

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



Planning Evolution Team
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PLANNING FOR TOMORROW'S CONSERVATION CHALLENGES: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PLANNING EVOLUTION TEAM

Executive Summary for Senior Managers

The Nature Conservancy is widely recognized for its systematic approach to conservation. Conservation Action Planning (or CAP, the Conservancy's version of strategic planning), Ecoregional Assessments (ERAs), global habitat assessments, and the organization-wide effort to measure the effectiveness of our conservation work are hallmarks of this approach. While these planning and adaptive management methods have served the organization well, both conservation and the Conservancy have changed dramatically over the past 15 years. The rapid pace of environmental change, our focus on whole systems with emphasis on ecological process and ecosystem services, and the need to strengthen the linkage between human well-being and ecological systems are illustrative of many new challenges we face.

To meet these challenges and maintain our position as an industry leader in strategic conservation action and adaptive management, it is essential that we evolve and improve our conservation approach. The Executive Team commissioned the Planning Evolution Team (PET) to do just that—evaluate our existing approach and make recommendations for its improvement. Over the last year, the PET—a geographically and programmatically diverse group of Conservancy and external staff¹—interviewed over 100 Conservancy staff to evaluate our current approach; researched the latest methods and tools on strategic, business, and conservation planning;

and identified many innovations inside and outside the Conservancy that could contribute to an improved conservation approach. We used three guiding principles in this effort; with this project the PET sought to:

1. Identify, disseminate, and catalyze current best practices in conservation planning across the Conservancy and its partners.
2. Embrace a more flexible, toolbox approach to conservation planning while maintaining the ability to communicate effectively about the process and results from conservation planning.
3. Bring greater rigor to planning without making it more time consuming and complicated.

In this report, we outline our principal recommendations, provide a justification for the recommended changes, identify examples of projects that are implementing these recommendations, highlight methods or applications that are essential to evolving our conservation approach, and suggest improvements in project management that are fundamental to successful implementation of our collective recommendations.

Across the Conservancy there is a huge amount of innovative and cutting edge conservation planning occurring. The PET was always conscious of recognizing and building off this strength, and

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as such, some teams reading this will simply see an evolution of their current practices reflected in our recommendations. In nearly all cases the PET drew on work that was already going on in Conservancy field programs. However, a number of these recommendations do represent significant changes from business-as-usual planning in the Conservancy.

Recommendation #1—Enhance the Selection and Development of Strategies.

Much of the energy of conservation planning has been focused on identifying conservation targets and threats. Planning fatigue often sets in before teams develop strategies and actions. As a result, what is arguably the most important component of planning receives short shrift. We need to pay more attention to the process and tools for selecting and developing good strategies. We can accomplish this by placing a greater emphasis on linking strategies to ultimate outcomes (ends not means), thoughtfully comparing potential strategies, and thoroughly assessing the costs and risks of alternate interventions.

Justification: Strategy development and selection, along with “measuring results” are the weakest components of our existing conservation approach, and yet these decisions are critically important to how we spend our dollars and whether we achieve our mission. Interviews with Conservancy staff consistently revealed that strategy selection is often opaque, biased towards traditional approaches, accomplished without sufficient engagement of policy, economic and other implementation experts, and opportunistic. Creative, cost-effective strategies are needed if we are to meet today’s conservation challenges and rise to the priorities of Global Challenges and Global Solutions. The confidence and freedom to develop and explore such strategies requires a strategic planning and decision making system that is transparent, explicit about risk, and realistic about costs. Without major enhancements to the tools and process of strategy selection, it will remain difficult for the Conservancy to escape current limitations in determining how we work.

Recommendation #2—Develop A Single Integrated Planning Approach.

The Conservancy should develop and adopt a single, flexible strategic conservation planning framework that would build on but ultimately replace current versions of CAP, ERAs, and Business planning over the next 2 years. This framework—which we refer to as Conservation Business Planning—would be based around a common set of conservation, business planning, and adaptive management questions, a version of which the PET has proposed, tested, and peer reviewed (see accompanying Roadmap figure in main text). Numerous planning tools, including those we currently use, can help provide answers to these questions, but the Conservancy should look to develop and support a set of made-for-purpose tools, especially for weak areas such as assessing costs and benefits of strategies and multi-objective planning. A revised approach to conservation planning should be applicable and applied to the full range of planning situations in the Conservancy, from traditional landscape, seascape, and watershed work to larger-scale policy strategies and global challenges.

Justification: *Reduced confusion*—The Conservancy engages in many different forms of planning from CAPs to ERAs, business plans, and Operating Unit (OU) strategic plans. For many of our field programs, this diversity of plan types is confusing and their application has become inefficient. We can largely deliver the same basic information with different points of emphasis for different audiences through a single planning process. One of the PET’s interviewees summarized it best: “we need to deliver the right information to the right people at the right time in a format that’s right for them.” *Broader engagement in planning*—We believe that conservation business planning will better engage a variety of audiences that have not regularly participated in planning (e.g., government relations (GR), philanthropy, and Senior Managers) through application of planning to a greater variety of situations (e.g., planning with corporations or government such as with “Development by Design”), avoiding the tendency to get too

bogged down in ecological considerations early in the planning process, and identifying a clear place for input from a diversity of disciplines. *Greater flexibility*—Because project teams face different socio-ecological contexts and a myriad of challenges with different skills and capacities, we need to encourage the use of the most appropriate tools for the job. Although some tools within CAP and ERA methods will remain useful for answering some of the core questions outlined in the Roadmap, a planning framework based on these core questions will enable flexibility in our toolkit while retaining the strength of speaking a common language and being recognized as a strategic organization. *Assessment of costs and benefits*—Planning in the Conservancy has not been consistent in integrating information on the cost, benefits, and risks associated with our strategic choices. This new planning framework creates the expectation that teams capture and use these important pieces of information.

Recommendation #3—Mainstream Multi-objective Planning.

The Conservancy should adapt its core planning approach to more consistently accommodate multiple objectives (e.g., objectives relating to ecosystem services, human-well being, or other sectoral interests in addition to our traditional biodiversity objectives). This requires a planning approach and tools that enable exploration of trade-offs between objectives, and a greater use of scenario analysis to evaluate alternatives.

Justification: Because the Conservancy increasingly works with various sectors of society (e.g., energy or fishing industry) at a landscape-seascape or greater scale—there will be many more projects that do involve both biodiversity objectives and additional objectives related to human use of natural resources. Our planning methods were designed with an intentional focus on biodiversity, and are not sufficiently structured to transparently weigh or evaluate other objectives. Some great evolution has already happened in this

regard—for instance the adaptation of Ecoregional Assessment methods to Marine Spatial Planning or Development by Design—but there is still demand for more of our planning to explicitly acknowledge and incorporate the fundamental objectives of our partners and other stakeholders. New approaches like Development by Design or new tools like multi-criteria decision analysis don't assume that we are adopting the objectives of others but instead enable us and our partners to jointly explore scenarios that deliver on a range of conservation and human-use objectives.

Recommendation #4—Integrate Spatial and Strategic Planning.

The Conservancy should adapt its core planning approach to integrate spatial (e.g., Ecoregional Assessment) and strategic planning (e.g., CAP), rather than conduct them as separate exercises.

Justification: From land protection to shellfish restoration to managing for sustainable ecological flows, the Conservancy employs a diversity of strategies to achieve its mission, and suitable places to deploy these strategies will not overlap perfectly with traditional portfolio sites from ERAs. Strategic action and place cannot be separated—so planning for them independently is inefficient. Most contemporary regional planning efforts or spatial prioritizations (ERAs are one type of such prioritizations) incorporate strategy development in the planning process, while at the same time CAP is increasingly being used at a scale where a spatial understanding of targets, threats, and enabling conditions is essential. Linking the tools of CAP and ERA themselves (e.g., viability ranking, Marxan) will not provide the quality of planning and decision support that the Conservancy needs. Integrating the methodological approaches into a single planning framework will drive what tools and methods need to be developed or refined, and therefore lead to more efficiency in aligning places with strategies.

Recommendation #5—Improve Plan Implementation.

Even when the Conservancy excels at planning, implementation of those plans often falls short. Four courses of action will significantly improve implementation and lead to better conservation outcomes. First, greater attention should be paid to the planning context before a plan is initiated—why is the plan needed, how does it fit into broader strategic initiatives, who is the audience for the plan, what is its scope, what decisions will be made from the plan, and who will make those decisions. Second, project directors and other senior conservation leaders must be more engaged in leading and managing strategic planning processes to better connect these efforts to good management decisions. Third, the implementation of a project’s strategic plan must be wholly integrated into the strategic and annual operating plan of Conservancy OUs. Finally, greater attention must be given to financial analyses related to both the costs and the feasibility of raising the necessary funds to move a project forward.

Justification: No state-of-the-art planning methods and tools will improve conservation if the resulting plans are not implemented. Too many plans in the Conservancy have been developed as a rote exercise to fill a perceived *Conservation by Design* mandate with not enough thought given to what questions the plan was intended to answer and who needed to know the answer to those questions. At the same time, planning—whether through CAPs or ERAs—has too often been viewed as a “science exercise,” primarily the responsibility of conservation scientists and planners. Quite to the contrary, decisions about where the Conservancy is going to work and the strategies it will use are the foundation of sound project management and must have greater engagement and leadership by project and Senior Managers to engender the buy-in that is necessary for implementation and allocation of necessary resources. Strategic and annual operating plans of Conservancy OUs are more often the vehicle for directing what actually gets done in a program, and

without better integration of conservation plans to OU, Regional, and Global Team strategic plans, implementation is likely to continue to fall short.

Recommendation #6—Aim for Greater Rigor without Greater Investment in Planning.

Improving planning does not mean doing more planning—it means doing it more efficiently, doing more appropriate planning, and improving its quality with expert and peer review. Efficiency can be gained by ensuring that the purpose and context for planning are clear (see Recommendations #5), limiting overlap in planning efforts, investing more intensive effort in plan development over shorter durations, and improving management of the planning process. Appropriate planning refers to scaling and tailoring our investments in planning to the needs of individual projects or selected strategies within broader programs and projects. Preliminary suggestions about the most important criteria to consider when making decisions on investments in planning include: likelihood for replication and leverage for selected strategies, financial and reputational risk, uncertainty of strategies, complexity of the planning context, and the anticipated longevity of resulting decision.

Justification: Any conversation about planning in the Conservancy would be incomplete without some mention of “planning fatigue.” The PET was routinely advised that any recommendations for improving planning had to be made within the context that many program staff are “planning weary.” More investment in planning than is needed is a significant waste of resources and it negatively impacts the perceived value of future planning efforts. To that end, we can be smarter about the investments we make in planning, “measures” (monitoring and evaluation), and peer review. First, we need to avoid duplication or overlap of planning effort. We know there is now greater potential for that to occur across different teams that are responsible for planning and execution at multiple organizational levels—global, regional, and OU-leveraged strategies and place-based projects. Making decisions to identify the most effective

planning units in the Conservancy will help avoid duplication. Second, too many planning efforts are completed over long periods of time, and the lag time between efforts results in too much time spent reviewing what has happened in the past or bringing new team members up to date. As a general rule, we need to apply the same rigor of sound project management to the planning of projects as we do to their actual implementation. Finally, we intuitively appreciate that a small site-based project implementing a well-known strategy should not require the same level of planning investment as a whole system project implementing a broad suite of strategies over multiple OUs. Accordingly, the PET has made some preliminary suggestions about how to tailor our investments in planning to our project-level investments.

What Do these Recommendations Mean for You?

- **Senior Managers**—This planning approach addresses a set of core questions for which Senior Managers as well as Project Directors and other senior OU leaders need answers. Senior Managers have a greater role to play to ensure that planning and peer review processes are better managed, that plans address a core set of questions that the PET is recommending, investments in planning are scaled appropriately to the needs of individual projects and strategies, and that implementation of conservation plans is part and parcel of OU strategic and annual operating plans. One integrated planning process that merges CAP (strategic planning), ERAs, and business planning should simplify matters and be appealing to a diversity of staff interests from planning and science to management and philanthropy.
- **Project and Program Directors**—Our recommendations specifically asks many of you to take a greater responsibility in leading and managing strategic planning processes, and helping ensure that we improve implementation. This request does not imply

that you should spend the bulk of your time leading planning efforts—only that you serve as the leader and manager of the process, helping ensure its relevance, transparency, accountability, and ultimately, its effectiveness.

- **Conservation Scientists, Planners, and Coaches**—If these recommendations are to be fully integrated into the work of conservation teams, this is the group who will be critical to making this happen and who will carry much of the weight of change. While recognizing that many Conservancy planners and coaches are pioneers of new methods and processes that the PET is recommending more broadly, these changes will mean that you will be learning, designing, and mastering more tools in an expanding toolbox (e.g., Return on Investment, Scenario Analyses). After these recommendations are carefully vetted, building on your experiences to harvest, develop, and test new tools will be an ongoing process, and providing guidance and training will be a continuing effort that this group will need to support.
- **Philanthropy Staff**—Information on conservation outcomes, strategies used to reach outcomes, and measures for evaluating whether the strategies are working are critical components of many proposals and reports to donors. Our recommendations as well as those in the most recent Measures Business Plan should make this information more transparent and available to you as outputs of any strategic planning process, and hopefully make your job easier as well. And, a greater emphasis during planning on thoroughly understanding both the expected costs of a strategy, and our ability to raise those resources, makes your input during planning increasingly important.
- **Government Relations & External Affairs Staff**—The emphasis on leverage, replication, and opportunity implies that more of the Conservancy's future strategies and actions will be increasingly policy-oriented. Policy

interventions have not generally been subject to the rigors of strategic planning as have more traditional place-based projects. We envision an increased engagement by GR and XA staff in which the risks, assumptions, costs, and benefits of alternate policy strategies are carefully evaluated.

- **Strategy and Learning Team (Conservation Programs) and Conservation Methods Team (Central Science)**—The bulk of responsibility for developing improved planning guidance, developing and supporting a limited set of new planning applications and tools, and supplying ample examples where these tools apply will fall to these two teams. You will have your work cut out for you in FY-12 and 13!

Conservation Approach

The core components of our conservation approach—setting priorities, developing strategies, taking action, and measuring results—remain fundamentally sound. Yet, the more significant role of leverage, demonstration and opportunity; a greater emphasis on solving big conservation problems; more orientation towards conservation efforts that also benefit people; and the importance of the larger matrix of lands and waters around conservation areas (as outlined in the North America Region’s conceptual [Whole Systems paper](#)) are strong indications of important changes to how the Conservancy works. In a brief companion paper to the PET report, the PET will draft its ideas for the Conservancy’s next Conservation Approach. While the PET report is focused first on the Conservancy’s Senior Managers and secondarily on other audiences mentioned previously, the companion paper will have as its audience *all staff, trustees, and partners* of the Conservancy. It will briefly outline the major changes in how we work, incorporate some of the general ideas from our recommendations, and be written around a set of simple steps and principles for designing our conservation programs and projects for impact while managing them for results. After substantial

review it may serve as a stand-alone piece or could get incorporated later into an updated version of *Conservation by Design* that would have additional sections on priorities, goal, vision, and mission.

Advancing the Recommendations of the Planning Evolution Team

Implementing these recommendations will be a journey, not something that should or will occur overnight. To successfully start this journey, several important steps should be taken in FY-12.

- Although the PET received some review of its preliminary recommendations through a workshop that included a cross-section of Conservancy staff in April 2011, additional peer review is needed with field program staff to improve our products and build broader support.
- New planning approaches (e.g., evaluating alternate strategies) need to be field tested with real Conservancy field projects or strategies.
- A small number of new methods and tools need to be added to the conservation planning toolbox in FY-12—for example, Return on Investment tools, expert elicitation tools, or social science methods. Over time the toolbox will grow as innovative methods inside and outside the Conservancy are added.
- The [Interim Planning Guidance](#) completed by the Strategies and Learning Team in Spring 2011 needs to be expanded to include the whole suite of PET core questions and recommendations, as well as integrating new field-tested approaches, methods, and tools. This likely will be phased-in over 2 years, with the majority completed in FY12.
- The Conservation Measures Partnership’s (CMP) [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) is scheduled to be revised in FY-12. The Conservancy, as a charter member of the CMP, will be working alongside our partners to undertake this revision. The PET recommendations should make a useful contribution to the revision of the Open Standards.

1.1 The Planning Evolution Team (PET)—Why, Who, and What

The Nature Conservancy will celebrate its 60th birthday as a conservation organization in the fall of 2011. Its founders—members of a professional scientific organization, the Ecological Society of America, who were concerned about disappearing natural areas—might scarcely recognize today’s Nature Conservancy. Yet, they would likely be pleased to see an organization that has taken a systematic approach to conservation and has maintained and strengthened its scientific foundation. While our current conservation approach as embodied in our framework for how we do our work—*Conservation by Design*—has served the organization well, both conservation and the Conservancy have changed dramatically over the past 15 years since that framework was originally conceived. The rapid pace of environmental change; the increasing spatial scales at which we work; and the growing recognition of the



CONSERVATION by DESIGN

social, economic, and political dimensions of conservation are illustrative of the many new challenges we face.

To meet these challenges and maintain our position as an industry leader in strategic

Planning Evolution Team		
Member	Position	Program
Silvia Benítez	Project Director, Northern Andes Water Funds	Northern Andes Southern Central America OU (TNC)
Robin Cox	Associate Director Science	California TNC
Gwynn Crichton	Senior Project Manager	Virginia TNC
Anita Diederichsen	Water Funds Coordinator	Atlantic Forest and Central Savannas OU (TNC)
Peter Ericson	Program Director	Colorado TNC
Kirsten Evans	Deputy Director	Conservation Strategy & Learning Team
Zach Ferdaña	Senior Conservation Planner	Global Marine Team
Edward Game (co-lead)	Senior Conservation Planner	Conservation Methods Team, Conservation Science
Craig Groves (co-lead)	Director	Conservation Methods Team
Randy Hagenstein	State Director	Alaska TNC
Lise Hanners	Director, Conservation	Eastern US Division
Jeff Hardesty	Senior Adviser, Conservation Strategy & Planning	Conservation Strategy & Learning Team (Conservation Programs)
Erik Meijaard	Senior Forest Advisor	PNCI (consulting), Indonesia
Andrew Soles	Director, Conservation Business Planning	Conservation Strategy & Learning Team (Conservation Programs)
Heather Tallis	Chief Scientist	Natural Capital Project—Stanford University, TNC, WWF

conservation action and adaptive management, the Executive Team commissioned the Planning Evolution Team (PET) to evaluate our existing conservation approach and make recommendations for its improvement. Although the Conservancy's Conservation Approach as summarized in this familiar cycle diagram has four components, the majority of the PET's recommendations are related to the first three components—setting goals and priorities, developing strategies, and taking action (i.e., implementation). Recommendations for improving the fourth component (measuring results) have been the focus of a related initiative to improve the Conservancy's efforts in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our conservation work and are summarized in the [Measures Business Plan](#).

The PET was comprised of an experienced group of project directors, planners, scientists, and Senior Managers, largely from the ranks of the Conservancy but with two noteworthy external members who know the Conservancy well and bring an important outside perspective. The diversity of geographic location, gender, programmatic positions, and work experiences represented on the PET has been invaluable in our efforts to develop a set of recommendations that will be robust for the diversity of situations and places in which the Conservancy works across the globe.

The PET conducted its work from March 2010 through July 2011. Research and evaluation of state-of-the-art planning tools and methods, identification of project examples that deployed these methods and tools, a review of recent business planning approaches in the Conservancy, and interviews of over 100 Conservancy staff regarding strengths and weaknesses of current planning approaches defined the bulk of the team's work. We held three in-person meetings, reviewed our preliminary findings with colleagues at the November 2010 Conservation Coaches

Rally. We conducted a more formal peer review workshop of our recommendations in April 2011 with a diversity of practitioners from across the Conservancy with the aim of delivering this report and recommendations to the Executive Team by July 2011. Chief Scientist Peter Kareiva and Chief Conservation Strategy Officer Karen Poiani served as the sponsors of the PET.

1.2 Principles that Guided the Work of the PET

The Nature Conservancy is widely respected for its systematic approach to conservation. Conservation Action Planning or CAP (the Conservancy's version of strategic planning), Ecoregional Assessments (ERAs), global habitat assessments, and the organization-wide effort to measure the effectiveness of our conservation work are hallmarks of this approach. These planning and adaptive management methods and tools have provided a consistent underpinning to our conservation work, not only allowing staff from diverse settings to speak a universal language about their work (targets-threats-strategies) but also having substantial influence on conservation planning and adaptive management outside the Conservancy, such as through the [Conservation Measures Partnership](#) (CMP) and their [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#). These methods and tools have improved over time through numerous innovations by Conservancy field programs and partner organizations, and more recently through the member organizations of the [Conservation Coaches Network](#). This solid foundation in conservation planning led to our first guiding principle below. As the PET conducted its work, we quickly learned of a diversity of planning tools and approaches (e.g., scenario analysis, return on investment approaches) that were being used in the myriad conservation contexts in which the Conservancy works across the globe. This realization led to guiding principle number 2. Finally, we recognized that the Conservancy already makes substantial investments in planning which in many cases has led to “planning fatigue.”

Our third guiding principle reflects this situation.

1. Identify, disseminate, and catalyze current best practices in conservation planning across the Conservancy and its partners.
2. Embrace a more flexible, toolbox approach to conservation planning while maintaining the ability to communicate effectively about the process and results from conservation planning.
3. Bring greater rigor to planning without making it more time consuming and complicated.

1.3 Organizational Context for the PET Work

When the PET initiated its efforts in the spring of 2010, we were challenged by three ongoing but informal discussions across the Conservancy that might best be represented by the questions below:

1. Should the Conservancy revise its mission to reflect a growing need to make our conservation work more relevant to human well-being?
2. Is the 2015 conservation goal still relevant or does it need revising?
3. Does our current Conservation Approach still resonate across the organization or does it need updating?

Since the PET launched its efforts, the first two questions are being addressed through the work of Chief Conservation Officer Bill Ginn and the Executive Team. A revised mission statement, vision statement, and new conservation goal have been proposed and are being vetted across the Conservancy, including a review by the Board of Directors in June 2011. In essence, the revised mission and goal statement reflect the organizational interest in ensuring that our conservation work is also beneficial to people and is focused on addressing some of the world's most pressing conservation problems (e.g., "restoring the world's oceans"). With regard to the Conservation Approach, the PET has been asked to provide input on how its recommendations as well as those

of the Measures Business Plan would result in revisions to the Conservancy's overall approach to conservation. Those recommendations have been provided to the Executive Team in an accompanying document entitled "Evolving our Conservation Approach: Meeting Global Challenges with Global Conservation Solutions."

1.4 What Issues Did the PET Address and How Did it Conduct its Work

Based on a working paper of planning issues that was used to help launch the PET², discussions and filtering of these issues to a few topical areas, and the results of interviews of Conservancy staff, the PET was able to more accurately define the problems it was addressing. The result of that effort was the identification of five major issues which served as the focus for the team's efforts to improving planning and its implementation.

1. **Strategy Gets Short End of Stick.** Much of the energy of conservation planning has been on conservation targets and threats. Planning fatigue often sets in before teams develop strategies and actions. As a result, what is arguably the most important component of planning receives short shrift.
2. **Too Many Forms of Planning that are Poorly Integrated.** ERAs have focused on setting place-based priorities at regional scales but were not intended to fully consider strategies in those places. On the flip side, CAPs have focused on strategy but increasingly need to establish spatial priorities for targets, threats, and strategies at the ever-growing spatial scales of our conservation projects. A business planning approach had been established for some priority projects to fill some of the shortcomings of CAPs (see Box #1). Added to this are annual or strategic plans requested by OU or regional directors, and sometimes from the Worldwide Office, plus various kinds of philanthropy and operational

² See complete list of issues from working paper in Appendix A.

Box #1: Business Planning 101

By 2008, it was becoming apparent that our core conservation planning practices—Conservation Action Planning and Ecoregional Assessments—were not keeping pace with the demands of teams facing increasingly complex, integrated and large-scale threats and opportunities and the need for greater impact. By default, teams were trying a lot of different approaches. However, peer reviews indicated that strategy development was often not as strong as it could be and financial reviews suggested that even where strategies were robust and innovative many were poised to under-deliver because they were not financially realistic or outcomes were not sustainable.

Moreover, planning expectations were unclear and ever changing. Teams were developing plans and using different formats to meet many different purposes, from conservation planning to identifying marketing messages. When written plans did exist, they were generally not widely available nor were they written in such way as to be accessible to Senior Managers, marketing, philanthropy or executive leadership. In 2009-10, the Office of the Chief Conservation Officer ran a 6-month “business plan summary” pilot project with 12 TNC teams to evaluate a different approach. Rather than dictating a new planning process, we asked whether having teams summarize their projects/strategies in response to a core set of business planning questions with only modest guidance could result in better thinking and also produce succinct written plans that could be useful to several key audiences.

Here’s what was learned from pilots:

- A “question-based” approach was considered a significant improvement over strictly “process” approaches because it allowed teams to use whatever process or “toolbox” worked best for their situation.
- Teams and reviewers valued the more “results-based” focus that emphasized stronger outcome statements, clearer theories of change, more robust strategies, calling out risks and assumptions, and more realistic financial analyses.
- Core audiences (chief scientist, CCO, Senior Managers, team leaders and marketing and philanthropy staff) liked standardized questions and summaries, but it was clear that the question set could be improved and probably expanded.
- Teams and other target audiences (e.g., philanthropy) found that “business plan summaries” (20 PowerPoint slides) were very effective at forcing clarity and communicating only the most important information, but recognized that it’s far easier to produce 50-page documents than concise summaries.
- Overall, the process highlighted the need to evolve TNC’s planning approach and tool box—allowing flexibility, asking a set of core questions and providing basic guidance was the right approach, but not by itself sufficient.

plans. Formats range from management dashboards and OGSPs (a short form of strategic planning that includes Objectives, Goals, Strategies, Plans) to detailed written plans. Modest to no integration exists across any of these forms of planning.

3. **Planning Beyond Biodiversity.** Many of the Conservancy’s more complex projects and strategies involve multiple objectives beyond biodiversity (e.g., Development by Design, Marine Spatial Planning) but our tried and true planning methods need some upgrading

to incorporate multiple objectives beyond biodiversity conservation.

4. **Implementation Falls Short.** Even the best advances in planning technology and innovation won’t compensate for poor implementation of the best laid plans. Our interviews revealed that too many strategic plans were not implemented due to limited engagement by project directors and Senior Managers in the plans, poor connection of CAP to OU operating and strategic plans, long lists of poorly prioritized strategies, and

the perception that conservation plans are “science exercises”.

5. **Conservation Approach Outdated.** The current Conservation Approach (priorities-strategies-actions-measures) does not adequately capture how the Conservancy works today or will work in the future. For example, the concepts of leverage and opportunity, the framework of Global Challenges-Global Solutions, and the latest thinking on a measures framework for the Conservancy being advanced by the Chief Conservation Officer need to be incorporated in our approach.

For each of these major issue areas, the PET established small working groups. The working groups conducted extensive interviews of Conservancy staff to gather more detailed information on the issue, develop preliminary recommendations on how to address the issue, and pinpoint examples of Conservancy projects that had developed methods or tools to effectively address these issues. A complete list of interview questions and individuals interviewed is provided in Appendix B.

In addition to these working groups and the interviews, the PET devoted considerable effort to evaluating a set of questions that had been

Box #2: Original Business Planning Questions Evaluated in FY09-10 Pilot Project

Problem: What important conservation problem does this project/strategy address? What’s the current status of this problem?

Theory of Change: What are the specific conservation outcomes that we desire and what change is needed in the external world to achieve the desired outcomes? Who are the key actors and what are the specific major opportunities to achieve this change? What intermediate results do we believe are both necessary and sufficient to achieve and sustain the expected conservation outcomes and where must TNC or partners intervene to achieve the change? What is our role and niche relative to other actors? Have similar interventions been effective elsewhere?

Costing the Expected Results. What is the estimated cost of achieving and sustaining^[1] specific desired intermediate results? How would costs generally be allocated? What are current sources of funding? What’s the estimated gap?

Results, Strategies & Phasing: What specific results and related strategies [solutions?] will we hold ourselves accountable for and what are the key elements of each strategy? How will results and major actions be phased over time and what are the key objectives for the next fiscal year?

Costing and Financing TNC’s Strategies. How much will it cost to implement and sustain our strategies, and what are the expected sources of funding and how will we realistically secure them?

Assumptions and Risks: What are the most important assumptions underlying our theory of change and what are the key risks to achieving our results that are beyond our control?

Strategy Effectiveness: What do the indicators we are tracking tell us about whether we are making sufficient progress toward stated results and also whether our assumptions are still correct and risks still acceptable? [Management question: What level of future investment is warranted by the results to date?]

Project Team & Resources: What capacity, budget and support are required to implement these strategies and to lead and manage the project?

Contribution: How does this project/strategy contribute strategically to TNC’s specific and identified priorities? How does it advance a replicable conservation practice?

developed by Jeff Hardesty and Andrew Soles (Conservation Strategies & Learning Team), and that served as the basis for the development of business plan summaries in the Conservancy (see Box #2). Twelve pilot projects prepared business plan summaries on the basis of these questions, and the lessons learned from these pilot projects were in part used to improve the business planning questions as well as the business planning process. The PET also drew substantially on a review of these business plan summaries conducted by the Conservancy's [Sawhill Fellows](#). The PET primarily focused on the business planning questions as a starting place for developing a core set of planning and adaptive management questions which managers and project directors need answered in most strategic planning settings in the Conservancy. We compared these business planning questions to questions that CAP and CMP's [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#) were intended to answer as well as a similar set of strategic questions developed by WWF-US to implement their version of the Open Standards. Ultimately, we used all of these sets of questions to arrive at a core set of questions that appear in our recommendations section of this report.

2.1 Introducing New Ideas

Across the Conservancy there is a huge amount of innovative and cutting edge conservation planning occurring. The PET was always conscious of recognizing and building off this strength, and as such, some teams reading this will simply see an evolution of their current practices reflected in our recommendations. In nearly all cases, the PET drew on ongoing work of Conservancy field programs. However, a number of these recommendations do represent significant changes from business-as-usual planning in the Conservancy. For many teams in the Conservancy, some of these recommendations will point to entirely new ways of thinking about and approaching conservation planning. So what are the newest ideas being introduced?

Major new ideas contained in the PET recommendations

1. **Planning context**—only developing plans that are clearly linked to conservation decisions and resulting investments, and ensuring that decision maker(s) are involved in the planning effort from the outset.
2. **Comparative strategy assessment**—an expectation that strategic planning involves transparent comparison between alternative strategies.
3. **Multiple objectives**—explicitly planning to meet multiple objectives, in addition to biodiversity (e.g., human well-being, ecosystem services, other sectors including energy, transportation, fisheries, etc.), and clearly considering trade-offs among them.
4. **Integration of spatial and strategic planning**—integrate spatial (ERA) and strategic (CAP) planning efforts under a single approach rather than conducting them separately.
5. **Question-driven planning**—a core set of questions drives a single integrated, strategic planning framework.

2.2 Strategy Development & Selection

The Conservancy has a deserved reputation as a leader in strategic conservation planning (we're using the term 'strategic planning' to refer generally to the process of developing, prioritizing and allocating resources to different actions or interventions). Our principal strategic planning tool, CAP, is widely used both within and outside the Conservancy. Our application of CAP and the Open Standards, together with the skill of the Conservation Coaches has meant we excel at some elements of strategic planning—selecting conservation targets, and analysing their viability and threats. However, the ultimate role of strategic planning (including CAP) is to develop and select strategies that will most effectively help us achieve our mission—and yet this is the weakest part of

our existing approach to strategic planning, with the least guidance. Interviews with Conservancy staff consistently revealed that that strategy selection is often opaque, biased and opportunistic. They also highlighted that even when CAP was used, it was not sufficiently developed as a strategy selection tool, and has serious limitations in its ability to support defensible strategy selection (see Box #3). In addition, the Conservancy is increasingly engaging in policy-related strategies, the design and selection of which are not typically supported through CAP.

Other issues that were identified with strategic planning include:

- A disproportionate amount of time is spent evaluating targets, viability and threats, rather than developing conservation strategies and understanding their likely effects.
- Strategy selection is rarely comparative. Planning teams generally lack the skills, tools, guidance, or motivation to explicitly evaluate alternate strategies and compare trade-offs towards achieving a range of objectives.
- The ultimate outcomes or objectives that strategies are meant to achieve are not consistently stated, and therefore the theory of change is neither transparent nor easily communicated.
- Because the strategy selection element of our planning approach is weak and trade-offs between strategies rarely made explicit, our planning process commonly concludes with long lists of strategies from which project directors and Senior Managers have difficulty determining priority.
- Good strategic planning is often diminished because of poor channels of communication between Senior Managers and planning staff.
- Some staff involved in planning expressed frustration at the lack of openness and transparency about the strategic decision-making process, which was often perceived to

be heavily influenced by personal value and interests rather than strong evidence.

- Strategy ‘feasibility’ is one of the most commonly used criteria for decisions about engaging or not engaging in a particular strategy, and yet feasibility is a poorly defined measure typically involving level of staff confidence / familiarity, availability of long-term funding, and interests of partners and senior staff. The exact nature of feasibility determinations are rarely made transparent.
- Thorough estimates of cost rarely influence strategy selection, and this typically happens after a strategy has been selected, if at all.
- The risks and assumptions associated with strategy selection are rarely articulated.

These shortcomings make it difficult for the Conservancy to confidently assert or demonstrate that we work in a strategic fashion, and almost certainly mean that the Conservancy is not working as efficiently as possible towards achieving its mission.

Major recommendation #1: Enhanced approach to strategy development and selection

The PET is recommending a substantial revision of the Conservancy’s strategic planning process. Development of detailed guidance on a revised planning process and tools to address the issues raised above will take place in FY12, but the following recommendations represent hallmarks of this revision.

- **Identify diverse strategies.** Reserve a clear place early in the strategic planning process for identifying a diverse set of creative conservation strategies. No strategies should be taken off the table without clear justification, and teams should develop a broad list of potential strategies, including

those that depart from past Conservancy work and expertise. Even if we currently lack the expertise for a particular strategy, the process of identifying and evaluating alternate strategies can be an important guide to capacity needs and future hiring. There is also a need to distinguish strategic thinking from strategic planning. Identifying and expanding the use of Conservation Coaches who are good strategic thinkers will be invaluable assistance to teams developing creative strategies.

- **Clear articulation of ultimate outcomes.**

At the start of planning, teams must clearly articulate the ultimate desired biodiversity outcomes, as well as other key objectives of the project (e.g., human-well being or economic development). Too many strategic planning efforts in the Conservancy have confused means with ends—what we ultimately value are the “ends” (we care about the biodiversity of the coral reefs), versus the way to achieve that outcome, “the means” (MPAs are one way of conserving the reefs). Teasing apart means and ends will allow effective assessment of trade-offs between strategies and help teams avoid anchoring on known actions and missing alternate means of achieving our desired outcomes. Our early peer review and testing have indicated that this is a surprisingly challenging expectation, and one for which much improved guidance is needed.

- **Clear logic and descriptions of theory of change.** Strategies are clearly linked to ultimate outcomes through results chains, logic models or theories of change. Assumptions and uncertainties contained in the reasoning are made explicit and documented with these methods. Strategic planning should provide a forum for team members to openly discuss, probe, and question assumptions contained in a strategy’s theory of change. It is important that the sensitivity of our logic and expected outcomes to these assumptions is explored. The evidence that supports a given theory of change should also be transparent and well documented.

What are theories of change and logic models?

Theory of Change is the rationale (e.g., beliefs, experience, data, and context) for selecting a set of interventions or change strategies that will lead to a project’s intended result. Logic models or results chains are often used to illustrate how a team believes a particular Theory of Change will achieve a project’s ultimate outcomes. Theories of change and logic models are not synonymous.

- **Increased transparency.** Transparency in strategy selection can be improved by acknowledging the presence and influence of personal value judgments in decisions. For example, if three different Key Attributes for a Target are assessed as fair, good, and very good—whether this Target receives an overall score of fair, good or very good is not a question of scientific fact but rather is heavily influenced by personal judgments and risk tolerance. Value judgments are a perfectly reasonable part of conservation planning, and should not be discouraged provided they are represented as matter of personal judgment and preference and not science, and that it is clear whose judgments and preferences they are. Transparency should also be improved by making the decision making process around strategy selection clear to all staff involved.
- **Focus on the expected outcome of strategies.** Our strategic planning process should be re-oriented to dedicate substantial emphasis and rigor to estimating the likely benefits of strategies, and linking these to ultimate outcomes. This should be the principal focus of strategic planning, and will require teams to develop greater skills in predictive modelling, and interrogation of available data. In situations where data and models are not available and/or feasible to develop, teams should seek expert opinion in a more rigorous fashion through formal elicitation methods. Understanding

Box #3—Decision Analysis Critique of Conservation Action Planning (CAP)

Decision Analysis is the science of formal decision making—using information rationally to make the best decision possible. Decision Analysis is an extensive field with its own theory, methods and tools, and it underpins much decision making in engineering, health, and economics. CAP is a strategic planning process with associated algorithms that constitute the Conservancy’s principal strategic planning tool. From an institutional point of view, the use of CAP and the community established around its application have been a source of strength for the Conservancy. Furthermore, from a decision theory point of view, the CAP process also has strong elements, such as the disaggregation of a complex problem into a set of underlying and simpler pieces that can hopefully be estimated with greater reliability. However, CAP also has a number of weaknesses as a strategic planning tool, especially when viewed through the lens of Decision Analysis. These weaknesses are briefly described here. It is important to note also that many CAP practitioners have developed creative approaches to addressing some of these weaknesses, and these notes refer to the CAP process as it is presented in the main CAP documentation—the Conservation Action Planning Handbook.

Objectives

Objectives in CAP take a number of forms, but because there is no articulation of how different measurable objectives contribute to achieving the overall goal of the project, it is difficult to know how to weight them, particularly when there are trade-offs among them. At present objectives are by default all weighted equally but resource limitation means that there will necessarily be trade-offs. For example, the following are two typical objectives in CAP: *(1) By 2006, eradicate tamarisk and other woody invasives from the San Miguel River and major tributaries. (2) By 2013, X acres (TBD) in at least 2 viable Gunnison prairie dog colonies are under full protection status.* Which one of these two objectives contributes more to our conservation mission in that geography? It is unlikely that we consider them entirely equal, and yet this is how they are treated in CAP.

Strategies and their consequences

If the decision being supported by CAP is selection of the best conservation actions in which to invest resources, then the process should be focused on identifying strategies and predicting the consequences of those strategies. This means using our knowledge of socio-ecological systems to understand how different actions are likely to affect the things we care about. In CAP, this Decision Analysis paradigm is largely reversed: the majority of time is spent identifying our knowledge of the socio-ecological system, and from careful evaluation guided by probing questions it is anticipated that good strategies will be developed. Far more time is dedicated to assessments of target viability and threats, than to strategies and their consequences. The assessment of the consequences of different alternatives that does occur is buried within a complex algorithm (e.g., threat abatement benefit, viability enhancement benefit), that users largely do not control and many do not even use. The complexity and lack of transparency in the CAP algorithms are not apparent to most CAP users who interface only with the Excel Workbook or Miradi. Although often presented as a simple and intuitive process, the CAP algorithm is complex. A large number of scoring rules substitute for a model of the system. Following the process from start to finish involves at least:

- 17 separate points at which scores are ranked, combined, normalised, and re-ranked,
- 6 different ‘rules’ that are applied at various points to reflect the fact that variables don’t combine linearly,
- 3 opportunities to manually override the ranks, making the use of the algorithm up to that point meaningless.

However carefully considered these procedures and rules are, they still represent value judgments, and as such, are unlikely to be appropriate or robust in all cases, or at the very least, should be examined by users. This is especially important as they drive the outcome - there are significant consequences to changing these scoring rules, so teams must be confident their decisions are appropriate for their case. Many CAP coaches seem unaware of the rules, let alone question them.

Continued on next page

Transparency

Transparency is an important property of defensible decision making. CAP is not transparent because there are so many value judgments tied up in the scoring rules and never made explicit. The scoring rules described above contain substantial hidden values and risk tolerances, which should be treated on a case- by- case basis.

Finding the best strategy

Despite its role as a strategy decision support tool, “CAP lacks a methodology for actually optimizing and quantitatively testing alternate strategies” (from a recent scientific paper by Greg Low and colleagues, one of the founders of CAP). At the very minimum, a decision support system should defensibly balance the benefit of an action with the cost of taking that action, and preferably also be able to evaluate trade-offs between benefits. The ad hoc scoring system used in CAP means that “CAP methodologies lack a rigorous system for assessing the benefits vs. the costs of alternate management strategies” (Low *et al.* 2010). The field of Decision Analysis has many different well established methods for helping to identify the best strategy.

Stakeholder input

Part of finding good strategic solutions is incorporating the values and preferences of stakeholders. The scope for stakeholder input into CAP is limited. All the parameters being estimated are attempts to reveal a ‘true’ but unknown value, rather than genuinely subjective decisions about values and the perceptions of participants. There is no place to really incorporate preferences of stakeholders who will be affected by decisions. There is a big and important difference between elicitation of stakeholder preference, and using experts to elicit parameters for which there is no/ little data. Subjective judgments of values will become more important as our objectives expand to include human well-being and our projects involve partnerships with other sectors.

Expert elicitation

CAP typically uses what could be termed an ‘informal behavioural approach’ to expert elicitation. In the expert elicitation and decision theory literature, this is widely recognized as a poor approach as critical evaluation can often be suppressed in favor of group cohesiveness, and dominant members often have a disproportionate influence. In addition, as the process only asks for best guesses and not plausible bounds, the level of uncertainty around estimates is not captured. There is a lot of research on this topic and many options for improving the process.

benefit requires teams to assess expected change, as well as the change that would have happened if the Conservancy was not involved.

- **Thorough estimates of strategy costs.** Strategy selection needs to include thorough and realistic estimates of the costs of alternate strategies. This will require planning teams to involve staff from philanthropy and external affairs to better understand the likelihood of raising the required funds for different strategies.
- **Comparative strategy selection.** Our strategic planning process and tools must be able to deliver a thoughtful, rigorous, and transparent comparison of alternative potential strategies. At the very least this should involve the use of

basic return-on-investment (ROI) or cost-effectiveness calculations (see Box #4 and Business Analytics example). Preferably, our tools should also be able to illustrate trade-offs between strategies across a range of objectives, and include a mechanism to defensibly and transparently weight the range of objectives or otherwise evaluate different scenarios. Understanding the relative ROI and trade-offs associated with potential strategies will aid decision makers to prioritize between strategies. Our interviews and peer reviews revealed real interest from Conservancy staff to use formal ROI methodologies to compare strategies, but there were understandable concerns about data and skills required. This puts the onus on the Conservancy’s Conservation Strategies

Box #4 – Return-on-Investment (ROI) Basics

In conservation, return-on-investment (or simply 'ROI') has come to be a rather general term for prioritization tools that explicitly consider the *cost* of the alternatives being evaluated (in contrast to approaches based principally on the occurrence of biodiversity and the threats to it). ROI analyses belong to a general class of economic analysis known as *cost-effectiveness analysis*.

In its most basic form, ROI analysis is simply the conservation benefit of a particular action divided by the cost of taking that action:

$$ROI = \frac{\text{Conservation Benefit}}{\text{Cost}}$$

In nearly all situations there is likely to be some uncertainty about the outcome from a given action. Of particular concern are events or risks that are largely beyond the control of conservation management and yet are likely to influence the success of conservation interventions. In ROI analyses, these risks are typically expressed as a probability of success, with ROI calculated as:

$$ROI = \frac{\text{Conservation Benefit} * \text{Probability of Success}}{\text{Cost}}$$

Calculating conservation benefit

On the return side of the ROI equation is the expected benefit, towards some predefined conservation objective, of taking a particular action. This is the hardest part of using ROI in conservation. The benefit does not need a dollar value, but it must be in the same units for all alternatives being considered. Commonly used metrics include; total number of species protected, number of threatened species protected, reduction in extinction risk of threatened species, reduction in a particular threat, or number of hectares protected. The same metrics we would use to measure achievement of our goals and the effectiveness of our strategies are good candidates for conservation benefit.

Estimating cost

It goes without saying that a well thought-out estimate of the costs associated with the alternatives under consideration is a prerequisite for a return-on-investment analysis. When estimating the cost of a conservation action it is useful to break the total cost down into different pieces (e.g., start-up, implementation, project management, infrastructure, services and support, monitoring, legal, communication, etc.), so that there is consistency in the estimates for different actions. It is also important to consider a consistent time frame over which costs will be estimated.

Why use ROI?

The ultimate motivation for employing ROI methods in conservation is more efficient conservation actions – achieving the most conservation possible for our investment. However, ROI analysis has a number of strengths relative to other approaches to conservation planning. First, it encourages us to acknowledge that the investment required to achieve conservation outcomes is important in deciding where and how we work. Second, it encourages accountability in our decisions. Like all conservation planning tools, ROI analysis will only be part of the story when it comes to decision making. There are many reasons why we might not simply choose the option with the highest ROI, but we should be concerned if we are pursuing options that have a low ROI. ROI analysis can serve to provide a transparent view of the value of particular opportunities.

and Conservation Science teams to work with the field to develop the tools and capacity to implement this recommendation.

- **Identification of risks.** Conservancy teams need to be systematic and explicit in identifying and assessing the risks associated with different

strategies. Risks should be characterized by estimates of their probability and severity, and for key risks, teams should be able to describe what, if any, influence they had on strategy selection, and how these risks will be tracked and where possible mitigated. Strategic plans

Example: Business Analytics in TNC

An excellent example of rigorous strategy selection can be found in the Conservancy's Business Analytics Unit, a branch of the Conservancy's Advancement Services Division.

Context: Decision about who among our roughly 1.5 million members will receive direct mail marketing for a specific initiative.

Objective: Maximise revenue

System dynamics: The Business Analytics team built a predictive response model based on the response to previous similar mailings, and on demographic data (e.g., likely wealth rating, probability of children, etc.). From this information they generated, for each individual; a) their likelihood of responding, and b) how much they were likely to give.

Decision analysis: The cost of different mail-out options was balanced with the predictive model above to give an expense-revenue ratio (ROI) for each alternative.

The use of predictive models and rigorous decision analysis has led to an increase in revenue and decrease in costs associated with these mailings.

should also identify trigger points associated with these risks that would require a substantial change in strategy, and what contingency plans exist for these cases. Counter-intuitively, it is likely that having a transparent forum in which to acknowledge the risks associated with strategies will give teams confidence to be less risk averse and more creative with their strategy selection.

- **More peer review.** Formal peer review (internal and external) of both our strategies and the strategy selection tools we use should be expanded.
- **Analytic support for policy strategies.** The Conservancy should use our analytical skills to support development and selection of large-scale policy strategies.

Making these changes will be hard without a significant shift in our approach to strategic planning, the order we think about different components, the sorts of questions we ask our staff and partners, and the decision-support tools we use.

Key benefits

Better decisions—The Conservancy is able to say with confidence that it had a rigorous and defensible approach for deciding how we spend the money that is donated to us.

Better strategies—Strategies reflect a thoughtful assessment of alternatives rather than simply opportunity, legacy, and staff interest. Reducing bias in our strategy selection will lead to strategies and investments that are more cost effective.

2.3 Single Planning Framework

We have a number of strategic planning and adaptive management tools, and the Conservancy engages in many different forms of planning from CAPs to ERAs, business plans, and OU strategic plans. For many of our field programs, this diversity of plan types has become bewildering and their application has become inefficient. But each different type of plan has different strengths and has the attention of different audiences. To address this, and respond to the need for major change in our approach to strategic planning, the PET recommends that the Conservancy should develop and adopt a single strategic conservation planning framework that would build on and replace current

versions of CAP, ERA, and Business Planning over the next 2 years.

Major recommendation #2:

Develop a single strategic conservation planning framework to replace CAP, ERA and Business Planning

This framework—which we refer to as *Conservation Business Planning*—would be based around a common set of conservation, business planning, and adaptive management questions, a version of which the PET has proposed, peer reviewed, and revised.

These questions would form the basic strategic planning and adaptive management framework of the Conservancy. They can be answered in many different ways using different tools, but they help set the stage for the evolution we believe needs to happen in the way we approach conservation planning. As well as helping make the changes mentioned above with regard to strategy development and selection, these planning questions also provide the context for other major recommendations of the PET—some recommendations reflect suggestions for how project teams should approach answering these questions. In the Roadmap figure below we have highlighted where and how these questions reflect recommendations of the PET, and where other recommendations fit within this planning framework.

Key Benefits

Reduced confusion—The diversity of plan types has become bewildering and their application has become inefficient. We can largely deliver the same basic information with different points of emphasis for different audiences through a single planning process.

Broader engagement in planning—Through application of planning to a greater variety of situations (e.g., planning for policy strategies), avoiding the tendency to get bogged down in ecological

considerations early in the planning process (e.g., over viability status), and making a clear place for input from a diversity of disciplines in the Conservancy, we believe that conservation business planning will better engage a variety of audiences that have not regularly participated in planning (e.g., GR, philanthropy, and Senior Managers).

Greater flexibility—Because project teams face different challenges with various skills and capabilities, we need to encourage the use of the most appropriate tools for the job. Although some tools within CAP and ERA methods will remain useful for answering some of the core questions outlined in the Roadmap figure above, a planning framework based on these core questions will enable flexibility in our toolkit while retaining the strength of speaking a common language and being recognized as a strategic organization.

Expectation of change—Planning in the Conservancy has not been consistent in integrating information on the cost, benefits, and risks associated with our strategic choices. This new planning framework creates the expectation that teams capture and use these important pieces of information.

In this report we provide only limited detail about the intention of each question, and only for those that reflect PET recommendations; in some cases, greater detail on answering questions can be found in the [Interim Planning Guidance](#). Throughout FY-12, the Conservation Strategies and Learning Team, Conservation Science and members of the PET will periodically update the interim guidance to bring it in alignment with the PET recommended framework. Updates will occur as supporting guidance and new tools are developed, tested and vetted.

Conservation Approach Questions

1. What is the internal and external context for this planning effort?

Why answer this question? To ensure our plans are focused on providing the answers needed to make relevant decisions and ultimately,

Roadmap for PET Recommendations*



*Questions 1-13 are a set of planning and adaptive management questions that apply to the entire life cycle of a conservation project. The emphasis of PET recommendations was on questions 1-7 and 9-10 because these questions are primarily about strategic and business planning. Questions 8, 12 and 13 are covered in the measures business plan.

sound conservation investments. Too often, our focus on using planning tools has obscured our understanding of the decisions they are meant to inform, as well as the full context surrounding these decisions. Our plans should be oriented to those who will use the information to make decisions and to other audiences the plan is intended to reach. Socio-economic conditions need to be considered as part of the context to help determine the most appropriate planning approach and tools.

Suggestion: Ensure plans are clearly linked to conservation investment decisions, address questions managers want answered, and present the information in appropriate format for intended audiences.

2. What are the ultimate conservation outcomes we are trying to achieve?

Why answer this question? Being clear about “ultimate outcomes” will focus strategies on what actually matters—ends not means. *Ends* are where we want to go. They are what we care about and value. *Means* are ways to get to the ends. Unintentionally, we tend to anchor on *means*—a natural bias in human decision making. Clearly-stated ultimate outcomes enhance team creativity when generating ideas about alternative interventions. They also provide a basis to consistently and transparently compare and prioritize alternative strategies, and expose trade-offs between them. There will always be trade-offs between achieving different outcomes, something we do not acknowledge or tackle in our current approach to strategic planning. Ultimate outcomes do not have to be questions of science—they should reflect what the Conservancy and other partners fundamentally value (e.g., sustain native fish populations, increase employment opportunities).

Suggestion: Ensure that the ultimate outcomes that we and our partners desire are clearly stated from the beginning.

Suggestion: Explicitly acknowledge the presence of multiple objectives in our planning exercises (e.g., biodiversity, human well-being, ecosystem services, other sectoral interests involved in the plan etc.), and ensure the planning tools we use adequately address the influence of other objectives beyond biodiversity conservation (see Major recommendation #3).

3. What important ecological, socio-economic or political trends are acting as impediments or present opportunities to achieving ultimate conservation outcomes? What are the important sources of uncertainty?

Why answer this question? Setting the stage for identifying good strategies and potential points of intervention requires looking at the full socio-ecological setting in which our work takes place. Although our viability analyses have been strong in revealing the health of ecological systems, there is room for improvement in our understanding of the situational (i.e., socio-economic and political) contexts in which we work. Greater participation of project directors and non-science staff such as government relations and philanthropy could strengthen this part of the planning process. There usually will be uncertainty in our understanding of these systems, and acknowledging that uncertainty could lead to improved development of alternative strategies.

Suggestion: Reduce emphasis on viability analyses of conservation targets to only those select few targets that are used as indicators for assessing strategy effectiveness.

Suggestion: Provide supporting evidence for our assessment of socio-ecological and political systems, including improved use of expert judgment (see Box #5). Acknowledge uncertainty in our understanding.

Box #5—Four easy ways the Conservancy could improve its use of expert judgement

1. Use approaches to drawing out information from experts that bring out the strengths (while avoiding the pitfalls) of both individual and group elicitation. Allow each expert in a group to provide her own estimate of the variable in question (e.g. threat severity), then discuss these individual recommendations as a group to generate insights. After discussion, allow individuals to alter their estimates if desired, and then combine the individual estimates using a formal, structured process of aggregation.
2. Instead of asking for a single “best guess” for values like condition, we should ask for a best guess and the plausible extremes (bounds). This approach helps provide an estimate of the uncertainty surrounding the experts’ assessment, and provides a basis for using more rigorous methods to combine estimates.
3. Ask experts to respond to this question: “Why might I be wrong?” This can help reduce overconfidence and begin to establish an understanding of the risks involved in decisions.
4. Separate scientific judgments from values judgments. Two methods are important: (1) clear understanding of the context for eliciting an expert judgment, separating the objectives for a decision from the scientific predictions of outcomes; and (2) decomposing problems (through model-building), so the parameters elicited are not so directly tied to the decision.

4. What range of strategies was considered?

Why answer this question? Developing alternative conservation strategies encourages creativity. Attempt to avoid the bias of simply continuing existing strategies. Build an expectation that strategic planning involves transparently evaluating a range of alternatives for achieving ultimate outcomes.

Suggestion: Strategic planning should be focused on developing and evaluating alternatives not simply planning for and justifying existing strategies.

5. What suite of strategies was selected and why were they selected over alternatives?

Why answer this question? Encouraging teams to be transparent in their selection of defensible strategies will ensure that the strategies we select are those that will most effectively advance our ultimate outcomes. Encourage teams to evaluate how well existing strategies have worked and what advantages the selected strategies have over those that were not chosen.

Suggestion: Strategy selection becomes a comparative process, documents the reasons for choosing one strategy over another, and clearly considers return-on-investment among other considerations.

6. How will the selected strategies achieve intermediate results and ultimate conservation outcomes and what are the major implementation steps and actions?

Why answer this question? Clear linking of strategies to achieving ultimate outcomes, with a clear, written description of the theory of change associated with each step will facilitate better documentation of choices and adaptive management later on.

7. What are the major risks and assumptions associated with the chosen strategies?

Why answer this question? Transparent and explicit statement of risks allows us to plan for their mitigation, makes us more risk tolerant in designing strategies because we’ve thought through each aspect and have an approach to managing risk, and establishes a clear connection between risks and strategy selection.

8. What key indicators will be monitored to evaluate progress toward ultimate conservation outcomes and track important risks and assumptions?³

Why answer this question? Tracking progress toward indicators for intermediate results as well as risks and assumptions will facilitate regular progress reporting and provide the vehicle for adjustments to strategy as teams move toward ultimate outcomes.

9. What resources are needed to implement the chosen strategies?

Why answer this question? These details indicate that teams have thought carefully about the financial implications of the selected strategies.

10. How will we and our partners realistically secure the required funds?

Why answer this question? Being realistic about the funds (public and private) that can be raised to support a particular project or strategy has been a weak area in our strategic and business planning. As a result, we have too often undertaken projects with a limited likelihood that we—and/or our partners—will be able to raise the funds to support the proposed strategic actions.

11. How will experience from this project be communicated and leveraged?

Why answer this question? When it comes to selecting and developing strategies, there is an enormous amount of reinventing the wheel that takes place in the Conservancy. Many colleagues have expressed the desire to be able to quickly learn of other projects in the Conservancy that are addressing similar problems. To do so requires

that all projects do a better job of communicating their objectives and strategies, both those that are innovative and successful as well as those that fail.

Adaptive management questions

12. Are we making progress against intended outcomes?³

Why answer this question? Regular tracking of our progress enables us to report more effectively to managers and funders and can provide an early alert to changes in course that might be necessary.

13. How have we adapted strategies or altered our investments based on what we have learned so far?³

Why answer this question? The Nature Conservancy prides itself in taking an adaptive management approach to its conservation work. Building an expectation that projects will receive regular review and adjustments will be made and documented as the project proceeds builds a culture of transparency and self-assessment that ensures focused investments in projects that work.

2.4 Multi-objective Planning

The Conservancy is, and will increasingly be, involved in planning that includes objectives beyond biodiversity conservation (e.g., commercial interests, human well-being, etc.). The increasing scale of our work necessitates interacting with diverse partners towards multiple objectives. In addition, the proposed new mission statement of the organization and the strategies that support the Global Challenges—Global Solutions framework extends the scope of our conservation objectives (e.g., Ecosystem-Based Adaptation).

³Note that questions 8, 12, and 13 refer to the “measuring results” component of our Conservation Approach. These questions have been the focus of an organization-wide initiative to improve the Conservancy’s ability to evaluate the effectiveness of our conservation strategies and actions. We have not addressed them in this report because they are the focus of the organization’s Measures Business Plan.

Major recommendation #3:

Explicitly acknowledge that our planning addresses multiple objectives (e.g., biodiversity, human well-being, ecosystem services, other sectoral interests etc.), and ensure the planning methods and tools we use illustrate trade-offs between, and support decisions about, multiple objectives.

In the context of conservation, multi-objective planning refers to a rational and transparent approach to the need to balance protection of the environment while achieving social and economic objectives. Conflicts can arise from the spatial allocation of activities in the environment (e.g., oil palm expansion is incompatible with most other land-use activities), and also through the environmental use of different activities (e.g., different approaches to logging have varying effect on biodiversity). Multi-objective planning incorporates both spatial and strategic elements (see Major recommendation #4). For the Conservancy, multi-objective planning requires examination of other objectives in association with biodiversity conservation, and transparently accounting for both their influence on conservation outcomes and the consequence of conservation action on their achievement. Multiple-objectives inevitably mean trade-offs: priority areas for biodiversity are not always going to deliver ecosystem services; conservation strategies will sometimes limit economic opportunities. Explicit trade-off analysis has not traditionally been a feature of the Conservancy's conservation planning approach, but needs to be.

There are two key perspectives on multi-objective planning:

- Planning that involves one sector trying to achieve multiple objectives (e.g., a conservation organization trying to achieve both biodiversity and human well-being objectives);

- Planning that involves multiple sectors each trying to achieve one or more objectives (e.g., conservation, fisheries, shipping, mining, and development groups participating in a marine spatial planning exercise).

The Conservancy is likely to encounter both situations with increasing frequency. Indeed, the PET's interviews revealed that many Conservancy projects already fall into the multi-objective planning category. Examples include:

- Sustaining ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation—Water Funds
- Working with multiple sectors to minimize conflicts between economic growth and biodiversity—Development by Design projects with the energy sector
- Land-use planning for biodiversity conservation, economic returns, and carbon storage (both as climate change mitigation and a conservation financing mechanism)—Berau Forest Carbon project
- Coastal hazard mitigation, coastal development and biodiversity conservation—Global Coastal Resilience projects
- Coastal hazard mitigation, coastal development and restoration of coastal ecosystems—oyster reef and salt marsh restoration in the Gulf of Mexico
- Fisheries and biodiversity conservation—projects in the Pacific Northwest and California Current

Our current planning methods (both spatial and strategic) largely focus on prioritizing work towards biodiversity conservation objectives. While additional objectives beyond biodiversity have sometimes been incorporated into ERAs and CAPs, neither process has been formally adapted to support multi-objective planning. In most ERAs, other objectives (e.g., energy, transportation, fisheries) have been treated as threats or human impacts to be avoided. Similarly, as outlined Box #3, CAP is not structured to allow

evaluation of trade-offs between objectives, nor designed to support decisions about objectives other than biodiversity. However, because of the frequency with which Conservancy teams and other conservation organizations are involved in multi-objective exercises, numerous innovations are occurring inside and outside the Conservancy that we can draw upon.

A wide spectrum of planning tools is being used for multi-objective exercises. These range from multi-objective mapping and visualization tools (e.g., web mapping applications as part of the Global Coastal Resilience projects on www.coastalresilience.org), tools for assessing the economic, social and environmental implications of alternative conservation and development scenarios (e.g., [InVEST](#) and [ECOSAUT](#)), to multi-objective optimization tools (e.g., [Marxan with Zones](#) which are being used by the Conservancy in Marine Spatial Planning exercises and in the Berau Forest Carbon Project). All of these planning tools involve mapping conservation value, at which the Conservancy excels and is well recognized. Indeed, the Conservancy built on this mapping expertise with the Development by Design approach to multi-objective planning. This approach is essentially a two-step procedure, first conducting a conservation prioritization (e.g., ERA) to understand the value of different areas for conservation, followed by an investigation of how other objectives can be met with minimum loss of conservation value. However, to maximize the use of our ecological and biodiversity knowledge in a multi-objective setting, the Conservancy will need to place a greater emphasis on predictive modeling of conservation or ecosystem service ‘return’ or value under different scenarios (see Box #6).

Multi-objective planning also requires a transparent process for partners and stakeholders to provide preference information to guide either the development or evaluation of alternate scenarios. This is absent from the Conservancy’s existing approach to strategic planning, and therefore represents a barrier to engaging in truly multi-objective and stakeholder-driven planning.

A strong potential role of a shift to multi-objective planning methods in the Conservancy is the evaluation of policy-related strategies. Common examples of multi-objective planning that support strategic policy decisions have focused on identifying the most cost effective land-use changes for a range of objectives, typically, increased revenue, carbon sequestration and biodiversity. These analyses support policy statements such as, ‘oil palm expansion is best targeted at degraded agricultural lands’ or ‘well managed timber concessions represent a cost effective way to deliver on all three objectives’.

Key benefits

Strong platform for multi-sector engagement — Provides the Conservancy with a planning approach and tools that can elucidate compromise solutions between different stakeholders, or trade-offs between incommensurable objectives, and help people reduce conflict where possible.

Cost-effective solutions— Planning tools that can better inform the costs and opportunities for conservation, and through working with other sectors, offer opportunities to fund conservation.

Provide input into existing planning exercises— Providing input to established or ongoing planning efforts (particularly within governments) will increase the influence of conservation. In the U.S. government, for example, nearly any major federal activity involving natural resources is required by law to examine a range of alternatives (in Environmental Impact Assessments) and evaluate their costs and benefits.

Increase likelihood of successful implementation— Participating in existing, industry or government-mandated planning efforts has a high probability of successful implementation. Similarly, considering the needs of other sectors and stakeholders during planning will hopefully increase the relevance and acceptability of conservation solutions and priorities. All stakeholders bring their own legitimate, subjective preferences and value judgments to decisions regarding conservation strategies and priorities, and we need a planning

Example: Coastal Resilience Long Island

The Long Island coastline has both highly developed lands and valuable marine resources in the coastal zone. The costs of coastal hazards are increasing as investments in coastal development swell. Much of Long Island's private property is only inches above sea level, placing millions of dollars in public and private funds at risk. Coastal Resilience describes the ability of communities to identify the risks and assess the vulnerability of different coastal hazards, determine resilience given socio-economic and ecological conditions, and visualize a range of adaptation solutions including ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA). The Coastal Resilience Long Island project explores flooding scenarios resulting from sea level rise and storm surge for Long Island Sound (New York and Connecticut), to help managers, planners and stakeholders understand and incorporate hazard mitigation and conservation of natural resources in their local planning processes. The project's interactive web mapping application, the [Future Scenarios Map](#) helps users visualize flooding given a range of sea level rise and storm scenarios, presenting these in a user-friendly framework that can inform decision making.

This web-based spatial decision support tool demonstrates that mutually beneficial solutions for human and natural communities can be created by addressing multiple management objectives (hazard mitigation and biodiversity conservation) in coastal zones. Providing local communities with easy to access to information on multiple objectives allows users to readily examine current ecological, biological, socio-economic, and management information alongside inundation scenarios developed from widely accepted climate and hazard models. This helps communities better understand their choices for adaptation, and when combined with the project website's information on EBA strategy development and policy information, assists them in taking action to achieve both ecological and socio-economic objectives. This example in Long Island Sound has now expanded to several other domestic and international geographies.



An example screen shot from the online, interactive, Coastal Resilience Future Scenarios Map. The map is zoomed in to a portion of the existing project area on the southern shores of Long Island. The map illustrates the flooding and inundation from a moderate emissions scenario (IPCC A2 projection) coupled with a flooding event with a 20% likelihood annually. A few of the ecological and socio-economic data layers are activated to show some of the information that decision makers can access (i.e. vacant parcels in orange in association with an index of the potential protective capacity of salt marshes in green and red).

PET recommendations illustrated by this project: Multi-objective planning; integrated spatial and strategic planning; scenario planning.

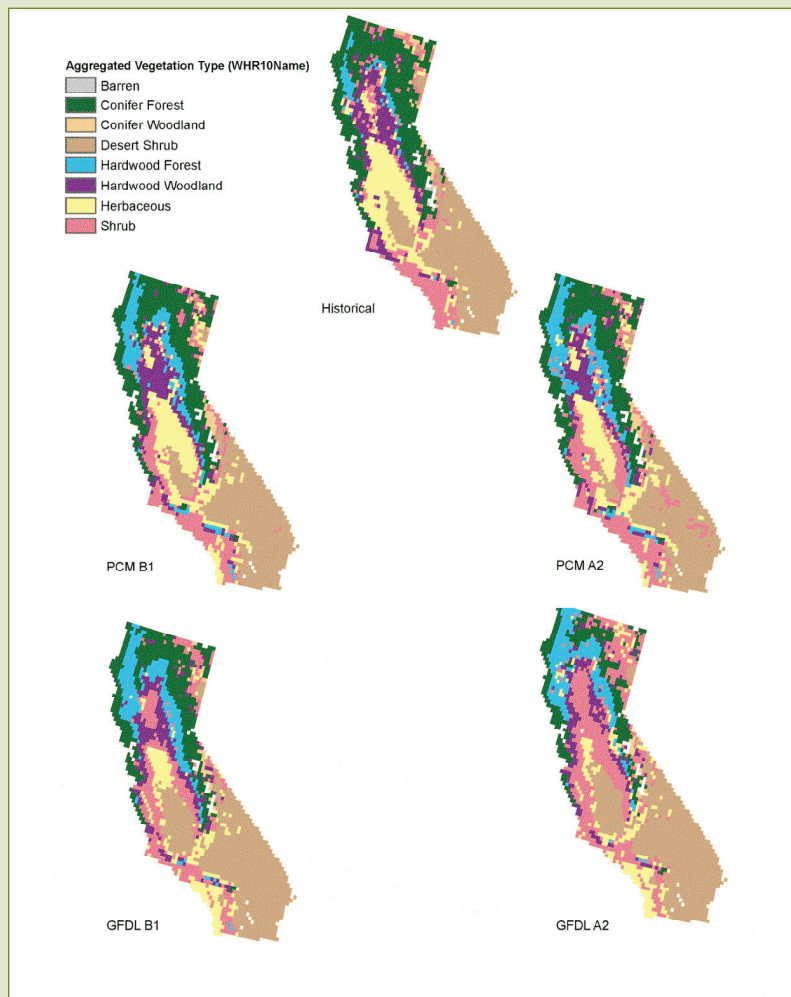
Box #6: Scenario analysis

Scenario analysis involves exploring alternate possible futures that might arise either as a result of different conservation interventions or changes in conditions largely beyond the control of conservation (e.g., severity of climate change, rate of population growth, etc.). By considering several scenarios, the Conservancy can gain insight into how conservation outcomes are likely to change under each possible future, ultimately helping to understand the likely benefits, consequences and risks of taking particular actions. Scenario analysis is not used widely in the Conservancy at present, but as a decision support approach with accompanying tools it has the potential to help address a number of the PET's main recommendations.

1. It can be useful in estimating the likely benefits and risks of different alternatives, and identifying strategies that are most robust to uncontrollable changes (Recommendation #1).
2. It can be useful in exploring trade-offs across multiple-objectives through the development of different scenarios that favor different objectives (Recommendation #3),
3. As a result of the two points above it is therefore a powerful tool for comparative assessment of alternate strategies (Recommendation #1).
4. Scenarios allow exploration of the consequences of taking different actions in different places, thereby effectively integrating spatial and strategic elements of planning (Recommendation #4).
5. In addition, scenario analysis is particularly useful in situations where there is high uncertainty or where significant and perhaps unpredictable changes in the socio-ecological system are expected. This characterizes a lot of policy-related work. (Recommendations #1 & #2).

Example: How will future climate change affect habitats and ecosystem services in California?

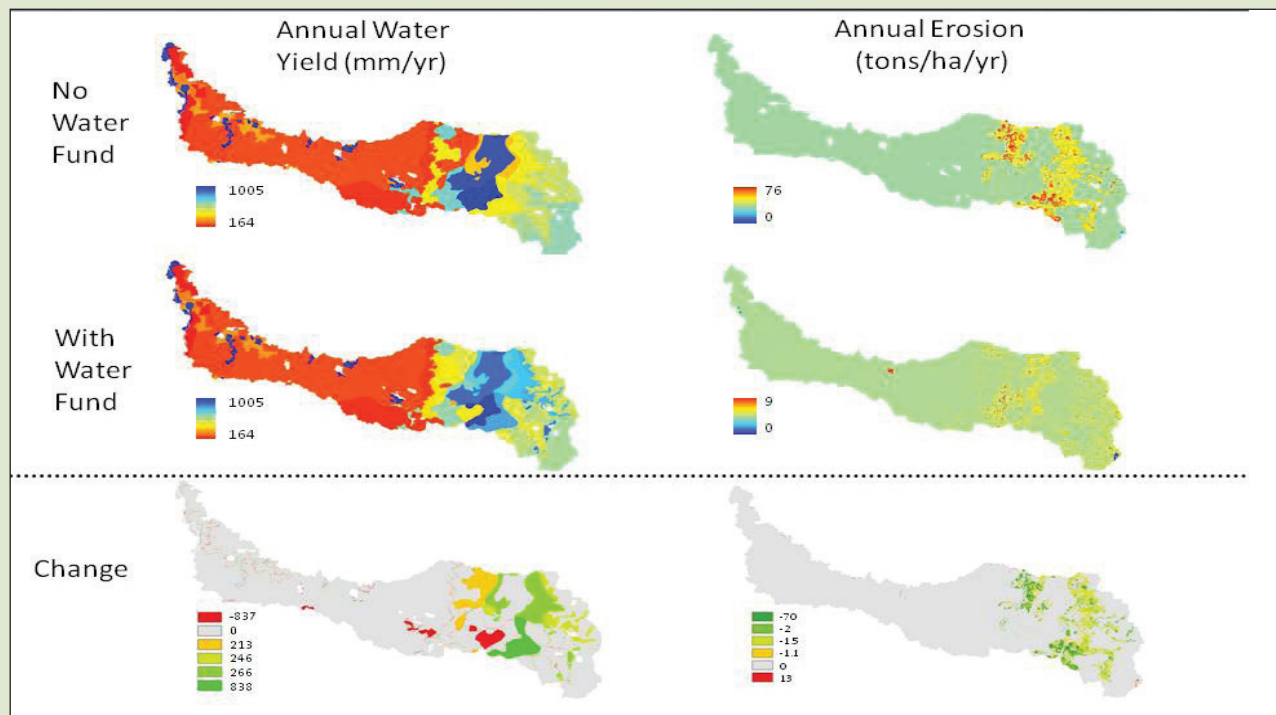
TNC's California state chapter asked this question for a report to California state government. To answer the question, they needed to represent the uncertainty in what future climate will look like and they did this by using four of the readily-available global climate scenarios. They then used a dynamic global vegetation model to estimate how the predicted climate changes would affect the distribution of vegetation in the state. That additional step yielded the four future maps shown below and allowed them to do further assessment of those scenarios to estimate how biodiversity and ecosystem services will change in response to climate-induced vegetation shifts.



Scenario analysis - continued.

Example: Which investments in a water fund portfolio will be robust to climate change and its consequences for water yield, erosion, agricultural production and biodiversity?

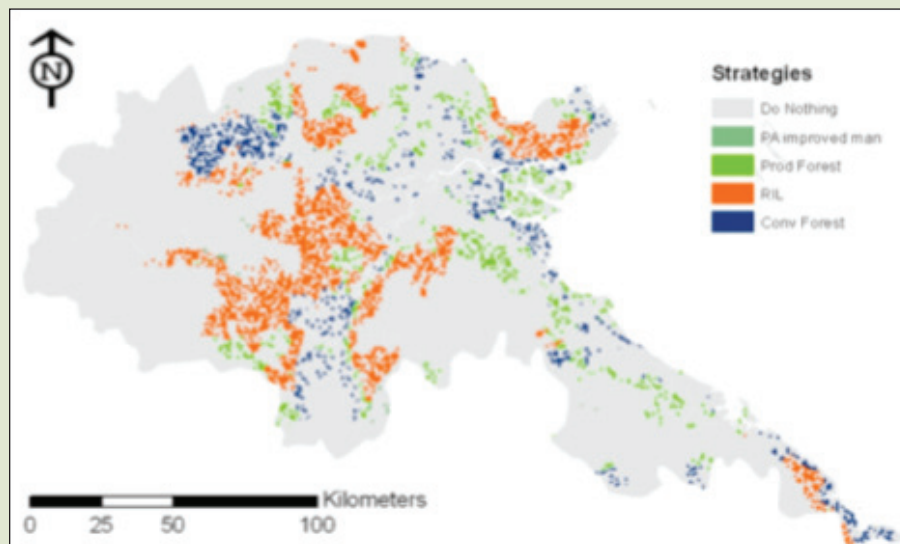
This question is being asked by TNC and partners in the Cauca Valley, Colombia. To answer this question, they are using both a goal-based approach and the IPCC climate scenarios. The goal-based approach was used to develop the water fund portfolio. The water fund set goals for how much of each possible conservation activity they wanted to invest in (protection, restoration, reforestation and fencing) and then used simple rules to determine where those goals could best be met and what the impact of a water fund would be on expected water yield and erosion (see figure below). Then, one climate scenario and 19 global climate models were used to ask how robust those investments would be to climate change-driven shifts in species' ranges, agricultural production, water yield and erosion. If many of the water fund investments are not robust to climate change, other options (scenarios) for meeting the investment goals will be considered until one is found that will give long-term returns.



Example: Berau Forest Carbon Project

TNC is working in partnership with district, provincial, and national governments in the Berau District of Indonesia to help Berau increase its rate of development while reducing emissions from forests and minimizing loss of biodiversity. The emissions reduction component of this project is intended to serve as a pilot for the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) scheme. The project is using a multi-objective approach to planning, which explicitly recognises and incorporates economic goals for oil palm, logging, timber plantations and overall employment, alongside goals of reducing emissions and protecting biodiversity. Four different strategies were developed through an extensive process by stakeholders at district, provincial, and national levels: 1) improve management of existing protected areas, 2) improve management of production forest, 3) set aside production forest for conservation, and 4) retire or rezone oil palm permits. Recognising the multiple needs and objectives within the district, and the set of strategies available has allowed this project to be integrated with the government's sustainable development strategy, rather than TNC attempting to impose conservation strategies on the district.

The project team used the planning system Marxan with Zones to help spatially allocate these four strategies across the district in a way that met minimum targets for all the desired objectives. This analysis required modelling both the benefit of employing a strategy in a given location to each of the different objectives, and the cost of each strategy across the district. Modeling has allowed the team to involve the government in the exploration of trade-offs between emissions reductions and economic development goals, and the team is currently broadening this multi-objective scope by adding biodiversity considerations into the trade-off analysis.



Locations and strategies to cost-effectively reduce 30% of emissions in Berau District, Indonesia

The multi-objective planning approach ensured that development objectives were met, while the overall cost of meeting carbon goals for the program was lowered. The reason these benefits emerge when development and conservation objectives are planned for simultaneously is that instead of just looking for oil palm permits to retire to reduce emissions, the process also looked for optimal areas to grant new permits to ensure that employment and development goals are also met. On average the retired permits are twice as carbon dense as the newly granted permits, and the new permits are also substantially more suitable for oil palm production than the retired permits.

PET recommendations illustrated by this project: Multi-objective planning; integrated spatial and strategic planning; focus on estimating the benefits and costs of alternate strategies; exploring trade-offs between objectives.

framework that recognizes these factors. *Reflects the Conservancy's mission and goals*—Many Conservancy projects are likely to have both biodiversity and ecosystem service or human well-being targets.

2.5 Integrated Spatial & Strategic Planning

Under the traditional *Conservation by Design* paradigm, the Conservancy has prioritized the spatial distribution of our work through ecoregional assessment, and followed this with strategy development in portfolio sites through a process of Conservation Action Planning. However, from land protection to shellfish restoration to managing for sustainable ecological flows, the Conservancy now employs a diversity of strategies to achieve its mission, and suitable places to deploy these strategies will not overlap perfectly with traditional portfolio sites from ERAs. This is especially true as we look to increase the scale of our work, and focus on strategies that address large scale challenges. Place cannot be separated from strategic action—so planning for them independently is inefficient. As raised in earlier recommendations, we believe that our planning needs to better consider the costs of alternative interventions, and in most cases, costs are likely to be dependent on both the strategy and where it is deployed.

Increasing recognition of the need for integration of spatial and strategic planning means that CAP and ERA are now often answering similar questions. Contemporary ERAs and other similar spatial prioritization processes (e.g., Marine Spatial Plans) increasingly incorporate strategy development as part of the assessment and prioritization and suitability planning—answering the questions: Which strategies are most important at a regional scale, and where within a geography are the optimal places to deploy these strategies? At the same time, as the Conservancy focuses on landscapes and “sites” of larger and larger geographic scale, the scale at which CAPs are conducted has likewise increased.

Target viability, threat severity, and enabling conditions for strategies are not evenly distributed across these large landscapes. This requires a spatial understanding of these properties when developing and evaluating strategies.

Despite the Conservancy having substantial expertise in both spatial data and strategic planning, these skills are not consistently used together. A session dedicated to this topic at the 2010 Conservation Coaches Rally revealed that staff conducting CAPs were sometimes unaware of the spatial data compiled through ERA in the same area, and cited a lack of expertise with spatial data as a limitation. Equally, spatial prioritizations that consider strategy do not always draw upon CAP and the strategic planning skills of Conservation Coaches to assist with strategy development. Because the need to integrate spatial and strategic conservation planning is so ubiquitous, Conservancy teams have developed a variety of approaches in response. This shows the creative and technical strength of the organization, but also presents challenges for supporting and communicating our planning across the Conservancy.

Major recommendation #4:

Integrate our approaches to spatial and strategic prioritization

The PET recommends that decisions about where and how we work should not be the domain of separate planning processes—prioritization of places should not be separated from what we are going to do there, and decisions about strategy should draw upon our spatial analysis skills and data. Implementing these recommendations will require us to use both the tools and processes of ERA and CAP differently from our current applications, and when following the single conservation planning framework described in Major recommendation #2, that spatial and strategic approaches are explicitly integrated.

Example: Bodie Hills-Northern Mono Lake Basin Project

One of the best examples of integrated spatial and strategic planning (and of a number of other PET recommendations) that PET encountered is from the Conservancy's Nevada Chapter.

To inform proposed management actions for the Bureau of Land Management and private land managers for a 76,464 ha (188,946 acre) project area in California's Bodie Hills and northern Mono Lake Basin, the team used predictive ecological models and return-on-investment assessment to explore 4 management scenarios each with a different combination of actions. The approach, which built upon CAP, provided quantitative measurements of current and predicted future ecological conditions and evaluated the benefits and costs of alternative management strategies. The key to the process was the ability to use remote sensing to calculate current landscape ecological condition and use computer models to isolate management strategies with the greatest ecological payoff for the least cost.

PET recommendations illustrated by this project: integrated spatial and strategic planning; the use of predictive models to assess likely benefits of alternative conservation actions; cost-effectiveness comparison of alternate conservation actions; the use of scenario analysis; reduced emphasis on viability in favor of ecological condition (calculated as ecological departure), a more appropriate measure for landscape-scale assessments.

Low, G., Provencher, L. and Abele, S. L. 2010 Enhanced conservation action planning: Assessing landscape condition and predicting benefits of conservation strategies. *Journal of Conservation Planning*, 6:36-60

This, however, does not necessarily mean specifically integrating the tools of ERA and CAP, but rather the approaches and frameworks behind them.

Our planning should also make better use of our spatial analysis skills and data to support strategic planning. Mapping ecological occurrences, condition, threat, and developing predictive models to support cost-benefit analyses are critical tasks for strategic planning at landscape scales and up. They also require working in a GIS environment, often with quantitative remotely-sensed data. The Conservancy has a great set of staff with these skills who have been more commonly engaged in ERA than CAP. These staff must be an integral part of strategic planning teams at larger scales so they can advise on available data, analyses and appropriate interpretation. This will maximize the Conservancy's substantial investment in ecoregional scale data and encourage strategy planning to be supported by quantitative spatial assessments rather relying heavily on expert judgement.

Key benefits

More efficient planning—Prioritizing places where genuine opportunities exist and are consistent with the Conservancy's capacity, niche and expertise will be more efficient planning and lead to more likely implementation and bigger impact.

Improved planning at scale—Increased ability to tackle landscape-regional challenges through coordinated strategic planning for the range of activities that occur within large areas.

Planning Expertise—Ensures that the Conservancy's programmatic expertise in strategic and spatial (GIS) planning, as well as the available data and information, are being deployed in a collaborative fashion in our most important projects.

3.1 Improving Implementation of Conservation Plans

Perhaps the strongest criticism of planning in the Conservancy that was revealed in the PET interviews is the laundry list of potential strategies that often emerge from CAP or similar strategic planning exercises and our inability to set priorities among these strategies. Coupled with limited

analysis of the costs or feasibility of fundraising for alternative strategies, these factors represent a major hurdle to successful implementation of conservation plans. Somewhat less obvious as a hurdle is the reality that conservation plans have often been viewed as a science activity that is led by planners or scientists without sufficient engagement of senior project directors. The lack of integration of conservation plans with OU strategic plans may also impede implementation as these OU Plans have a significant influence on the objectives of individual staff and programs. Finally, the well-known phenomena of plans taking too long to complete with the ongoing malaise of planning fatigue only adds to the planning-implementation or planning-doing gap, a problem that is well described in the conservation biology literature and pervasive across the governmental and non-governmental communities.

Major recommendation #5: Improve plan implementation

Three broad courses of action will significantly improve implementation and lead to better conservation outcomes:

1. **Planning Context.** Greater attention should be paid to the planning context before a plan is initiated—why is the plan needed, how does it fit into broader strategic initiatives, who is the audience for the plan, what is its scope, what decisions will be made from the plan, and who will make those decisions. Such due diligence to context will help discourage the development of conservation plans for the sole purpose of a perceived organizational (e.g., Conservation by Design) mandate, a situation that rarely results in successful implementation. (See *Question #1 in Conservation Approach Questions*)
2. **Good Project Management for Planning.** Project directors and other senior conservation leaders should become more engaged in

leading and managing strategic planning processes to better connect these efforts to good management decisions and improved project management. It should be no less important to manage the planning process well as it is to employ good project management practices in implementation. More detailed recommendations include:

- Project Directors should take responsibility for leading or co-leading planning efforts including forming a planning team, setting deadlines for the planning process, holding the team accountable to those deadlines, and ultimately for implementing the plan with other program staff and partners as appropriate.
 - The need to develop a plan should be initiated by a Project Director or senior leaders of an OU or Global Team. Plans need to be completed and implemented because managers need them and will use them to inform investment decisions.
 - Conservation plans should be closely aligned with strategic and annual plans of Conservancy OUs. Doing so will help elevate the importance of the planning effort in the eyes of management and increase the likelihood that the planning effort will be taken seriously.
 - Implementing peer and expert review of conservation business plans that include appropriate internal and external expertise will improve the overall quality of plans and help insure that the most effective and feasible set of prioritized strategies are being proposed.
3. **Costs and Feasibility.** Greater attention must be given to financial analyses related to both the costs and the feasibility of raising the necessary funds for alternative strategies being proposed to move a project forward. Recommendation #1 (improved strategy development and selection) covers this topic in more detail.

3.2 Investing in Planning

Any conversation about planning in the Conservancy would be incomplete without some mention of “planning fatigue.” We recognize that an enormous amount of planning has and continues to take place in the Conservancy and that many staff are “planning weary.” Our goal is to improve the quality and effectiveness of planning, not do more planning. We can accomplish this goal by doing planning more efficiently, and doing planning that is more appropriate to particular situations and contexts. More investment in planning than is needed is a significant waste of resources and it negatively impacts the perceived value of future planning efforts. Below, we elaborate on several steps that we can take as an organization to be smarter about the time and investments we make in planning.

Major recommendation #6:

Improve rigor without greater investment in planning

Greater rigor without greater investment can be accomplished by making planning more efficient and by making it more appropriate to the variety of circumstances in which we do it.

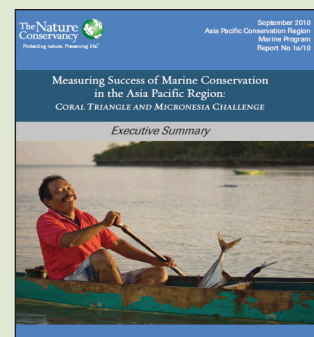
More efficient planning. Efficiency can be gained in a number of ways:

- We need to avoid duplication or overlap of planning effort. We know there is now greater potential for that to occur among global and regional thematic teams, the demonstration projects associated with these teams and the planning that occurs in OUs. Making decisions to identify the most effective planning units in the Conservancy will help avoid duplication.
- Too many planning efforts are completed over long periods of time, and the lag time between efforts results in too much time spent reviewing what has happened in the past or bringing new team members up to date. Investing more intensity of effort over a shorter time period can help. Applying good project management practices to the planning process (see Asia Pacific Marine Measures example) as well as to the implementation of the actual project and being clear about the context of the planning situation can help with efficiency as well (see Major recommendation #5 regarding improving plan implementation).

More appropriate planning. We intuitively appreciate that a small site-based project implementing a well-known strategy should not

Example: Asia-Pacific Marine Measures

The Conservancy’s Asia-Pacific Region developed six strategies and associated effectiveness measures for these strategies over a 4-month period in 2010. Each strategy was developed through a series of WebEx meetings and email exchanges in June–July. Then a week-long workshop was held in August that brought together members of all six strategy teams as well as the Senior Management Team of the Region to refine goals, refine strategies, articulate linkages among the strategies, and develop strategy effectiveness measures and a monitoring plan for each strategy. Following that week long workshop, a detailed report on the strategies and measures for all 6 strategies and one over-arching uber-strategy was written in September. In summary, an extensive strategic plan was developed over a 4-month period. Keys to this development were training in strategic planning and measures, establishment of teams and leads for each strategy, clear expectations for the content and consistency of each strategy, measures and strategic planning coaches to help develop and refine strategies, peer review, engagement of Senior Managers in APCR throughout the process, and transparency in the process and outcomes through a published report completed within one month after finalizing the strategies and measures.



require the same level of planning as a whole system project implementing a suite of strategies with some degree of uncertainty over multiple OUs. Yet, we have not thought rigorously as an organization about how we should best tailor our investments in planning to the complexity, costs, and uncertainties of our project—and strategy-level investments. The PET has developed some preliminary rules of thumb and applied some of these rules to hypothetical situations in the graphic below. This topic merits more attention in terms of guidance for practitioners than the PET is able to provide in this report.

- *Risk* — greater levels of financial or reputational risk suggest the need for greater investment in planning.
- *Leverage and replication*—for projects in which replication or leveraging the strategy for greater, more widespread conservation outcomes is important, then a correspondingly greater investment in planning is needed. Conversely, when a well-known strategy is being replicated, it should take less investment in planning.

- *Complexity*—some projects by their very nature are more complex (e.g., those that involve multiple partners) and are likely going to take greater investment in planning. For example, in some cases planning with partner organizations is in itself a strategy to garner buy-in to the project and its strategies.
- *Stability of situation*—in some situations, the longevity of organizational decisions surrounding future investment in a strategy or project may be uncertain such as launching a major new project that is not necessarily an organizational priority. These situations suggest the need for a relatively lower investment in planning.
- *Data availability*—insufficient data shouldn't affect how much we invest in planning but rather how we go about planning. A limited amount of data is not a good reason to not invest in planning.
- *System uncertainty* —uncertainty in socio-ecological systems (e.g., government may turnover affecting implementation of strategy) implies a relatively lower investment in planning.

Recommended Level of Planning Investment

Level of Sophistication/ Capacity and Effort	High (high tech)	<p>\$\$ Moderate Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High uncertainty in socio-ecological system <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid rate of change <input type="checkbox"/> High data availability <input type="checkbox"/> High urgency <input type="checkbox"/> High level of reputational risk 	<p>\$\$\$ High Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High internal or external institutional complexity <input type="checkbox"/> Complex problem <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder engagement where planning is strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Strategy has large scope <input type="checkbox"/> High impact strategy <input type="checkbox"/> High level of reputational risk 	
	Low (Low tech)	<p>\$ Low Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High uncertainty in socio-ecological system <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid rate of change <input type="checkbox"/> Low data availability <input type="checkbox"/> High urgency <input type="checkbox"/> Low cost project <input type="checkbox"/> Short term project <input type="checkbox"/> High level of uncertainty 	<p>\$\$ Moderate Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> High internal or external institutional complexity <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder engagement where planning is strategy 	
		Shorter	Time Spent Planning	Longer

Above we have applied some of these rules of thumb to a graph that may help inform how much to invest in planning with example projects to illustrate the graphic.

High Cost Example—Berau Forest Carbon Project, Indonesia. A complicated high stakes project that involves working with different levels of the Indonesian government; a flagship Conservancy project hoping to demonstrate the effectiveness of Reduced Emissions from Forest Degradation and Deforestation (REDD) policy on a global level; a relatively high financial investment; and serious reputational risk if we fail.

Moderate Cost Example—Agua por la Vida Water Fund, Colombia. Pilot project for a high tech approach to conservation planning using InVEST modelling; high uncertainty in socio-ecological systems (guerrilla activity in region); potentially high leverage strategy.

Low Cost — Choiseul Protected Area Network, Solomon Islands. Low cost project; decisions depend heavily on the opportunities available meaning there is high uncertainty in the socio-ecological system; data availability is limited.

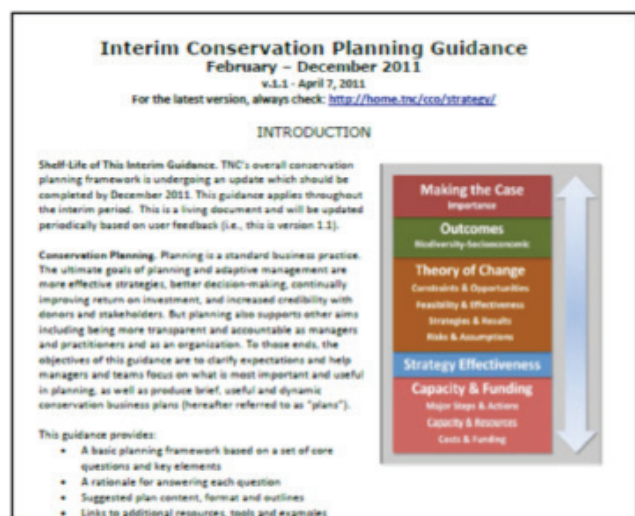
3.3 Implementing the Recommendations of the PET—Proposed Next Steps

Implementing these recommendations will be a journey, not something that should or will occur overnight. To successfully start this journey, several important steps should be taken in FY-12.

- Although the PET received some internal review of its preliminary recommendations through a workshop that included a cross-section of Conservancy staff in April 2011 (see Appendix C for summary of peer review comments), additional peer review is needed with field program staff to improve our recommendations and build broader support. This review might best be accomplished by selecting a set of reviewers from across the

Conservancy and requesting written peer reviews of the PET report. In addition, we believe that some external peer review of selected portions of the recommendations would be helpful as well. Eddie Game and Craig Groves will take responsibility for working with a small number of external planners and scientists in the first half of FY-12 to get additional review.

- New planning approaches and tools need to be field tested with real Conservancy projects or strategies. The most important new approaches that merit testing are comparing alternative strategies, the related return on investment analyses, scenario analyses, and multi-objective planning. We need to identify a set of field or global (focal area) team projects where members of the Conservation Methods Team and Strategy and Learning Team can work closely with field staff to test and refine new methods and tools.
- The *Interim Planning Guidance* completed by the Strategies and Learning Team in Spring 2011 needs to be expanded in FY-12 to include the whole suite of PET core questions and recommendations and a more extensive set of examples for applying those recommendations. The Strategy and Learning Team is considering different alternatives for how to best disseminate and maintain this



guidance, especially given its dynamic nature. This guidance should also provide more specific direction on the expected content and format of conservation business plans.

- The Conservation Measures Partnership's [*Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*](#) is scheduled to be revised in FY-12. The Conservancy, as a charter member of the CMP, will be working alongside our partners to undertake this revision. The PET recommendations should make a useful contribution to the revision of the Open Standards.
- For some of the new methods and approaches that the PET is recommended, the Conservancy will need to provide substantial guidance, tools, and examples of their applications. For example, this would be the case with ROI, ecosystem services, or social science methods related to strategy development. Developing this expanded conservation planning toolbox will be accomplished over 2-3 years with new tools and methods added each year on an incremental basis.



4.1 Consequences of Implementing PET Recommendations

We have characterized the consequences of implementing PET recommendations into two types—short-term and longer-term.

Shorter-term (1-2 years)

- Planning is driven by a set of core questions for which project directors and managers want answers. Project directors take greater responsibility for leading planning processes, and Senior Managers work to ensure that conservation business plans and their stated outcomes are priorities in OU strategic and operating plans. Philanthropy, government

relations, and other staff disciplines begin to actively participate in the planning process.

- We begin to pay more attention to the planning context—why we are developing (or updating) a plan, what decisions will be made from it, who will make those decisions, and what constraints exist for those decisions.
- More and more projects have multiple objectives beyond biodiversity—especially incorporating ecosystem services into the goals of priority projects where appropriate. We slowly begin to build more modeling capability into our planning processes to incorporate multiple future scenarios as well as multiple objectives.
- We begin the journey of developing and comparing alternative strategies and the costs and benefits of each, but recognize that we neither have all the tools at our disposal or the staff capacity to do as many of these approaches as we might wish.
- CAP and ERA methods are still used, but more frequently are being integrated into one planning process and are regularly supplemented with additional tools and methods.
- The Strategy and Learning Team leads the effort to train conservation coaches on new training guidance and works with the Conservation Methods Team to test new approaches (e.g., comparing alternative strategies) with priority field projects.
- The Nature Conservancy takes the initiative to work with the Conservation Measures Partnership to revise the [*Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*](#).

Longer-term (3-5 years)

- The planning and adaptive management toolbox expands dramatically to include scenario analysis, improved expert opinion, return-on-investment analyses, better forecasting of financial costs, connectivity analyses, ecosystem service valuation, and other tools and methods

as appropriate. Practitioner guidance, tools for implementing new planning approaches, and online training in their use are widely available.

- We begin to build more capacity in economics, social science, ecosystem service/ecological process, and quantitative modelers among our science and planning staff, and these staff enable us to bring more rigor and broader focus to our planning, implementation, and measuring of results. This includes more attention to managing and maintaining our conservation data and information systems so they can be leveraged and re-purposed as our planning evolves.
- Peer and expert review of conservation business plans in priority projects becomes a standard practice in the Conservancy.
- Implementation of conservation business plans improves substantially—plans are more focused on decisions, project managers and directors more engaged in leading efforts, strategies are more transparent and better implemented, and costs and benefits routinely compared in priority projects.
- An updated conservation approach is broadly understood and supported by the majority of Conservancy staff, trustees, and partners.
- Better conservation decisions are being made leading to more and better conservation outcomes.

4.2 Risks Associated with Evolution

Any major change in practice has accompanying risks. The PET believed it was important to identify these risks in advance, and be clear about them so that they can be considered, managed and ameliorated to the greatest extent possible.

Loss of brand equity

- The Conservancy has built up substantial brand recognition around the terms, processes and products of Conservation Action Planning and Ecoregional Assessment. CAP also has a significant, global, and visible network of practitioners. The Conservancy is also

recognized for its deep understanding of ecological systems and species. The evolution of CAP and ERA methods into a new planning framework must be done carefully to not lose the equity associated with our existing methods.

Organizational division

- Some resistance to change can be expected from staff strongly attached to existing methods, or those simply frustrated by and resistant to more change in the organization. Our planning framework needs to be flexible enough to support and harness a range of different approaches and avoid division into pro- and anti-evolution camps.

Required investment

- The evolution recommended here requires substantial work and investment over the next two years to develop, test, adapt, and communicate the core methods and tools that will support our planning. There remains a risk that adequately supporting this evolution with the resources available will be difficult and that too much ongoing change in the Conservancy (mission, vision, goal, priorities, measures) will make it difficult to focus on improved planning methods.

4.3 Consequences and Risks of Not Evolving Our Planning Methods

Although we have endeavoured to accompany each of our recommendations with a compelling justification for change, the PET also believes that there are a set of overarching risks of not evolving our planning methods along these lines. These risks illustrate the general importance of updating our approach to conservation planning at this point in the organisation's history.

Failure to deliver on our mission

- Our work has changed (bigger, more complex, more objectives), and if we do not undertake a commensurate change in our strategic planning tools, our work will become less efficient, less strategic, and less relevant, increasing the risk of failing to make headway on our mission.

Reputational risk

- It will become increasingly difficult to argue that we spend our nearly \$1 billion annual budget strategically.
- We risk losing our credibility as a “science-based” organization, an important stamp for the Conservancy.
- Our planning methods will not match our new mission and tag line.

Organizational inefficiency

- There is resource inefficiency in each program of the Conservancy trying to address planning method inadequacies independently. This is happening now and was abundantly clear in our interviews of field programs.
- The continued fragmentation of our planning methods diminishes the efficiency of a common language achieved through CbD and limits our ability to manage as One Conservancy.

Current methods become increasingly obsolete

- Our current planning methods (CAP and ERA) fail to support the types of decisions we make and become largely irrelevant to resource allocation and decision making in the Conservancy.
- Substantial resources are wasted on plans that are not needed or used.
- Planning fatigue will continue and get worse and as a result our plans will not be update and become obsolete.

Risk losing niche

- The Conservancy risks losing its widely recognised niche as planning and decision support tool innovator and leader.
- We risk losing the opportunity to influence tool and model developers (e.g., Stanford University, University of Washington, University of Queensland, etc.).

Missed opportunities

- The Conservancy risks missing valuable conservation opportunities with other sectors (e.g., hydropower, energy, etc.) because our planning tools are not amenable to working on joint planning exercises. This includes both:
 - a risk we won’t be invited into the conversation,
 - and a risk we might not achieve mission without these opportunities

5.0 Frequently Asked Questions

(Updated September 2011)

1. What is Conservation Business Planning and why is the PET recommending TNC embrace this new framework?

PET & CSL Response: The Conservancy’s strategic and spatial planning approaches—*Conservation Action Planning and Ecoregional Assessments*—have served us and many others extremely well for more than 15 years. The PET recommends integrating both approaches, plus expanding the toolbox of methods and tools, into a single, more flexible framework called “Conservation Business Planning.” This recommendation recognizes that the Conservancy’s future needs will not be as well-served by a specific planning “formula” as we were in the past. Conservation Business Planning is characterized by a set of core questions that can be tailored to any project or strategy, and that are supported by a flexible array of tools. The PET also found that a surprising proportion of conservation plans were never implemented because planning was often not well aligned with senior manager decision-making and vice versa. Under the new framework, how and when we plan, and how much we invest in planning will vary depending on a host of internal and external factors, for example: the decisions we’re trying to make; alignment with other strategies and projects; scale and complexity of the conservation challenge and solutions; degree of conflict among actors/stakeholders; urgency of opportunity; stage and maturity of our engagement; nature of risks; and accountability to funders. Our answers to the core questions also will allow senior managers and funders to have greater confidence in our ability to

deliver and will enable evaluation of progress and conservation return. A number of teams are currently applying an early version of the new framework (*Interim Conservation Planning Guidance*). FY12 will be a transitional year, with additional development, testing and evaluation. We'll transition to a new and more fully developed Conservation Business Planning framework at the beginning of FY13.

2. How can I provide feedback? Who is charged with implementing the recommendations?

PET & CSL Response:

· *Feedback:* The PET's sponsors, Karen Poiani and Peter Kareiva would like your comments and feedback. Senior leaders, managers and practitioners will have several opportunities to participate in briefings and comment on the recommendations in September and October 2011. You are also encouraged to provide feedback, ask questions and participate in discussions (*see the links at the top of these FAQs*).

· *Implementation:* The Conservation Strategies and Learning Team (CSL) (under Karen Poiani) will be charged with implementation during FY12-13. Jeff Hardesty and Andrew Soles will lead and coordinate this effort. They will work closely with Brian McPeck (Chief Operations Officer), Bill Ginn (Chief Conservation Officer), Central Science and many senior managers and field practitioners. Implementation will include a testing and refinement phase, informed by the experiences of pilot project teams and other feedback.

3. Why do we have "Interim Conservation Planning Guidance" and why are there differences between it and the PET recommendations?

CSL Response: [Interim Conservation Planning Guidance](#) was developed in February 2011 (updated in April 2011) to help teams already engaged in planning incorporate some of the early PET recommendations that the team and early testers were confident would be included in the final recommendations. It's a transitional document.

Then as now, some of the key PET recommendations have not yet been translated into methods, tools and examples, so some of the core questions and planning elements recommended by the PET have been intentionally—but temporarily—deemphasized in the *Interim Guidance*. These include, for example, how to incorporate human values/benefits and how to evaluate alternative strategies. These and other areas needing further development will be addressed in FY12 based on actual user experience and need.

4. Do all conservation project and strategy teams need to immediately update their conservation plans based on the PET recommendations and the Interim Conservation Planning Guidance?

PET Response: No. First, the PET report is not a new planning handbook, but rather a set of recommendations. Second, only a subset of all of TNC's project and strategy teams should undertake new planning or update existing plans in FY12. In particular, these teams should read the PET report and use the *Interim Conservation Planning Guidance* (see above): 1) teams that are launching a significant new project or strategy, especially those identified as "priorities" in the Global Challenges/Global Solutions framework, 2) teams that are making major revisions to an existing priority strategy or project or 3) any other project or strategy teams that have inadequate or out-of-date plans and that have been identified by a senior manager sponsor as needing to be updated in FY12.

5. When will new planning guidance and tools be available and where can we find them? How will the PET recommendations be implemented and over timeframe?

CSL Response: Teams should use the *Interim Conservation Planning Guidance* in FY12 (check here for the latest version <http://home.tnc/cco/strategy/>). The basic plan for implementing the PET recommendations and updating TNC's planning guidance in FY12 and FY13 is as follows:

· *Throughout FY12* – Application of the Interim Guidance. Testing and vetting of new guidance, methods and tools and incorporation/adaptation of core CAP and ERA methods and tools. R&D will emphasize: Planning context; incorporating people; integrating strategic and spatial planning; strategy selection and design; and conservation leverage.

· *31 January 2012* – Modest revision of the *Interim Conservation Planning Guidance (v1.2)* including updating the core questions, updating measures guidance, and incorporating lessons learned from managers and teams who have been using the Interim Guidance to develop plans and make decisions. Updated guidance to include “key” that helps practitioners choose a planning path depending on maturity or stage (e.g., early, middle, late) and conservation context (e.g., kind of conservation decision that plan will inform).

· *30 June 2012* – *Conservation Business Planning v1.0* that addresses all of the PET recommendations and lessons learned to date. Will include at least basic guidance for all components, but not all will be backed by fully developed and tested methods, tools and examples.

· *FY13* – *Conservation Business Planning v2.0* available in a readily accessible format on the internet. Includes improved and expanded guidance, processes, methods, and examples.

6. Do the PET recommendations specifically outline the contents and format needed for a new conservation business plan?

PET & CSL Response: Only partially. The PET recommends that any team developing a conservation business plan should address a core set of questions. Many of you have requested a standardized format and template. *The Interim Planning Guidance* makes some suggestions about outlines, content and length, but does not yet mandate a particular format. During FY12, the Conservation Strategies and Learning Team will consult with a variety of senior leaders, managers and practitioners and then recommend a standardized format to be used beginning in FY13.

7. Does Conservation Business Planning replace CAP (Conservation Action Planning) and ERA (Ecoregional Assessments)?

CSL Response: Yes and No. CAP and Ecoregional Assessments revolutionized biodiversity conservation planning by providing a consistent planning and decision framework that has been widely adopted, copied, and successfully applied. As such, CAP and ERA thinking and tools are well integrated into conservation practice worldwide. These concepts and tools won’t go away. Rather, the recommendation of the PET is that the terms “CAP and ERA” be replaced in TNC by “Conservation Business Planning” and that Conservation Business Planning be used as an overarching single TNC planning framework characterized by a set of questions that can apply to any project or strategy. Answering these questions, however, will require different information and approaches depending upon the type, scale, complexity and stage of the project or strategy and other “context” issues—what kinds of decisions need to be made, what kinds of partners will be engaged. This shift recognizes that a growing number of TNC teams are engaged in very different strategies and partnerships that aren’t well served by a single planning method, a single tool or a specific “formula.” The tried and true and well-tested core components of CAP and ERA will often be used and needed to answer some of the questions that underlie Conservation Business Planning. However, Conservation Business Planning emphasizes and adds other types of information and is meant to encourage flexibility in how these questions and the needed information will be gathered. Teams can still choose to deploy CAP and ERA-like processes and methods if that’s the best fit with their conservation situation. Regardless of the approach taken, internal peer review and management decision-making will increasingly focus on how teams are answering the core Conservation Business Planning questions.

8. *The Conservancy has considerable brand recognition in Conservation Action Planning (CAP) methods. How might these recommendations affect that brand either positively or negatively, and what plans are in place to address this issue?*

CSL Response: In short, we're not sure, but we'll take time in FY12 to better understand the issues and implications. The CAP brand is closely aligned with a particular process and set of methods and tools. CAP was branded as part of an intentional conservation planning-related strategy called the Conservation Coaches Network. The PET recommends supporting the *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* (based on CAP) rather than perpetuating the CAP brand. However, we'll reach out to TNC staff and partners who have adopted CAP to better understand the impacts—positive and negative—of TNC altering or dropping the CAP brand and recommend a solution by the end of FY12. In particular, we'll reach out to the Conservation Measures Partnership and Conservation Coaches Network. Right now, we do not plan on organization-wide branding or exporting of "Conservation Business Planning" in the same way that CAP was branded and exported.

9. *Have the PET recommendations incorporated the ideas of whole system conservation as outlined in the recent TNC North America Report: Stepping up to the Challenge: A Concept Paper on Whole System Conservation (June 2011)?*

PET Response: Yes, the whole system concept emphasizes the variable spatial scales at which the Conservancy is working including the matrix of lands and waters between conservation areas with an increased emphasis on the needs of people. The PET recommendations that specifically support the aspects of whole system conservation are: (1) Mainstreaming multi-objective planning to include the needs of people from other sectors of society beyond conservation (e.g. coastal and marine spatial planning), and (2) integrating spatial (ERAs) and strategic planning into a single process and framework. The latter point on integration recognizes that when working at larger spatial scales we need to be setting spatial priorities

for conservation and developing strategies simultaneously as place-based priorities and strategy are inherently related.

10. *Have the PET recommendations considered the new mission, vision, goal, and conservation priorities (Global Challenges, Global Solutions) being proposed by the Executive Team and Senior Managers?*

PET Response: Yes, the PET kept abreast of the discussions about mission, strategic direction and priorities. Of note, the need for an updated planning approach predates the current priorities dialogue by a year or more. That being said, a number of PET recommendations directly support the emerging conservation framework. For example, the PET recommendation on multi-objective planning—how to include objectives of other sectors of society—directly supports the proposed new language related to "making people count." In addition, all of the PET recommendations should better enable Conservancy practitioners to develop effective strategic plans that emphasize solving major conservation problems, conserving biodiversity targets, or both.

11. *What is the relationship, if any, between the PET recommendations and the recommendations of the Measures Business Plan?*

PET Response: The Conservation Approach of the Conservancy has four major components—setting priorities, developing strategies, taking action, measuring results. Most of the PET recommendations refer to setting priorities and developing strategies. The core questions that form the basis of developing a *single integrated planning approach* are related to the entire conservation approach—that is to say, they include questions about planning but also about adaptive management (taking action and measuring results). The Measures Business Plan is an organization-wide initiative to improve the Conservancy's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of our conservation strategies and actions. It is focused on measuring results. Taken together, the

actions outlined in the Measures Business Plan and the PET recommendations will improve our strategic planning efforts and better enable us to adaptively manage our conservation projects and global-regional strategies.

12. How do the PET recommendations address human well-being?

PET Response: The PET proposes to mainstream multi-objective planning as a core methodology in the planning toolbox of Conservancy practitioners. “Multi-objective” refers to planning projects to achieve traditional objectives of the Conservancy (biodiversity conservation) as well as objectives related to human well-being, particularly those associated with ecosystem services. Planning for multiple uses and multiple objectives, including those closely associated with human well-being, is already happening across the Conservancy, especially in relation to industry and government partners (e.g., Development by Design, Marine Spatial Planning).

13. Will we still update or conduct new Ecoregional Assessments?

PET Response: Given the priorities outlined in the Global Challenge-Global Solutions framework, new ERAs may not be warranted, unless the Conservancy is entering a new geography where there is limited information on place-based priorities. Certainly any region or operating unit that has a compelling conservation need or reason to update an existing ERA will do so. If ERA teams had not considered potential strategies as part of their analysis, it would be worthwhile to do so in any revision as that consideration should influence not only the selection of conservation areas but also their relative priority for conservation action. We advise that all planning efforts address the core questions outlined in Major recommendation #2—a single conservation planning framework.

14. Are there plans to develop new planning software that incorporates the recommendations of the PET or will these be incorporated in future versions of Miradi software?

CSL Response: We’re not sure yet, but we’ll be evaluating this in FY12 as we implement the PET recommendations. Some of the new methods and analytical techniques recommended by PET require specific new tools or modifications to Miradi (e.g., for comparing alternative strategies). PET recommends borrowing or adapting existing tools where possible. The current version of Miradi does support a number of our needs and many TNC staff are active users. However, the new planning framework will be more flexible and modular and will overtime have a larger toolbox than at present. The “full cycle project management” Miradi software is based on the integrated *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* developed by the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP), of which TNC is an important and engaged member. The CMP is a growing consortium of conservation NGOs and large foundations with a strong interest in improving conservation results. TNC’s CMP representatives will help the Conservation Strategies & Learning Team evaluate Miradi and to what degree it can support TNC’s future needs. As noted in a previous FAQ, the PET recommends working with the CMP to update and improve the Open Standards. Until we engage with the CMP in revising the Open Standards, we won’t know how much of our evolving planning approach will be supported by Miradi or how many additional tools will be needed.

