

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leading With Science

The Nature Conservancy prides itself on being a science-based organization. Indeed, members have identified the Conservancy's science-based approach as the most appealing attribute of the organization. So, what does it mean to be science-based? Science guides the Conservancy's work in three important ways:

1. First, science helps the Conservancy decide where we work and what we are trying to accomplish.
2. Second, science guides our strategies and management actions by identifying critical threatening processes and developing management and restoration tools.
3. Finally, science can help us answer the questions of: "Are we being successful?" and, "How can we be more effective at achieving our conservation goals?"

The Nature Conservancy needs an integrated approach to science issues that currently influence our core business. Within the Great Lakes basin, the Conservancy's science expertise is extensive. Across the basin, however, the Conservancy has yet to establish a comprehensive set of conservation science research priorities. Core strategic science issues impeding effective conservation action in the Great Lakes basin are being addressed, as well as strategies for these issues.

Key Challenges, Opportunities & Questions

- Develop, communicate and initiate research projects following a coordinated Great Lakes conservation research agenda.
- Maintain essential focus on utilizing cutting-edge science to inform our conservation actions.
- Within the Great Lakes basin, take better advantage of the world-renowned academic research institutions as well as multiple organizations and agencies available.
- Develop and maintain critical basin-wide science efforts on key issues such as: climate change, invasive species, conservation planning, Great Lakes open water conservation, land use issues, and integrating conservation, economics, and social issues.

Desired Outcomes

- Coordinated Great Lakes conservation research agenda for key issues influencing the basin.
- Measures of conservation success for individual Conservancy projects as well as overall status of Great Lakes conservation.
- Full integration, coordination, and collaboration of Conservancy and partner conservation programs throughout the Great Lakes Basin.
- Establishment of key demonstration projects that effectively utilize and promote conservation projects.
- Performance reporting and public access to conservation information in order to learn from and influence key conservation partners.
- Effective working relationship with key conservation partners including academic, governmental and other conservation organizations.

Key Strategies

- Identifying and investing in a coordinated Great Lakes Research Agenda: Currently engaged in establishing core conservation science strategies to be pursued over the coming decade.
- Promoting adaptive learning and demonstrating, and refining innovations and effective conservation across a range of scales: Moving beyond the reporting of outcomes on a project-by-project basis to synthesized outcomes.
- Increasing accountability and transparency by measuring and reporting performance and increasing public access to information: Credible scientific research, accessible data and reliable monitoring are the keys to engaging communities in effective conservation across the world. In the Great Lakes basin, this means not only fully participating in Conservancy-led efforts, but also bridging the gap between our efforts and those of other Great Lakes organizations.