

Case Study: Sulawesi Ecoregional Conservation Assessment (ECA), Indonesia

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Purpose and region of analysis

Ecoregional Assessment of the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia (18 million ha) for a) determining TNC's future priorities; b) building a constituency, partnerships, and a vision for conservation in Sulawesi; c) providing comprehensive terrestrial & freshwater biodiversity information for the entire island of Sulawesi

Criteria/Methods

The Sulawesi ECA team accomplished ongoing peer review through three major avenues: the Steering Committee, the Road Shows, and ongoing expert involvement.

- a) At the outset of the ECA, the TNC team established a "Steering Committee" of non-TNC conservation professionals to help guide and promote the Sulawesi ECA (see case study in Standard 1). In addition to the additional regional representation, contacts, and other benefits brought by these six Steering Committee members, the group served as an ongoing "panel" of experts to review ECA process and products, meeting regularly throughout the process and becoming familiar with each step in the analysis. The six individuals involved were specifically chosen to complement the skills of the TNC staff in terms of expertise, and these individuals also brought with them further expert contacts who reviewed the ECA at numerous points in the process. In this ECA, the process of review, outreach, and "buy-in" were often combined through meetings and workshops to introduce and review the ECA analytical process.
- b) Two sets of large, inclusive workshops, or "Road Shows" (see case study in Standard 1), were conducted in each of six Sulawesi provinces. The first set of workshops was designed to introduce the ECA initiative, solicit input, and obtain review of the proposed methods. The second set was designed to present and review the draft portfolio. Although these workshops were not aimed exclusively at technical experts, but in large part toward government "customers" of the ECA, they were also attended by academics and other

experts who provided important technical review and comments during the workshops, both prior to the analysis and after the first draft of the results.

- c) Expert involvement was ongoing throughout the process. As the community of scientists familiar with the ecology of Sulawesi is relatively small and widely dispersed across the globe, taxonomic and other experts were contacted largely one-on-one, and face-to-face meetings or e-mail contacts were initiated for experts on a wide variety of subjects, from tarsiers to freshwater mollusks to karst formations. This provided two key benefits for the ECA: data acquisition and expert review. These experts were almost universally helpful and enthusiastic (being familiar with the conservation needs and challenges in Sulawesi, they welcomed the ECA effort). Most experts provided data or other information, and many have since become strong champions of the ECA.

Products/Outcomes

Through this participatory approach to the ECA effort, it's fair to say that most conservationists in Sulawesi have at least heard of, and in most cases, been involved in, the Sulawesi ECA in one way or another. This has resulted in as up-to-date and high-quality information in the ECA analysis as is reasonably possible; wide buy-in within the conservation community for the ECA results; and additional weight for the ECA among those toward whom our conservation outreach is targeted. As a result, the ECA has received several endorsements from key stakeholders (see case study in Standard 1), and looks to have high potential for implementation by others beyond TNC.

Tools

High-tech approaches to analysis and presentation were not always an advantage in this effort. For the purposes of understanding, input and comment, many reviewers found paper maps and hard copies much less intimidating and easier to deal with than GIS-on-screen and CDs.

Strengths and weaknesses

The major weaknesses of this approach were the extra time, effort, and, in the case of the Road Shows, money it took. One concern we had at the outset was that with so many experts involved we ran the risk of "serving too many masters." However, that problem did not occur. The strengths, as noted above, are high quality of the analysis, wide buy-in and strong credibility for persuading non-conservationists to come on board.
