

Title:

Conservation by Design—Protecting Freshwater Biodiversity

Author:

Betsy Bloomfield, The Nature Conservancy

(509) 962-1333

bbloomfield@tnc.org

Summary of Presentation:

To achieve our mission, The Nature Conservancy seeks to “conserve” the diversity of life on earth. Operationally, we interpret the term “conserve” as meaning to reduce or eliminate threats to targets identified through ecoregional planning, and to maintain or improve the ecological integrity of those species, communities, or ecological systems that are the focus of our conservation efforts. Conservation by Design is the Conservancy’s global strategic plan for achieving the mission. It is implemented through the use of rigorous assessment techniques that yield ecoregional portfolios of conservation areas, which in turn set the conservation agenda for taking leveraged conservation action. The Nature Conservancy measures the success of its conservation work in two ways: (1) by determining the overall biodiversity health of a conservation area by rating the ecological integrity of selected biodiversity conservation targets, and (2) by then assessing how well we have abated the “critical threats” to biodiversity at all ecoregional portfolio sites (conservation areas).

Early portfolio designs were modeled largely on terrestrial conservation target goals. Freshwater and marine conservation actions were poorly represented in the Conservancy’s collective agenda. The Freshwater Initiative was launched by the Conservancy in 1998, and much more recently, the Marine Initiative was started, both aimed at classifying and integrating freshwater and marine systems into the evolving ecoregional and site planning methodology. The Conservancy’s recognition of the central role played by Pacific salmon both ecologically and institutionally across ecoregions has lately challenged us to examine our role in recovery efforts.