

Charter for The Nature Conservancy Science Council

Description

The TNC Science Council (Council) will consist of a group of five to nine distinguished scientists, who will expand the breadth of scientific advice available to TNC's Board of Directors (Board) and staff. The members of the Council, plus additional members of taskforces to be appointed by the Council, will come from such diverse disciplines as landscape ecology, modeling and statistics, population biology, human geography, social science, restoration, climate change, fire, marine science, freshwater science, invasive species, and agriculture. Each taskforce will be composed of a combination of Council members, TNC staff, and outside experts as determined by the Council.

Topics to be Addressed by the Science Council

1. *Strategic Issues*—The Council will advise the Board of Directors and staff on science issues that arise from, the Board, the Council, staff scientists, or outside sources. For example, it could provide scientific review of TNC's approaches to its habitat goals, climate change, and compatible human use of protected areas. It will ask how scientific aspects of work by TNC staff could be improved, both in quality and in relevance to TNC's mission.
2. *Management Issues*—The Council will advise the Board on scientific aspects of management issues such as conservation-data management, the design of studies requiring expert assistance, and publishing (including web and print media). One early activity will be to conduct an assessment of progress on the recommendations of the 2001 External Science Review.
3. *Audits*—When requested by the Board, the Council will audit the Conservancy's scientific work. The Council, as a whole or through designated taskforces, will guide, review and report to the Board on the effectiveness of different conservation actions. For example, the Council could conduct a review of scientific aspects of easements, TNC preserves, land transfers to other agencies, or TNC's forestry practices. The Council will work with scientists in the Science Office and the field to develop plans, procedures, standards, and resources to evaluate the effectiveness of TNC's monitoring and management actions in conserving biodiversity.
4. *Influence and Reach*—The Council will help the Board and staff reach and engage other scientists and leading thinkers. It will help communicate the TNC's science to external audiences.
5. *Risks and Opportunities*—The Council will advise the Board and staff about risks related to key decisions about TNC's science program, about new tools and opportunities, and about ways to build upon the current strength of the TNC's work in conservation science. The Council will be alert to potential funding sources and opportunities.

Governance

The Council will be chaired by a Board member or co-chaired by two Board members who will serve as the liaison between the Board and the Council. The Council will meet twice per year: one meeting will be held in conjunction with the Board's annual meeting, the second will be hosted at a member's institution or a TNC field site.

Five to nine Council members (including a chair or co-chairs) will be appointed for three-year terms with the possibility of three-year reappointments. To ensure continuity, terms will be staggered, and initial appointments will include one- and two-year terms. The Council will conduct an annual self-assessment and report its findings to the Board at their annual meeting.

Working with senior TNC science staff, scientists on the Board will nominate new Council members. Members of the Council will be drawn from the state trustee base, former Board members, and highly qualified scientists from academia, government agencies, other NGOs, or foundations. The Council will be a source of scientists to serve as future Board members.

At least two Board members will participate on the Council. The chair(s), to be appointed by the chairman of the Board, will work with the Board and staff to raise strategic issues related to science and risk with the members of the Council. The chair's responsibilities will include setting the agenda for Council meetings, identifying issues for the Council's consideration, leading communications between the Council and the Board, presiding over meetings of the Council, and recruiting Council members and members of task forces as needed.

Staff and Management

The Council will be staffed and managed within the Conservancy's Science Office. The Chief Scientist will serve as the primary liaison between the Council and Conservancy staff; a Science Council Manager will support the Chief Scientist and the Council in all matters associated with the Council's work. The Science Council Manager will hold a M.S. or Ph.D. in a science-related field in addition to possessing the management and administrative skills required for this position.