

Open Standards Case Study Competition

The competition

The Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP) and the Conservation Coaches Network (CCNet) are committed to improving the practice of conservation by promoting and building capacity for cross-organizational, cross-project, and cross-coach/practitioner learning about adaptive management in conservation. To this end, in 2016 we launched our first global Open Standards Case Study Competition to identify and share excellence in adaptive management practice across the conservation community.

We were looking for case studies that both describe what was done and provide clear lessons and advice to others on what it means to undertake adaptive management using the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation or similar approaches. Stories or cases that describe learning from “failure” were as valued as those about success.

The judges

We received ten excellent entries and went through a first set of judging to narrow down the entries to five in order to facilitate a second round of crowd source voting. Our judging panel included Elizabeth O’Neill, Susan O’Neil, Rob Sutter, Daniel Sprod and Nina Hadley. With the input from crowd sourcing our judges selected the final three winners.

The power of the process

Each case study, including those that were not winners, demonstrated the flexibility and variety of approaches within the Open Standards and the power of adaptive management to employ new information to address the causes of and solutions to real-life conservation challenges. The five case studies selected as “finalists” by our judges will be featured on the Open Standards website over the coming months.

*Participatory village land use planning in Tanzania.
Future forest reserves are marked with leaves.*

The winners!

Congratulations go to case study competition winner, [*Twenty years and counting: adaptive management of Chimpanzee habitat in Tanzania*](#) by the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI).

Coming in second and third are [*Full cycle adaptive management in Australia’s arid rangelands*](#) by Bush Heritage Australia (BHA) and [*25 years of adaptive management in the Cascade Head Preserve and Salmon River Watershed, Oregon USA*](#) by the Nature Conservancy (TNC) respectively.

Chimpanzee Habitats, Tanzania

In Chimpanzee habitat that occurs in village lands above Lake Tanganyika, the Jane Goodall Institute assessed their project situation using the steps of the Open Standards and realised some of their primary assumptions were misplaced and thus some strategies employed were less effective.

Using participatory planning localised to each village community and with the aid of spatial mapping, they refocused their efforts resulting in 26% of the area being voluntarily set aside as forest reserves by villages. Now an increase in regeneration is being observed in much of these areas. This model has successfully been re-deployed elsewhere and ongoing review is revealing other factors that need to be addressed.



Boolcoomatta Reserve, Australia

Boolcoomatta, 64,000ha conservation reserve managed by Bush Heritage Australia is a formally grazed property in the arid lands of South Australia. The reserve has been through three cycles of Open Standards planning and management in ten years.

This commitment to adaptive management has yielded a consistency in effort through four different project managers, numerous stakeholders, and a diversity of approaches, all combining to document an improvement in the health of the targets identified.

Lessons learned include the importance of systematically recording project information and decisions, adequate resourcing - especially for monitoring, and periodic reviews allowing changes in definition of targets and threats.

Part of the success of the approach has been development of simple visual indicators of progress that easily communicate status and trends.

Key conservation targets	2006	2011	2016
Sandy dunes	Red	Yellow with up arrow	Yellow with dash
Rocky hills	Red	Yellow with up arrow	Yellow with up arrow
Creeks and floodplains	Yellow	Yellow with dash	Yellow with dash
Open plains	Yellow	Green with up arrow	Green with down arrow
Ephemeral wetlands	Red	Yellow with up arrow	Yellow with dash

Key threats	2008	2011	2016
Feral cats	Yellow	Yellow with up arrow	Red with up arrow
Foxes	Red	Yellow with down arrow	Green with down arrow
Rabbits	Yellow	Red with up arrow	Yellow with down arrow
Invasive weeds	Yellow	Yellow with dash	Green with down arrow
Grazing pressure	Yellow	Yellow with dash	Red with up arrow
Goats	Yellow	Green with down arrow	Green with down arrow
Soil erosion	Red	Green with down arrow	Green with dash
Climate change	Yellow	Yellow with dash	Yellow with dash

Simple visual indicators of progress in target health, Boolcoomatta Reserve

Legend		
Key conservation targets		
Status	Trend	
Very Good	Green	Significant improvement
Good	Light Green	Moderate improvement
Fair	Yellow	No change
Poor	Red	Moderate deterioration
	Orange	Strong deterioration
	White	Unknown (data lacking)

Key threats		
Status	Trend	
Low	Green	Significant reduction
Medium	Light Green	Moderate reduction
High	Yellow	No change
Very High	Red	Moderate increase
	Orange	Strong increase
	White	Unknown (data lacking)

Butterfly conservation, USA

In Oregon, efforts to maintain a population of a critically endangered butterfly have been through several cycles of conceptual modelling, each building on targeted research and management, gradually building the knowledge base and management skills of the Conservancy staff for managing this rare habitat.

Lessons learned include showing that active adaptive management can advance our understanding even at a small site with a modest budget and limited staff and can lead to the elimination of ineffective management actions, and that collaboration with key partners is an effective way to stretch resources.

Using the Open Standards planning methods provides a compelling approach for bringing diverse stakeholders to the table.



Cascade Head Preserve is located on a basaltic headland rising 365m at the mouth of the Salmon River estuary. Steep, south-facing slopes harbor remnant coastal prairie surrounded by Sitka spruce/western hemlock forest. It harbors several endemic species, including the threatened Oregon silverspot butterfly.