

The Coda Files

Margo Francis

Think being or hosting a Coda Global Fellow is mysterious and unattainable? Think again! The Coda Global Fellows program enables staff to apply their talents beyond their regular job to forward the Conservancy's global priorities. Coda Fellows can be anyone. They can be anywhere. They could even be...you. So step with us into...The Coda Files.

What happens when you get seven TNC state directors, two country programs, and their trustees in a room with a bunch of staff scientists and partners and ask them to debate what we want to do for conservation and how we'll know if we are getting there? Add TNC's new [whole systems approach](#) and [Planning Evolution Team \(PET\) recommendations](#) into the mix...and you'll find the initiative to create conservation measures for the Great Lakes Project was an experiment in more ways than one.

"I learned a lot about leadership: how do you get things done and move things forward, dealing with risk and change?" says Margo Francis of her Coda Global Fellowship for the Great Lakes Project, which was hosted by Great Lakes Project Board of Directors Chair Helen Taylor.

"We had been working off one version of planning guidance, and then the PET released their report in September [2011], which was when we were wrapping up the process," she adds. "While getting the new guidance earlier would have been great, it is only one of the challenges you face in implementing measures on a whole systems scale — we had no idea at the time the value and impact the measures initiative would have for our work in the Great Lakes. The conference spurred a rigorous scrubbing, honing and prioritization of strategies as well as measures, and a much stronger Great Lakes Project moving forward."

Coda Fellow: Margo Francis

Day Job: Project Information Manager, Amazon Program, Latin American Region

Assignment: Great Lakes Project

Duration: March 2011 – July 2012

Task: Manage a major initiative to create conservation measures for the Great Lakes Project, including a 120+-person Great Lakes Measures Conference.

Most Important Lesson Learned: "Business planning and measures at a whole systems scale is challenging. Programs like the Great Lakes Project are boldly taking these challenges on to integrate measures and assure accountability at all levels of their work."



Most trustees, says Margo, “liked the sausage-making aspect of peer review.” And she urges future endeavors to be thoughtful about the way trustees may best contribute their skills to assist Conservation Business Planning, strategy development and measures.

Content-wise, “teams struggled with what good socioeconomic objectives are and how we integrate them more explicitly to our planning,” she says. “Everyone realizes how important they are, but we are still learning how to do it.” More guidance would help.

Margo’s fellowship has been extended to help integrate the constructive feedback the Great Lakes Project received from staff, trustees and partners into the next iteration of business plans. **SC**

— [Jensen Montambault](#), applied conservation scientist, Central Science, The Nature Conservancy

The Coda Global Fellows program enables staff to apply their talents beyond their regular job to forward the Conservancy’s global priorities. Burning science needs? Want to share your skills with a global priority? Contact [Jolie Sibert](#), director of the Coda Global Fellows program!