Highlights from the January 9, 2015
Summative Evaluation of Conservation Measures Partnership and Conservation
Coaches Network to Strengthen Results-Based Management in Conservation
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In April 2014, the Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) and the Conservation Coaches Network (CCNet) contracted with Archipelago Consulting (Principals: Kent H. Redford, Mark W. Schwartz and Kristin Hulvey) to conduct an independent, summative evaluation of their work. *The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a comprehensive review and determine the extent to which their collective efforts have strengthened Results Based Management (RBM) in the conservation sector.* The Gordon and Betty Moore and Margaret A. Cargill Foundations provided generous funding for the evaluation. The consultant's final report was submitted January 9, 2015. The process was managed through an Evaluation Steering Committee with representatives from the Board of CMP and CCNet, external individuals and funders.
This evaluation provides a valuable assessment of the outcomes and impacts of our work and guidance for our future direction. Summarizing the key points of a much longer document (78 pages plus appendices) is both difficult and necessarily arbitrary. For reference and transparency we have posted the full evaluation including appendices on the CMP/CCNet website here: (CMP/CCNet Evaluation). In addition, where we insert direct quotes from the evaluation document (versus our own text) these are displayed in *italics*.

Process: The evaluation was divided into three principal data-gathering efforts:

1. Interviews: A total of 73 interviews were conducted including people with expertise in CMP, people with expertise in CCNet, and people with broad knowledge of the conservation field.
2. Web-Survey: A web survey was received by a total of 668 people, and completed by 250 individuals (a 37% completion rate). The survey population represented a diversity of organizations, regions, and range of professional experience.
3. CMP and CCNet provided copies of over 50 internal documents that supplied key information.

Organizational Backgrounds – CMP and CCNet:
Launched in 2002, the Conservation Measures Partnership is a coalition of conservation implementation and funding organizations that seeks to advance the practice of conservation. The CMP mission is to "advance the practice of conservation by developing, testing, and promoting principles and tools to credibly assess and improve the effectiveness of conservation actions." This mission stems from a vision that global conservation efforts will be more efficient and effective as the conservation community learns how to replicate successful practices based upon credible measurement of effectiveness and open sharing of lessons learned. CMP began with six member organizations and in 2014 has grown to 26 members.

The Conservation Coaches Network has a distinct but related history. Evolving from The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Efroymson Coaches Network, CCNet was chartered in 2009 by the WWF, The Nature Conservancy, Greening Australia and Foundations of Success to help meet the growing need to train and support coaches and project teams in the use of the Open Standards. The CCNet vision is that these engaged cadres of coaches ("Franchises) continuously improve and adapt the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation framework in ways that are responsive to the communities in which they work and the unique conservation challenges they face. As of 2014, CCNet supports a globally distributed network of thirteen franchises with nearly 400 active coaches from 125 organizations operating in 52 countries on five continents.

In addition to a shared history, complementary missions and a similar organizational status as informal associations, CMP and CCNet maintain a formal strategic alliance with shared Board

members and a formal Memorandum of Understanding, which defines an evolving, set of joint activities.

The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (OS): Throughout this document there are references to the Open Standards. The Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) supported by the work of CCNet has worked over the past decade to combine principles and best practices in adaptive management and results-based management from conservation and other fields to create the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation. The Open Standards bring together common concepts, approaches, and terminology in conservation project design, management, and monitoring in order to help practitioners improve the practice of conservation. More information on the *Open Standards* can be found here: [Open Standards](#)

Major findings:

- *As an organization CMP is unprecedented and remains unique in its mission to create a cross-institutional community of practitioners to develop, maintain and disseminate standards of practice for conservation.*

- *Through CMP's highly effective work, the OS as <u>open</u> standards have been widely adopted …. and has reached thousands of practitioners and been used on tens of thousands of projects around the world*

- *CCNet uniquely fills a niche of creating a globally distributed, cross-institutional networked community of practice through which to develop and share lessons learned from the practice of conservation to improve conservation outcomes.*

- *CCNet can demonstrate achievement of 2012 strategic plan goals for creating a well-trained coaching network that is both globally and culturally diverse and well connected.*

- *Though evaluated separately, CMP and CCNet goals are aligned in the vision of creating a community of conservation practitioners who use the OS for adaptive management.*

- The major accomplishment of both organizations has been to create broad communities of practitioners using the OS… and, *represent an estimated $1 billion in annual conservation spending.*

  This *broad adoption of the OS by the conservation community has resulted in:*

  1. <u>*Increased conservation funding… for conservation projects*</u>. There *was strong support from both the web survey and interviews that increased funding for conservation projects is one of the benefits derived from using the OS.*

  2. <u>*Increased stakeholder participation*</u>. *The OS brings stakeholders to the table and provides a common language for improving conservation decision-making.*

  3. <u>*Increased efficiency of implementation of actions*</u>. *A strong majority of survey respondents report average to significant positive contributions of the OS toward elements of good project management.*

  4. <u>*Increased investment in learning.*</u> *Over 90% of web respondents felt that the OS contributed to developing monitoring plans. However, advancing to this part of the OS cycle remains a challenge, and nearly half of all respondents report not starting this stage of the process in their projects.*

  5. <u>*Increased sharing of lessons*</u>. *There remains a strong contingent of practitioners who believe that the OS improves cross-project learning as well as cross-organizational learning.* However, *interviewees felt that sharing learning was only*

partially achieved and substantial work still needs to be done to increase shared learning across institutions.

- The evaluators' *expert opinion after examining comments provided by 250 web survey respondents, interviewing over 50 individuals, and examining dozens of documents is that use of the OS has significantly impacted biodiversity in positive ways in numerous locations around the globe.*

- *These accomplishments have been achieved in a scant 12 years for CMP and only five years for CCNet. Given that nothing less than complete sectoral change is the objective, this is a remarkable amount to have accomplished in such a short time.*

- *CCNet has achieved its considerable accomplishments efficiently, working with partial commitments of three* staff…. and the significant *efforts of unpaid franchise leaders.*

- *CMP has worked with an agile strategic design, adopting the practice of starting initiatives when there is a constituency and a need for the effort and then ceasing initiatives when they are no longer productive.*

- *Cooperation between conservation organizations is not common. CCNet and CMP show that strategic gains can result from working together, to give collaborative RBM efforts greater credence and power. As such they have raised the collaborative standards across the conservation sector.*

Key Issues and Recommendations: Since the submission of the final evaluation report the Evaluation Steering Committee members have developed a formal management response that defines what we believe to be the priority issues identified in the evaluation and presents a set of recommended next steps and the roles and responsibilities for taking action. This document has been shared with the CCNet and CMP Board and continues to receive input from our members. A current copy of the "Summary of Key Issues and Management Response" to the CMP and CCNet evaluation document can be also be found at the CMP/CCNet website (need weblink here). Furthermore, the joint actions to be undertaken in response to the evaluation will be incorporated in the formal Memorandum of Understanding between CMP and CCNet that since 2012 has define and guided the implementation of our work together.

Here is a high-level summary of these issues and evaluator's recommendations:
1. **Financial Sustainability** - CCNet and CMP *have been less successful at its objective to institutionalize* and sustain their networks e.g., …. *engaging the senior leadership* of partner organizations, *attracting new contributing member organizations* and major donors. Operating with small budgets they rely significantly on volunteered, in-kind support to maintain operations.
   Recommendations:
   - *Publish to Build More Buy-in*: *Producing more peer-reviewed articles by CMP and CCNet practitioners would help make the case for the efficacy of the OS, build knowledge amongst the conservation community, and provide evidence to be used in convincing organizations to adopt the OS.*
   - *Incorporate the Science of Changing Minds: Reach out to practitioners of behavioral economics and related disciplines.*
   - Expand engagement with government sector to fund needs.
   - Develop "full-cost accounting" information that includes in-kind contributions of all units to better define the level of support provided and help frame a solution.

2. **Structure and Governance** - *CCNet and CMP developed along different trajectories but have been growing closer to one another due to their strategic decisions and the similarity in their work.*
   Recommendations:

   - *Clear complementarity between the two organizations…. make it advisable to seek ways of* more formally *integrating. Such a process would need to be done with care and attention to the differing constituencies, cultures and histories and consider a range of alternative structures.*

3. **Strategic Direction –** For CCNet, growing demand suggests a need for a more top-down strategic growth differentiating and prioritizing among potential opportunities.
   Recommendations:
   - Consider these approaches:
     o *Geographies of need (where conservation capacity need is greatest);*
     o *Institutions of importance (identifying key institutions to spread good practices through coaching);*
     o *Developing a hierarchical coaching model (e.g., training for individuals and organizations who have no prior experience), or develop specialty coaches.*

4. **Open Standard's Implementation** - *Not all steps in the OS cycle are used and generally there is sharp attenuation after the planning stages.* CMP or CCNet does not support some important tools with the capacity to aid in OS implementation. Although …. *the OS are used by "thousands of conservation professionals in hundreds of organizations in dozens of countries" very few of the organizations have fully adopted (and enforce the use of) the OS.*
   Recommendations:
   - *The full power of the OS to transform the conservation community through improved practices such as cross-project learning will be fully realized when the OS are used broadly and through the full cycle.*
   - *CMP/CCNet should consider formally the role of the OS relative to a small but critical set of conservation frameworks that are viewed by many as alternative RBM approaches.*
   - Consider a more proactive promotion of *the OS in different organizations and sectors.*
   - *Use the OS to help establish a strong, shared learning system for the biodiversity conservation sector.*

5. **Measuring Impact** - *The evaluators found no quantifiable data, documented baseline or counterfactual studies that provide evidence that use of the OS, or any other specific adaptive management framework, has led to improved conservation status.*
   Recommendations:
   - *The fastest, lowest cost, and easiest option is the development of case studies. We recommend that CMP/CCNet develop a set of "test beds" – areas where decision-making bodies are willing to consider results of OS work in determining how and where to deliver conservation results. The desired outcome would be a set of peer-reviewed publications from a broad range of settings that demonstrate that use of OS improves impact at lower cost.*