



Case Study

ESTABLISHING SHARED GOALS TO BUILD A COUNTRY-WIDE VISION CHINA

Taking time to get the right mix of local players and define roles results in a science-based Conservation Blueprint for China.

The Nature Conservancy has been active in China since 1997. Specific local success in conservation action the Upper Yangtze River basin gave the Conservancy confidence to take the next step in working to create shared conservation goals among a variety of partners on a country-wide scale. By investing in long-term relationships at the provincial and national government level, the Conservancy developed practical shared goals with partners that could then be adopted countrywide by Chinese agencies.

The first step to establish shared goals was to build a strong team of Conservancy staff, local scientists, practitioners and representatives from provincial and national government agencies and universities. The Conservancy struggled for two years to get the right mix, and found that when the right local people became involved, momentum built quickly.

An important goal for the Conservancy was the long-term vision of creating “The China Conservation Blueprint.” Success for this project and others lay in the foundation of creating ecological assessments and a database on biodiversity. The Blueprint is a guide for conservationist and government agencies to know where their conservation efforts should go, for what, and what the goal is. The partners couldn’t initially embrace this Blueprint and didn’t understand its power and utility. Before the goal could be shared, the Conservancy had to vividly demonstrate how such an integrated knowledge foundation would translate into the direct action that so many wanted to see: new areas protected, an expanded and strengthened nature reserve system, illegal logging addressed and sustainable economic opportunities developed.

The Conservancy also had to adapt their own goals, which favored comprehensive data sets, and accept going forward with more rudimentary data. As the academic and government community increasingly saw the power that conservation data could bring to bear on environmental problems, they began to approve of greater emphasis on capturing it, and so the goal became more truly shared.

Ultimately, it was on-the-ground conservation knowledge that helped create shared goals at the upper levels, motivating leaders to make policies that will enable large scale conservation success. The Conservancy made sure that the government shared the goal by providing equal funding to the project as well. The result has been ongoing work with China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection to implement a countrywide conservation “Blueprint” that is resulting in local priorities and action plans.