Planning for Tomorrow's Conservation Challenges: Recommendations of the Planning Evolution Team

Appendices

Appendix A: Conservation Planning Issues[1]

The first responsibility of the new planning methods team will be to reach general agreement on the major issues that need to be addressed as we strive to improve our planning approach and methods. Below we have outlined the major topical areas for improvement and provided a brief sketch of some of the issues. These will be elaborated in more detail for initial use by the methods team:

1. **Human Dimensions** – Many practitioners have suggested that neither CAP nor ERAs have adequately considered the human dimensions of our conservation work. This notion is part of a larger conversation in the Conservancy and in biodiversity conservation organizations more broadly that we have not paid adequate attention to the needs of human communities in relation to our conservation goals, especially in the developing world. Although the planning methods team will need to dissect this issue in more detail, we will need to consider:
    a. How do we better incorporate the needs of the human communities within our project areas into the planning process?
    b. Should we specifically establish specific social and/or economic goals that parallel or are related to more conservation-oriented goals (e.g., poverty alleviation goals)?
    c. Do we need better guidance on how to engage a broader array of stakeholders?
    d. Should we consider having social or economic "targets" in conservation plans that
    e. What additional tools do we need in the planning toolbox to incorporate the human dimension and what metrics should we be measuring to evaluate success?
2. **Ecosystem Services** – Ecosystem services (ES) represents a distinct aspect of human dimensions of conservation. There is a great deal of ongoing work within and outside TNC with respect to ecosystem services, but especially within the Natural Capital Group and the Ecosystem Services team of central Conservation Science. Rob McDonald of the ES team has recently convened an informal working group to address the topic of ES and conservation planning. Some of the more important aspects of ecosystem services to consider within a conservation planning context are:
    a. Should ecosystem services be considered as targets in conservation planning?
    b. Can a particular ES be measured and mapped?
    c. What tools do practitioners need to incorporate ES into the planning process and where do they find these tools and expertise?
    d. What are the tradeoffs, if any, for biodiversity targets of incorporating ES into conservation plans?
    e. In what situations is an ES approach more likely to help advance conservation and in what situations is it not?
3. **Apply New Tools and Dimensions of Planning** – There are a number of new tools that are being applied in conservation planning and we will need to consider if and how best to

[1]These issues were identified in a memo to the proposed Planning Evolution Team prior to its first meeting.

incorporate some of these tools into TNC's planning toolbox:

a. **Scenario Planning –** One of the most effective emerging planning tools is to examine future scenarios of land and water use over a specific planning domain as such scenarios provide stakeholders with a better understanding of what a landscape, watershed, or seascape may look like in the future.

b. **Return on Investment (ROI) –** Although still in its infancy in development, ROI analyses have the potential to inform the effectiveness of different strategies or of selecting different focal conservation areas in terms of the reality of financial investment and what we can expect to get in return for our investment in terms of conservation outcomes. In addition, ROI thinking forces us to give greater consideration to what would happen in a particular project if the Conservancy did nothing (i.e., counterfactual evidence) – a point of view that needs greater emphasis in TNC planning and strategy evaluation.

c. **Protected Area Planning and Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas –** The Conservancy has been engaged in many places in the world in helping protected area managers develop management plans and measures their effectiveness, largely related to the Programme of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We may need to strengthen specific aspects of our planning methods to ensure they will be effectively used by protected area managers.

d. **Development by Design –** Biodiversity offsets (also known as compensatory mitigation) provide a mechanism for enhancing biodiversity values in situations where development is being planned. The Conservancy is increasingly deploying these tools in relationship to planned energy development, while recognizing that offsets are likely to be most successful if integrated with landscape-level conservation planning.

e. **Cumulative Impact Analysis –** Although governmental planning methods and assessments have long used cumulative impact analyses, few Conservancy planning efforts have evaluated the cumulative or synergistic effects of multiple threats on conservation targets.

f. **Expert Opinion –** Conservation planning in TNC has relied heavily on expert opinion. A first consideration is whether our guidance needs to place greater emphasis on more data-driven approaches. A related consideration is how we may better incorporate expert opinion through new tools (e.g., Expert Choice) and improve the transparency and process for making decisions about threat levels, viability, or other categorical rating systems within our planning methods.

g. **Local Government Planning Approaches** – Local governments often lack the expertise to incorporate natural resource or biodiversity concerns in their planning efforts. A greater understanding of local government planning approaches (e.g., comprehensive land use plans) and the integration of planning as practiced by land use planners and architects with conservation planning methods as practiced by TNC will likely enhance our conservation successes in these arenas.

4. **Issues of Scale –** As mentioned in the introduction, TNC is increasingly developing strategic conservation plans at larger spatial scales. In some cases (e.g., Integrated Landscape approach of Eastern Division) these planning units are equivalent to ecoregions, which, in turn, begs the question of integration of CAP and

ecoregional planning methods. These larger spatial scales pose several conservation challenges:

a. **Connectivity –** How do we more effectively consider the issue of ecological connectivity and linkages within our conservation plans, and what tools and techniques are available to help? How do we better incorporate the needs of wide-ranging and migratory species and what tools and techniques are available?

b. **Heterogeneity in Threats and Viability –** At larger spatial scales, the same threat may vary considerably in it scope and severity across the landscape and seascape. Similarly, the same conservation target may have high viability within one part of the planning area and relatively low viability in other areas. How is this heterogeneity best accommodated within the planning process?

c. **Nested Projects –** Many regional or landscape/seascape projects in TNC consist of strategies at multiple scales and nested projects (e.g., networks of marine protected areas within the larger Coral Triangle Project). From a planning perspective, how do we most efficiently deal with this complexity?

5. **Financial Analyses** – Strategic conservation plans need to contain a "costing of results" and analysis of "sources and uses" of funds in order to ascertain whether a project or strategy can be financially sustainable in implementation over time. Experience suggests that TNC has not been nearly as thoughtful or realistic about the costs of achieving goals and implementing strategies.

6. **Strategy Development and Outputs of Planning Process –** Although widespread in its application in TNC, conservation action planning or CAP has in practice placed a greater emphasis on the identification of conservation targets, viability parameters for those targets, and threat analyses arguably at the expense of strategy identification, evaluation of the effectiveness of strategies, and implementation and adaptive management. We need to shift this balance to one that is spending greater or equivalent energy on developing and measuring the effectiveness of strategies and actions and paying more attention to the "outputs" of the planning process (e.g., intermediate or expected results) rather than the inputs.

a. **Theory of Change –** Theory of change is about the application of logic models in evaluating how TNC's strategies are intended to have impact. Although many TNC conservation planners and projects have long used logic models in their planning processes, we need to place greater emphasis in our planning methods on evaluating how strategies intend to achieve specific outcomes and the underlying logic of how we will do so.

b. **Proof of Concept projects –** TNC is increasingly relying on "proof of concept" or demonstration projects to test the efficacy of particular strategies for their broader application. Our planning methods need to ensure that these types of project are developing strategies in the broader contexts in which they may be applied and are including strategies for leveraging the outcomes related to proving the utility of concepts (e.g., water fund strategies).

c. **Different Audiences for planning –** For any given planning exercise, there are different audiences for the results – the planning team itself, philanthropy, project director or other OU managers, interested funders, and Regional Directors and the Chief Conservation Officer and his/her staff. As a result, we need to ensure that the outputs of our planning efforts (e.g., targets, goals, strategies, actions, etc.) are sufficiently robust to meet the needs of these different audiences. Traditionally, TNC conservation plans have been weighted heavily towards scientists and planners as the principal audience while

there is now a clear need to be more expansive.

d. **Decision Making –** We develop conservation plans to help us make more thoughtful and strategic decisions, but much of the information used in the planning process to arrive at decisions is neither transparent or in some cases defensible (e.g., the algorithms behind the CAP Excel workbook "decisions" on what constitutes a "low-medium-high" threat is one example of this situation). Our planning methods need to be clearer about the types of decisions they are likely to influence as well as being more transparent and defensible in how the methods and the tools help make these decisions.

Appendix B: Interview Questions and List of Conservancy Staff Interviewed for each topical area

Multi-objective planning Working Group (Lead: Eddie Game)

1. What is the planning problem being tackled? And what objectives are included (i.e. what sectors are involved and what are their interests)?
2. What planning methods/tools are they using?
3. What stage is the work at (conceptual, developing, implemented, etc.)?Has anything been written/published from the work?
4. Who is the best contact person? And should someone from the work be on this sub-group? More broadly, who are the experts in the field?
5. What expertise and data is required for the planning method?
6. How is its application expected to improve conservation outcomes?
7. What are the likely costs (resources and time) of employing this approach?
8. What would happen in the absence of this planning method? What are the alternatives? And what are the consequences of not using the method?
9. What obstacles/challenges have or are envisaged to occur in applying the method/tool?
10. What institutional changes would be required of TNC to use this approach to conservation planning?

Interviewees: Alfonso Blanco, Bruce McKenny, Christopher Holmes (WCS), Geoff Lipsett-Moore, Heather Tallis, Holly Copeland, Joe Kiesecker, Lex Hovani, Reinaldo Lourival, Silvia Benitez, Steffen Reichle, Steve Schill, Zach Ferdana

Integrated spatial and strategic planning Working Group (Lead: Lise Hanners)

1. Comments on our draft problem statement.
2. Can you give examples of challenges you have encountered in integrating the needs of spatial and strategic planning?
3. What approaches have you tried?
4. How would you rate the effectiveness of what you tried? Would you recommend it to other teams?
5. Do you think there are changes needed in how we conceptualize or communicate Conservation by Design?
6. What aspects of CAP would especially benefit ERAs?
7. What aspects of ERAs might beneficially be incorporate into CAPs for large areas?
8. New approaches?

Interviewees: Alison Green, Erika Feller, Fernando Veiga, Evie Whitten, Joel Tuhy, Jon Fisher, Jonathan Higgins, Kim Lutz, Randy Curtis, Patrick McCarthy, Taylor Hawes

Strategy development and selection Working Group (Lead: Andrew Soles)

A. Building a list of potential strategies

- Did you build a list of potential strategies, or were there strategies that had been identified as good ideas in some other way?

- If the former:
    - How did you build a list of potential strategies?
    - Who was part of brainstorming the list of potential strategies?
    - How long did you take to brainstorm strategies?
    - Were certain ideas considered too unworkable to be worth writing down or considering?
- If the latter:
    - How did those strategies get identified? In an earlier phase of the CAP? Based on the success of past TNC projects?

B. Evaluating the list of strategies

- Did you collect information, including the expert opinion of those in the room, to try to evaluate the strategies?
- If yes:
    - Who assembled the information?
    - How much time was spent assembling information?
    - What information did you collect about each strategy? Did you talk about:
        - Potential impact of the strategy on conservation targets?
        - The odds of the strategy working, given TNC's strengths and weakness and the opportunities that were out there?
        - The cost of implementing the strategy?
        - Any risks or uncertainties for the strategy?

C. Choosing a strategy

- How did you pick which strategy or strategies would be used by TNC?
- Who made the decision?
- Which factors were most important in making the decision?
    - How long was the discussion before a decision was reached?

Interviewees: Audrey Newman, Alan Holt, Barbara Vickery, Bill Ulfelder, Brian Richter, Bob Bendick, Charles Bedford, Dan Salzer, George Schuler, Doria Gordon, Gerald Miles, Greg Low, James Fitzsimons, Jeff Baumgartner, Jerry Touval, John Beaver, Jora Young, Lynn Hale, Mark Robertson, Matt Durnin, Mauricio Castro Schmitz, Michael Lipford, Mike Tetreault, Paquita Bath, Pip Walsh, Susan Anderson, Tim Tear, Terry Cook, Tom Rumpf, Trina Lederer

Planning Context Working Group Interview Questions on Setting Regional Priorities in TNC (Craig Groves – lead)

1. What are the "big picture" questions or major criteria you are asking or using to inform selection of priority strategies and places? Some programs, for example, may be setting priorities in part based on cross-cutting strategies of the focal area teams. Other programs may still use ecoregional assessments or a similar spatial priority setting exercise to help establish priorities in their regions. Perhaps some regional priorities have been influenced by regional strategic plans that were developed approximately four years ago? In any event, this question is aimed at determining the major "drivers" of regional, divisional, OU, and focal area team priorities.
2. What planning methods do you use to set *place-based* priorities, i.e. for deciding *where* to invest conservation resources? (e.g., Ecoregional Assessments, State Wildlife Action Plans, country-level biodiversity plans sponsored by government, Protected Area Planning, Viability-Management-Threat framework for Latin America, etc.). Please briefly describe your logic and methodology. Is there written documentation of the approach or a document demonstrating its application?
3. What approaches/methods do you use to set Regional, OU, or focal area team *strategic* priorities, (i.e., for deciding *what* to focus conservation investments on). For example, some regions such as North America have selected several broad cross-cutting strategies such as accelerating land conservation and

transforming ocean management in addition to place-based work of individual state or country programs. In developing strategic priorities, what criteria do you use (biodiversity, enabling conditions, theory of change, urgency of threat, leverage potential, etc.) to select these priorities?

4. Do you have strategic plans or business plans that describe how you translate (regional, OU, divisional, focal area) strategic priorities into action (e.g., some Regions are developing 'business plans' that differ in scale and content from Conservation Action Plans)?
5. Do you use global organizational goals (such as TNC 2015 goal) to inform priority-setting? If so, explain.

Interviewees: Aurelio Ramos, Bob Moseley, Bill Raynor, Brian McPeek, Cristina Lasch, Doug Shaw, Jack Hurd, Joe Keenan, Jim Bergan, Joni Ward, Rob Marshall, Susan Anderson, Russell Leiman, Matt Brown, Kara Nelson, Jerry Touval

Planning Context Working Group Interview Question on Improving Implementation of Conservation Plans (Craig Groves, Peter Ericson – lead)

1. In your experience, do you think that poor execution of good plans is an issue in TNC and if so, how prevalent?
2. What do you think are contributing factors?
    a. Note: this is the meat of the discussion. Be prepared to probe on issues like role of uncertain funding, poor estimates of people/time/money required, mismatch of skill sets, staff turnover, etc.
3. How about examples of excellent implementation? What are best practices to help ensure effective execution?
4. What are some specific practices and tools that you would recommend we explore?
5. Are there issues of disconnect between the planning staff/team and the implementation staff/team that contribute?
6. What have we missed in the discussion today?

Interviewees: Terri Schulz, Heidi Sherk, Chris Pague, Nancy Fishbein, Tim Sullivan, William Burnidge, Rick Studenmund, Nels Johnson, Barbara Vickery, Mark Anderson, John Randall, Tim Tear, Dick Cameron, Susan Antenen, Wendy Millet, Henry Little, John Beavers, Fernando Veiga

Email Survey of CAP Coaches on Improving Plan Implementation (Craig Groves – lead)

1. Time it takes to plan: In your experience, what are the most important underlying reasons for why some plans take too long to complete or why some planning processes last longer than they should? More importantly, can you make some specific suggestions on how we can speed up the planning process or make it more efficient? Can you refer me to an example or two of a planning process that produced a quality product in a reasonable amount of time? (You need not elaborate about this last question unless you have the time to do so – if you can just refer me to a person and a project, I can do the follow-up).
2. Setting priorities among strategies and actions: We know that there is good guidance in the CAP handbook on selecting strategic actions using the criteria of cost, benefit, and feasibility as well as a tool for applying these criteria. Yet, we repeatedly have been told that these criteria are rarely used. What are the most important reasons for why these criteria are not being utilized in the selection of strategies and actions? Can you point us to examples where these criteria or ones similar to them have successfully been used in TNC to prioritize strategic actions? Elsewhere in our recommendations, we will focus on an increased use of Return on Investment Analyses (ROI) to help select and prioritize strategies and actions, yet we realize that it is unrealistic (for many reasons) to deploy quantitative ROI in some (if not many) TNC projects. Have you seen or used any other effective methods or tools for setting priorities among a set of strategies or actions?
3. Project/Strategy Director or Senior Leadership Engagement: Which parts of the planning process do you feel that it is most important for a project/strategy director to be involved in? Is it reasonable to assume that a project/strategy director should be the person who takes overall

responsibility for initiating, leading, and completing a conservation or business plan? (This does not imply that she or he necessarily takes on the bulk of the planning process – coaches and conservation planners can do that. But it does suggest that the strategy/project director would have overall responsibility for the plan and "ownership" of its results.) Do you have specific suggestions for recommendations that we can make for greater engagement of directors in the planning process? Can you tell us of an example or two where project directors have been most effectively engaged in the planning process (and what made this engagement effective)?

4. Expertise on the planning team: In your planning experiences, to what degree has the lack of a particular expertise (e.g., hydrologist, forester, social scientist, strategists, etc.) on a planning team hindered the planning process (selection of targets, threat analyses, selection and design of strategies)? In what ways have you seen planning teams effectively fill these gaps? Can you tell us of an example or two where a project team has effectively brought in expertise to the team that was otherwise missing or not available from a particular program or operating unit?
5. Planning with others: In what ways are or should our planning processes be different when we are conducting them in partnership with others (governmental, NGO, local communities, or corporations)? Are there specific parts or tools of our planning processes that need to be modified or used differently depending upon the partner? Can you tell us of a situation where planning with a partner organization did not go as well as we might have wanted and why? Can you tell us of an example where it did go well and what the principal reasons for its success were?
6. Other Comments: Please make any additional suggestions or recommendations concerning how TNC can best improve the implementation of its strategic plans, business plans, or conservation action plans (don't get caught up in the language – I'm just trying to cover the bases of the different terms we use for conservation plans).

Email Responses to Survey: Randy Hagenstein, Doria Gordon, Dan Salzer, Sally Palmer, Jora Young, Shelly Green, Trina Leberer, Kara Nelson, Terri Schultz, Cristina Lasch

Appendix C: Key Feedback Point from TNC Next Generation Conservation Approach Peer Review Workshop, San Antonio, Texas, March 30-31st 2011

The Most Important Feedback Points

- We are preparing strategic or business plans at multiple levels across TNC – global teams, regional strategies, landscape projects, smaller sites. It is becoming unmanageable. Which of these are really mandates?
- Examples in the guidance need considerably more work. Participants want a diversity of examples and the examples need to be tied closely to the questions and sub-questions. Some examples should follow one project through all of the questions.
- Be very careful about the WO-driven product. Lot of angst over top-down driven guidance, especially if mandated. Peer review and pilots where we test the questions and guidance are critical. Need to have top-down endorsement, too.
- New approaches to planning and adaptive management may help, but won't go far without cultural changes in management in TNC, especially of greater accountability and transparency. Project strategic plans need to be tied to OU strategic plans and to individual performance objectives.
- Considerable confusion over terminology - intended and ultimate outcomes, measurable objectives, goals, intermediate results.
- Theory of Change section – too general, needs broken into component pieces and each piece needs to have more detailed guidance.
- The questions and guidance are a mix of planning, process, and content and this needs more clarity and consistency in revised versions.

- The idea of evaluating alternative strategies was well received but low tech tools are needed as well as higher technology ones (ROI).
- In general, the set of questions was well received – they're not just for planning but also for decision-making and adaptive management of conservation projects.
- Several participants were concerned about where targets, threats, and viability analyses have gone in the current guidance and were concerned about throwing the baby out with the bathwater with a new planning approach.
- Many participants felt there was a real gap in the questions concerning how good strategies emerge and are generated. Seemed to be a leap of faith in current questions.
- Considerable concern was registered on how these proposed changes to our planning methods and adaptive management will play out with the Conservation Measures Partnership and Open Standards.
- Need for tools-guidance on dealing with uncertainty, complexity and rate of change.
- Considerably more peer review, pilot testing of guidance, and buy-in will be needed for PET recommendations to stick and to make changes in Conservation Approach. Gateway mentioned as one conduit for transparency and exchange of ideas.