomes reflect what we and/or our partners ultimately value - the "ends" (e.g., we care about coral reef biodiversity), versus the way to achieve that outcome - "the means" (e.g., MPAs are one way of conserving reef biodiversity).

2. **What are the ultimate outcomes we intend to achieve?**

2.A. What is the status of biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing issues?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Are the initial starting point and focus clearly stated? For example - 1) Geography (e.g., conserving biodiversity and protecting ecosystem services in the Chesapeake Bay) or 2) Environmental Problem (e.g., reduce, mitigate and offset the impact of planned wind development on the Eastern US seaboard).*
- *Does the project team provide an overview and evidence of the status of biodiversity targets, critical ecosystem services and human wellbeing issues 1) in the targeted geography, or 2) as impacted by the focal environmental problem? Is the information presented in an accessible way?*

Issues you have identified for improvement	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

2.B. Targets: What we and others value and desire to improve, maintain, protect, restore or change:
Things you may want to probe for:

- *Is it clear to you what we and partners care about or value 1) in the geography and/or 2) relative to the selected environmental problem? Is it clear who cares about the targets or values identified (e.g, just TNC, TNC and partners, important major actors, society as a whole)?*
- *Do you have a sense from the document of what the overall status, major stresses, their sources and general trends are, for the things the project values?*

Issues you have identified for improvement	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

2.C. What are the ultimate outcomes we intend to achieve?
Things you may want to probe for:

- *Do the ultimate outcome statements include – <u>what</u> we are trying to change or conserve, the <u>direction or magnitude</u> of the change, the estimated <u>scope</u> of our intended impact, and the general <u>timeframe</u> within which we believe it will take to achieve outcome?*
- *How well are ultimate outcomes stated? (see Appendix A at the end of this format for tips on what to look for).*
- *Are multiple relevant ultimate outcomes acknowledged? (e.g. are human well-being and socioeconomic values included?) NOTE: At this early stage it is OK if some outcomes appear in opposition (e.g., minimize habitat loss and maximize energy production); conservation often requires finding acceptable trade-offs. Does the team acknowledge potential conflicts among outcomes?*
- *Do any outcomes appear to be more milestones or intermediate results than ultimate outcomes?*
- *Is the total set of ultimate ecological outcomes relatively small (i.e. 1-10)?*

Issues you have identified for improvement	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

C. SITUATION ANALYSIS

3. **What important political, socioeconomic or ecological trends are acting as constraints or present opportunities?**

3.A. Have direct threats to biodiversity, ecosystem services and human wellbeing outcomes been prioritized?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Is it clear to you which direct threats are more critical for the project?*[1]

Issues you have identified for improvement	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

3.B. Have underlying drivers and root causes of threats, as well as opportunities been identified? Have roles and motivations of important actors and stakeholders been analyzed?

Things you may want to probe for:

- *Does the situation analysis identify the most important social, economic, political, or ecological drivers, trends or issues threatening the targets/values defined in the intended outcomes and/or does it identify major opportunities for conservation intervention?*
- *Does it summarize compelling evidence of important drivers, trends, etc.?*
- *From the information, can you determine who major actors are and their interests and motivations?*
- *Has the team assessed and summarized TNC's strengths, expertise, and potential role relative to the situation and relative to other major conservation actors?*
- *Is the situation analysis communicated and summarized clearly and succinctly?*

Issues you have identified	Recommendations to address issues

Is there something in this section of the plan that you really liked? A good practice?

3.C. Please go back to sections 1 (Why is this project or strategy important and relevant?) and 2C (What are the ultimate outcomes we intend to achieve?) Provide any additional feedback in those sections.

[1] *NOTE: If the project focuses on an environmental problem (e.g., a "threat", this step can be skipped.*

- Do the selection of ultimate outcomes and the situation analysis support the “case” for importance and relevance made in step 1?
- Does the situation analysis reflect and support the team’s selection of ultimate outcomes?
- Do you think the ultimate outcomes will resonate with important internal audiences and as well as decision-makers, donors or important stakeholders and actors identified in the situation analysis?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SUPPORT OUR CONSERVATION IN THE EASTERN DIVISION!

APPENDIX A. HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME IS STATED WELL?

Here you can find additional guidance on ultimate outcomes.

The diagram below illustrates three different ways to state an ultimate outcome.

Same Example– 3 Acceptable Alternative Statements

Specificity

Alternative Statements	Grade	Characteristics
Within 5-years, District-wide annual deforestation rates and C02 emissions are declining.	Good	•Targets (forests and GHGs) •Direction of change (declining) •Spatial and temporal scope (District-wide, 5 years) •Measurable (rates and emissions) •Appropriate in many situations
Within 5-years, annual District-wide deforestation rates and C02 emissions have been reduced by more than 50% compared to 10-year 2010 baseline.	Better	Above, plus: •Magnitude of change (>50%) •Context (2010 baseline)
By 2017, annual District-wide deforestation rates are reduced by 80% (20,000 ha) and C02 emissions are reduced by 90% (2 million tons) compared to 10-year 2010 baseline, and account for >20% of Indonesia's overall GHG reduction goal.	Better	Above, plus: •Specific change (%) •Strategic context (Indonesia GHG goal)