Managing for Change when Uncertainty is the only Certainty

Or

Now What?

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Now is what we need to do...Act Now!
The future ain’t what it used to be.
-- Yogi Berra
Bruce Stein, Chief Scientist, NWF
We must do more to combat climate change... to prepare our communities for the consequences of climate change
-- State of the Union 2013
Climate Smart Adaptive Management
What Constitutes Good Adaptation?

• Adaptation an emerging field
  • Still poor understanding of what climate adaptation means

• Most guidance still at very high level; little operational advice

• Danger of existing work simply re-labeled as adaptation

• Strong interest in understanding what truly constitutes climate adaptation and how it can be operationalized
“I skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been.”

--- Wayne Gretsky
Climate-Smart Conservation

- NWF-led expert workgroup developing criteria and guidance for “climate-smart” conservation
- Follows on successful guidance publication and training on vulnerability assessment
- Not a recipe book
  - Rather, “the way to cook”
- Four top-line themes
The Secret for Successful Adaptation

Intentionality

Need to “Show Your Work!”
Global Average January Temperatures. Source NOAA 2009
Theme 3
Reconsider Conservation Goals
Not Just Strategies

• Goals are the *why*; strategies the *how*
• Many current goals will no longer be feasible
• Need is for “climate-informed conservation goals”
  – Not just “climate-change goals”
Aligning Climate-Informed Goals and Strategies

Stage 1
- Business as Usual
  - Traditional goals
  - Traditional strategies

Stage 2
- Climate Retrofit
  - Traditional goals
  - Revised strategies*

Stage 3
- Climate-Smart from the Start
  - Revised goals*
  - Revised strategies*

* Review and revise as needed, based on climate change assessments.
Theme 4
Integrate with Existing Work
Not Just Stand-Alone Adaptation Plans
A Spin Around the Climate-Smart Conservation Cycle

1. Define planning purpose and objectives
2. Assess climate impacts and vulnerabilities
3. Review/revise conservation goals
4. Identify possible adaptation options
5. Evaluate and prioritize adaptation actions
6. Implement priority adaptation actions
7. Track action effectiveness and ecological responses

Revisit planning as needed
Adjust actions as needed
Re-assess vulnerability as needed
1. Define Adaptation Planning
Purpose and Objectives

• Clarify existing conservation goals

• Identify:
  – Key problems to address
  – Stakeholders and their needs
  – Appropriate spatial and temporal scale
  – Focal resources/conservation targets
  – Resource constraints
    • money, time, capacity, data

• Based on above, can select most appropriate approach/tools
2. Assessing Vulnerability

• Components of vulnerability
  – Sensitivity
  – Exposure
  – Adaptive Capacity

• Provides essential context for adaptation
  – What’s at risk?
  – **Why** is it at risk?
  – Doesn’t mean should only focus on most vulnerable; might also focus on least vulnerable/most resilient
3. Review/Revise Conservation Goals

• Need is to review, and as necessary revise
  – May either validate existing goals, or indicate need for alteration

• Modified “SMART” framework
  – **Achievable** in light of likely impacts
  – **Realistic** based on likely resources and constraints (e.g., legal/institutional)
  – Over what **time scale** might be feasible
  – Over what **spatial scale** might be feasible
4. Identify *Possible* Adaptation Options

- Link actions to climate impacts
  - Reduce exposure
  - Reduce sensitivity
  - Enhance adaptive capacity

- Need to think outside the box
  - What is not feasible now may be in a climate-altered future
5. Evaluate and Prioritize Adaptation Actions

• Consider ecological effectiveness
  – But also financial, social, political, legal, institutional, and technological

• Most actions will draw from existing tools and approaches
  – But may vary in when, where, why carried out

• Near vs. Long-term needs
  – Ideally, should meld near-term needs with longer-term directions

• Works across climate scenarios
  – Ideally, robust to uncertainty
6. Implement Priority Actions

• Focus on cross-sector benefits and synergies

• Engage diverse partners early

• Demonstrate success
  – No matter how small

• Communications is key
  – Meet people where they are
  – Sometimes climate is not the appropriate message
7. Track Action Effectiveness and Ecological Responses

• Monitoring is key to agile and informed management
  – But requires careful design and link to actions

• In context of adaptation informs both
  – evaluation of project effectiveness and
  – understanding of underlying system changes

• Although shown as last step, provides feedback to many interim steps in cycle

• How to define success
Climate Smart Conservation
Climate Smart Conservation
Principles of Climate-Smart Conservation

1. Forward looking goals
2. ID actions linked to future conditions
3. Design actions in ecosystem/watershed context
4. Prioritize actions across multiple scales & species
5. Adaptive and flexible management timely to continual change
6. Collaborate and communicate across sectors for timely long term solutions
7. Follow TEN% rule: Test, and Experiment Now
Putting Ideas into Actions

• Courage to Take Next Steps

• Believe You Can

• Know Why

• You are Not Alone!
Be Brave, Take risks, Nothing Can Substitute Experience.
(Paulo Coelho)
We are in this together