IUCN

The World Conservation Union

CMP

The Conservation Measures Partnership

IUCN – CMP
Unified Classification of Conservation Actions

Version 1.0 – June 2006[1]

Q1: What do we mean by "conservation actions"?

As shown in the following diagram, the work of conservation ultimately involves taking action to achieve certain desired outcomes among factors (direct threats, underlying causes, and opportunities) that affect biodiversity targets.
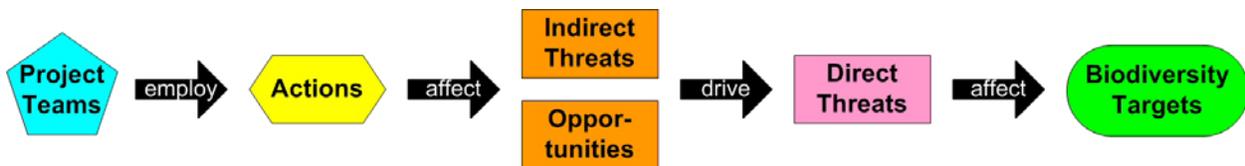
As shown in the following table adapted from the *CMP Rosetta Stone*, different groups have different terms for these actions. In this document, we use the term *action* to be synonymous with *intervention*, *activity, response,* and *strategy.* An action is implemented by completing a number of specific *tasks* or *steps*.

Organization	Term	Definition
CMP:	Actions or activities	Specific actions or sets of tasks undertaken by project staff designed to reach each of the project's objectives.
AWF:	Intervention options	Types of conservation interventions that can be implemented to abate threats to conservation targets or to take on opportunities.
CI:	Responses	Human reactions to pressures through organized efforts to reduce, prevent, or mitigate undesirable change or environmental results.
TNC:	Strategic actions	Sets of tasks undertaken by project staff designed to reach each of the project's objectives.
WCS:	Interventions	Specific activities or actions taken by the project to abate a specific indirect or direct threat.
WWF-ER:	Strategies & actions	Responses to address key threats to the ecoregion's biodiversity and leverage opportunities to influence potentially supportive trends, attitudes, and processes.
WWF-P:	Activities	Specific actions which lead to the achievement of project outputs.
EWW:	Activities	Actions designed to address threats, improve socio-economic conditions of target producers, and address policy issues.
FOS:	Activities or interventions	Specific actions or sets of tasks undertaken by project staff designed to reach each of the project's objectives.

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[1] This classification is the direct successor to Version 1.0 of the *IUCN Red List Conservation Actions Authority File* and the June 2005 Version of the *CMP Taxonomy of Conservation Actions.* For the latest version of this document in html or pdf as well as a web-page on which you can provide comments and feedback, go to: http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sis/classification.htm.

Q2: What are we trying to do and why?

We are trying to develop a classification of conservation actions. There are three main reasons for developing such a classification:

- To help practitioners figure out what actions to take at their site. A project team can scan this classification and see if they find any actions that they may be overlooking in their analysis of what to do at their site.

- To create general summaries or "roll-ups" for broader organizational purposes and/or use by senior managers, fundraisers, and external affairs staff. Summaries can tally the frequency of the use of a given type of action across projects at various organizational scales or be combined with other information for more detailed summaries.

- To facilitate cross-project learning and the development of a science of conservation. A common classification of conservation actions enables practitioners to search a database of conservation projects and find projects employing similar actions for similar conservation problems and (hopefully) to learn how (and why) those actions are working or not-working.

Q3: How will we know if we succeeded?

A good classification will meet the following criteria:

- **Simple** – Clear language, understandable to all practitioners.
- **Hierarchical** – Creates a logical way of grouping actions that are related to one another.
- **Comprehensive** – Covers all possible actions (at least at higher levels of the hierarchy).
- **Consistent** – All entries at a given level of the classification are of the same type; the hierarchy does not "mix apples and oranges."
- **Expandable** – Is designed so as to enable new actions to be added to the classification as they are discovered.
- **Exclusive** – Any given action can only be placed in one cell within the hierarchy.
- **Scalable** – The same names can be used for actions at one site and across a continent.

As we developed the classification found at the end of this document, we found that we were able to satisfy most of these criteria. The one criterion that we had some trouble with was "exclusive" – it was hard to avoid situations in which some actions could be placed in more than one category. This is not a problem if we think of the classification as a list of key words so that multiple categories can be assigned to any given action a project is taking. This should be fine for the cross-project learning process outlined above. However, violating the exclusivity criterion is a problem if we want to roll up actions in reports. In these cases, it may be necessary to further refine the classification or, at a minimum, constrain users to select only one category for a given action.

Q4: What is the unit that we are trying to classify?

As stated by the "consistent" criterion, any classification is greatly enhanced if all the units being classified are more or less the same type of fruit – you don't want to mix apples and oranges.

In this work, we have agreed to focus on the conservation actions that practitioners take – the things that conservationists do. We are explicitly not focusing on the biodiversity targets or the threats to these targets; we assume that other taxonomies will deal with these issues (for example, see the IUCN - *CMP Classification of Direct Threats*).

If we look at how a conservation practitioner spends the day, many of his or her actions fall into the category of "doing things that every project or program must do."   These actions, which are summarized in the Conservation Measures Partnership's *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation* include things like setting priorities, developing a situation analysis, developing and implementing actions, developing and implementing a monitoring plan, and analyzing and communicating results. In addition, a practitioner will have to spend his or her time developing and improving the institutions (project, programs, and organizations) he or she is working and/or affiliated with.

All of this work that the practitioner is doing is presumably ultimately in service of taking actions to counter threats to biodiversity, take advantage of opportunities, or restore degraded biodiversity targets. In this work, we are focusing only on these direct conservation actions – the highlighted box in the following diagram.
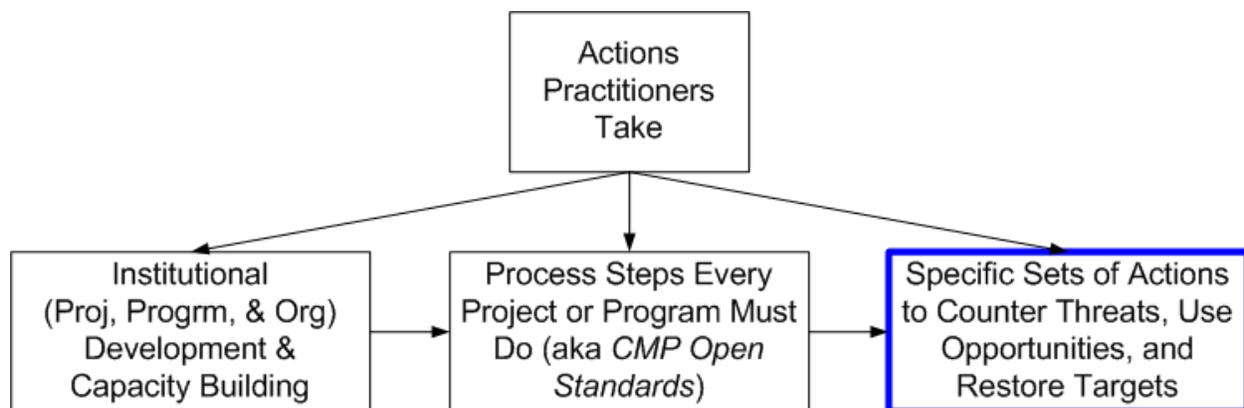
Q5: Does an action include the actor and the objective?

Any given action can be disaggregated into:

Objective(s) – What the action is trying to accomplish
Activity(ies) – The specific tasks that get accomplished
Actor(s) – The individuals or institutions taking the actions

For the purpose of this document, we are primarily trying to focus on the activities being taken as shown in the following example:

Objective: By 2005, 20 households in x village make $1000 per year from dive tourism homestay to replace the money they now get from cyanide fishing.

Action: Set up community-based dive tourism homestays

**Actors:** Local NGO, community members, dive tourism company

The action listed above could be undertaken by almost any type of actor (e.g. a donor, NGO, or government agency) in service of many different objectives (conservation, community development, etc.). We are thus restricting ourselves to considering the action.

Q6: What level should we focus on?

Conservation actions can be classified at different levels as shown in the following examples. We agreed that our classification will try to be comprehensive at the class and category levels, but not at the type level – that we would only provide examples of types. The class and category designations are probably more useful as roll-up mechanisms then for promoting learning.

Level	Example 1	Example 2
1. **Class**	Livelihood, economic & other incentives	Land/water protection
2. **Category**	Linked enterprises	Easements
3. **Type**	Community-based dive tourism homestay	Water rights easement

Another dimension on which we could categorize actions is where along the conceptual chain the action is intervening. For example, as shown in the following diagram, we could have A) actions that affect targets, B) actions that affect direct threats, and C) actions that affect underlying causes and opportunities. This is a different dimension than the classification level shown above; we will have to consider and then decide whether this is a helpful breakdown. In our classification, categories **1. Land/Water Protection**, **2. Land/Water Management**, and **3. Species Management** are generally focused more on the "east" side of the diagram below whereas the remaining categories are farther to the "west."
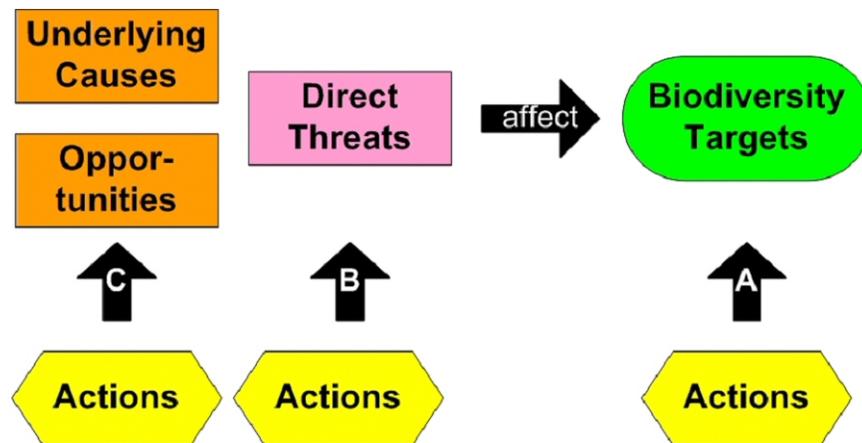
Q7: Multiple actions or one action with several tasks?

In most real-world situations, a project will take multiple actions to deal with different threats and opportunities. However, a project may also take multiple actions to accomplish one objective. Consider the following two examples:

1. Lobbying a government agency to change regulations to allow for conservation easements.
2. Educate private landholders to get them to adopt a forest certification system.

Using our classification, does the first example fit into the **1.3 Resource & Habitat Protection (easements)** or **5.1 Public Legislation** category, or both? Does the second example fit into the **4.2 Training** or **6.3 Market Forces** category, or both?

It depends on your perspective. We would generally argue that in the first example, the lobbying would be a task in service of the overarching easement action (or if you prefer, a *tactic* in service of the broader *strategy*). But if you work for a full-time lobbying group who is taking the action to benefit another group that will implement the easement, then you could claim that your action is lobbying. In the second example, if your organization is setting up the certification system, then the awareness raising is merely a task in the broader action. But if you are a full time training provider, then you may be using training as your primary action. In either case, however, we would generally try to limit the number of primary actions being taken.

Q8: Is this the only classification of its kind?

The classification in this document has been adapted from previous work including:

*   Conservation Measures Partnership. 2005. *Taxonomy of Conservation Actions.*

*   IUCN. 2005. Conservation Actions Authority File. Available at http://iucn.org/webfiles/doc/SSC/RedList/AuthorityF/consactions.rtf

*   Salafsky, N., R. Margoluis, K.H. Redford, and J.G. Robinson. 2002. Improving the practice of conservation: A conceptual framework and research agenda for conservation science. *Conservation Biology* **16**: 1469-1479.

Q8: How will this classification be updated?

This classification is under the editorial authority of the IUCN Authority File Task Force of the IUCN Biodiversity Assessments Sub-Committee of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Steering Committee. It is our hope that this classification becomes the standard reference for conservation actions around the world. For data management purposes, it is important to have classification systems that are relatively stable. At the same time, we obviously need the ability to have the classification systems grow and change over time. To this end:

- This Version 1.0 was initially released in June 2006, after substantial review and testing.

- There will be 6 month public comment period and any necessary revisions will be made by December 2006, resulting in Version 1.1. You can provide comments and feedback at http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sis/classification.htm.

- At the end of this time, the classifications will be locked until the end of 2008 (at least the Level 1 and Level 2 classifications). It will still be possible to adjust definitions and expositions and to add additional examples at Level 3. If substantial changes are made, the release will be with a new Version number (e.g. 1.2).

- A formal review process will begin in January 2009, culminating in the release of Version 2.0.   We then anticipate repeating the cycle every four years thereafter.

Acknowledgements

Please cite this classification as: IUCN-CMP. 2006. *Unified Classification of Conservation Actions, Version 1.0.* http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/sis/classification.htm.

For more information about the IUCN Red List, go to www.redlist.org.

For more information about the Conservation Measures Partnership, go to www.ConservationMeasures.org.

IUCN - CMP Unified Classification of Conservation Actions

Version: 1 June 2006

Level of Classification			**Definition**	**Exposition**
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
1. Land/Water Protection			Actions to identify, establish or expand parks and other legally protected areas	This class contains all actions designed to directly protect biodiversity through parks, reserves, easements, or other similar means.
	1.1 Site/Area Protection		Establishing or expanding public or private parks, reserves, and other protected areas roughly equivalent to IUCN Categories I-VI	For many years, this was the primary action used by conservationists. The actual management of protected areas fall into **2.1 Site/Area Management**.
		List the type of reserve	*national parks, town wildlife sanctuaries, private reserves, tribally owned hunting grounds*	
	1.2 Resource & Habitat Protection		Establishing protection or easements of some specific aspect of the resource on public or private lands outside of IUCN Categories I-VI	This category is for efforts to legally protect some part of the overall resource rather than the entire entity.
		List the type of protection	*easements, development rights, water rights, instream flow rights, wild & scenic river designation*	
2. Land/Water Management			Actions directed at conserving or restoring sites, habitats and the wider environment	This class contains all actions involved in directly managing habitats.
	2.1 Site/Area Management		Management of protected areas and other resource lands for conservation	The establishment of protected areas goes into the appropriate category in **1. Land/Water Protection –** this category covers the actual management of the land or water.
		List the specific action	*site design, demarcating borders, putting up fences, training park staff, control of poachers*	
	2.2 Invasive/Problematic Species Control		Controlling and/or preventing invasive and/or other problematic plants, animals, and pathogens	This could arguably fit into **2.1 Site/Area Management** and others, but it is such a vital action it gets its own category.
		List the specific species and action	*cutting vines off trees, preventing ballast water discharge*	
	2.3 Habitat & Natural Process Restoration		Enhancing degraded or restoring missing habitats and ecosystem functions; dealing with pollution	This category involves the restoration of degraded lands and natural processes as opposed to the protection of existing ones.
		List the specific restoration	*creating forest corridors, prairie re-creation, riparian tree plantings, coral reef restoration, proscribed burns, breaching levees, dam removal, fish ladders, liming acid lakes, cleaning up oil spills*	

Level of Classification			Definition	Exposition
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
3. Species Management			Actions directed at managing or restoring species, focused on the species of concern itself	This class contains all actions involved in directly managing species. For you literal minded people interested in drawing black lines on gray areas, the difference between land/water management and species management is defined as follows: If the action targets 2 or fewer specific species, it's species; if it targets 3 or more, it's land/water. For example fish ladders aimed at one salmon species fit in species recovery; fish ladders aimed at several different species fit in natural process restoration.
	3.1 Species Management		Managing specific plant and animal populations of concern	Note that culling deer to save a rare plant that they are eating is **2.2 Invasive/Problematic Species Control** whereas culling deer to manage the deer population itself fits here.
		List the specific species and action	*harvest management of wild mushrooms, culling buffalo to keep population size within park carrying capacity, controlling fishing effort*	
	3.2 Species Recovery		Manipulating, enhancing or restoring specific plant and animal populations, vaccination programs	
		List the specific species and action	*manual pollination of trees, artificial nesting boxes/platforms, clutch manipulation, supplementary feeding, disease/pathogen/parasite management*	
	3.3 Species Re-Introduction		Re-introducing species to places where they formally occurred or benign introductions	Re-introductions are to areas where the species formerly occurred following IUCN re-introduction guidelines. Benign introductions are to areas outside of the species' historic range, but within an appropriate habitat and done deliberately for conservation reasons.
		List the specific species and action	*re-introduction of wolves*	
	3.4 *Ex-situ* Conservation		Protecting biodiversity out of its native habitats	This is one of the key strategies practiced by zoos and aquaria interested in conservation.
		List the specific species and action	*captive breeding of gorillas, artificial propagation of orchids, gene-banking*	

Level of Classification			Definition	Exposition
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
4. Education & Awareness			Actions directed at people to improve understanding and skills, and influence behavior	This class obviously overlaps a bit with **7. External Capacity Building**; actions in this class tend to target individuals rather than organizations.
	4.1 Formal Education		Enhancing knowledge and skills of students in a formal degree program	
		List the specific type of education	*public schools, colleges & universities, continuing education*	
	4.2 Training		Enhancing knowledge, skills and information exchange for practitioners, stakeholders, and other relevant individuals in structured settings outside of degree programs	This category refers to training outside of formal degree programs.
		List the specific type of training and target audience	*monitoring workshops or training courses in reserve design for park managers, learning networks or writing how-to manuals for project managers, stakeholder education on specific issues*	
	4.3 Awareness & Communications		Raising environmental awareness and providing information through various media or through civil disobedience	This is a large category that involves many different efforts to raise awareness about conservation issues in specific stakeholder groups and the general public. There is a grey area between general awareness campaigns which belong in this category versus campaigns to enact specific legislation which belong in **5. Law & Policy**. Many mainstream conservation organizations do not use the more disruptive and illegal forms of moral confrontation -- inclusion of them in an effort to make this taxonomy comprehensive should by no means constitute an endorsement of them.
		List the specific type of awareness raising	*radio soap operas, environmental publishing, web blogs, puppet shows, door-to-door canvassing, tree sitting, protest marches*	

Level of Classification			Definition	Exposition
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
5. Law & Policy			Actions to develop, change, influence, and help implement formal legislation, regulations, and voluntary standards	This class contains a series of strategies aimed at using government powers at all levels to protect biodiversity. There is a sequence embedded in this class that involves enacting or changing the legislation, policy, or standard and then promoting compliance or enforcement of it. Some organizations do both, others only one or the other.
	5.1 Legislation		Making, implementing, changing, influencing, or providing input into formal government sector legislation or polices at all levels: international, national, state/provincial, local, tribal	Public legislation refers to the official legal code governing society – what some people refer to as "hard law."
		List the level and type of legislation and the specific action being taken	*Global: promoting conventions on biodiversity, wildlife trade laws like CITES National: work for or against government laws such as the US Endangered Species Act, influencing legislative appropriations State/Provincial: state ballot initiatives, providing data to state policy makers, developing pollution permitting systems, dam relicensing Local: developing zoning regulations, countryside laws, species protection laws, hunting bans Tribal: creating tribal laws*	
	5.2 Policies & Regulations		Making, implementing, changing, influencing, or providing input into policies and regulations affecting the implementation of laws at all levels: international, national, state/provincial, local/community, tribal	Policies and regulations are how legislation gets implemented – what some people refer to as "soft law." This is a relatively narrow definition of the word "policy."
		List the type of policy or regulation and the specific action being taken	*Input into agency plans regulating certain species or resources, working with local governments or communities to implement zoning regulations; promoting sustainable harvest of timber on state forest lands*	
	5.3 Private Sector Standards & Codes		Setting, implementing, changing, influencing, or providing input into voluntary standards & professional codes that govern private sector practice	These are codes of practice that are adopted by an organization or industry on a voluntary (as opposed to mandated) basis. Mandatory laws and regulations fall under **5.1 Legislation** or **5.2 Policies & Regulations**.
		List the type of standard or code	*Marine & Forest Stewardship Councils, Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) Open Standards, corporate adoption of forestry best management practices, sustainable grazing by a rancher*	
	5.4 Compliance & Enforcement		Monitoring and enforcing compliance with laws, policies & regulations, and standards & codes at all levels	Laws, policies, regulations, and standards are useless if they are not implemented and enforced. Some organizations merely try to monitor compliance whereas others have the power of enforcement.
		List the action	*Water quality standard monitoring, initiating criminal and civil litigation*	

Level of Classification			Definition	Exposition
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
6. Livelihood, Economic & Other Incentives			Actions to use economic and other incentives to influence behavior	This class of actions has been gaining in popularity in the past few years.
	6.1 Linked Enterprises & Livelihood Alternatives		Developing enterprises that directly depend on the maintenance of natural resources or provide substitute livelihoods as a means of changing behaviors and attitudes	In linked enterprises, the health of the enterprise directly depends on the health of the biodiversity - for example, a community homestay that depends on tourists coming to visit an intact coral reef. Livelihood alternatives are established to move people from destructive actions to non-destructive ones -- for example, a community homestay that keeps the operator from working as a logger.
		List the type	*ecotourism, non-timber forest product harvesting, harvesting wild salmon to create value for wild population*	
	6.2 Substitution		Promoting alternative products and services that substitute for environmentally damaging ones	This category involves developing products and services explicitly to remove pressure from biodiversity.
		List the type	*Viagra for rhino horn, farmed salmon as a replacement for pressure on wild populations, promoting recycling and use of recycled materials*	
	6.3 Market Forces		Using market mechanisms to change behaviors and attitudes	This category includes both positive and negative incentives for conservation. This category deals with incentive-based standards; non-incentive standards go in **5.2 Policies & regulations**.
		List the type	*certification, positive incentives, boycotts, negative incentives, grass & forest banking, valuation of ecosystem services such as flood control*	
	6.4 Conservation Payments		Using direct or indirect payments to change behaviors and attitudes	This category involves a direct payment for conservation behaviors.
		List the type	*quid-pro-quo performance payments, resource tenure incentives*	
	6.5 Non-Monetary Values		Using intangible values to change behaviors and attitudes	This category cuts across the others in this class, but involves those cases where the incentives are not financial.
		List the type	*spiritual, cultural, links to human health*	

Level of Classification			Definition	Exposition
1	**2**	**3**	*Examples*	
7. External Capacity Building			Actions to build the infrastructure to do better conservation	As discussed in greater detail in the introduction, every organization has to develop its own capacity to design, implement, manage, and learn from its work. These basic functions should not be considered part of this classification. However, if a group does this type of work to help partner organizations, then it should be part of this class.
	7.1 Institutional & Civil Society Development		Creating or providing non-financial support & capacity building for non-profits, government agencies, communities, and for-profits	Building conservation institutions.
		List the type	*creating new local land trusts, providing circuit riders to help develop organizational capacity*	
	7.2 Alliance & Partnership Development		Forming and facilitating partnerships, alliances, and networks of organizations	Promoting cross-organizational informational sharing, learning, and collaboration.
		List the type	*country networks, Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP)*	
	7.3 Conservation Finance		Raising and providing funds for conservation work	Providing the financial resources for conservation.
		List the type	*private foundations, debt-for-nature swaps*	