

Conserving Ecoregional Portfolios: Sequencing Priorities for Conservation Action

Ecoregional portfolios are made up of a significant number of conservation areas that can seem overwhelming when we are charged to "conserve the whole portfolio". How do we figure out what to conserve next? How should limited resources be allocated? Should resources first go to those areas that have the highest number of conservation targets? What about those places that have the last remaining population of certain species? Perhaps those places that are most threatened? What about potential for success? How do we factor in opportunity or the potential for leveraging further action? Are the most highly leveraged opportunities always the best investments? These questions have stimulated innovation by TNC programs and conservation partners to develop methods to define priorities and sequences to guide our conservation efforts.

Methods for sequencing conservation actions can help managers by organizing information about conservation project^[1] values, costs, and opportunities in a way that informs more rational and transparent decision-making. Sequencing tools can also help to identify key conservation strategies that cut across portfolios, and inform projections about staffing and funding needs. As the Conservancy begins pursuing its new ten-year goal, sequencing tools will also be useful for defining programmatic goals for conservation outcomes in the ecoregions where we work, and can support proposals for large conservation projects to the Board of Governors.

Appropriate methods for sequencing conservation actions will vary regionally, depending on available information and the purposes for setting priorities. Several programs across the Conservancy and in partner organizations have been pioneering methods for priority setting and sequencing based on ecoregional assessments, and have tailored them to their different needs and circumstances. Descriptions and examples of their approaches are presented here to illustrate potential solutions to this common challenge.

Each of the examples linked to this web page provide the following information:

- Purpose and Region of analysis
- Criteria/Methods
- Products/Outcomes
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- Suggestions for others considering a similar analysis

The examples are composed of a 2-3 page summary, a set of figures, and several have appendices. Further information about each analysis can be obtained by emailing the lead author.

This is the Global Priorities Group's inaugural effort to serve as a clearinghouse for distributing lessons learned across the organization and highlighting outstanding examples of advancing Conservation by Design. Please send comments and suggestions for improving this information and service to: jhiggins@tnc.org

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Case Studies:

	Docu ment	Figure s	Appen dices
Generating a Prioritization Method for Informing Conservation Action Across the Five Ecoregions Overlapping Arizona, USA	AZ Act ion Pri ors.doc	AZ Pri ors Fig ures.pp t	AZ Prior s Appen dix 1.do c AZ priori tyranks.x ls
Sequencing Conservation Actions in the Southern Rocky Mountains Ecoregion. Rocky Mountain Division, USA	SRM A ction P riors.do c	SRM P riors Fi gures.p pt	SRM Pri ors App endix 18 .xls
Sequencing Conservation Actions in the Southeast Division, USA	SED A ction P riors.do c	SED P riors Fi gures.p pt	SED Pri ors App endix A. doc
Identifying Priority Areas and Strategy-Based Actions in the Great Lakes Ecoregion. A Two-Phased Approach, Midwest and Canada Division.	GL Act ion Pri ors.doc	GL Pri ors Fig ures.pp t	NA

[1] A conservation project is any set of strategies that are designed to conserve biodiversity by improving ecological condition of conservation targets or abating the threats to that biodiversity. A conservation project has traditionally been at the scale of single conservation areas. However, it can target multiple conservation areas, or focus on specific targets or threats across the range of their distribution.