

Conservation Learning Networks: Matching Learning Objectives to Network Design

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Panel session: Resilience Through Multi-scalar Collaboration

Social learning can enhance our ability to address challenges to resilience across temporal and spatial scales and jurisdictional boundaries. However, as Reed et. al (2010) recently noted in *Ecology and Society*, social learning has a variety of different meanings. Rather than choose one, this paper examines conservation learning networks as a means to consider how multiple definitions of social learning can guide the design of collaborative learning networks, an approach to cross-scale collaboration that balances autonomy and control to advance collective action across scales (Goldstein and Butler 2009, 2010; Butler and Goldstein 2010).

This study compares four learning networks: the World Conservation Learning Network, the Local Marine Managed Area system in the South Pacific, Australian LandCare Networks, and the US Fire Learning Network. We consider how these networks enabled different kinds of social learning, including instrumental, tacit, and critical or “double-loop” learning, and we describe how network design and operation makes different kinds of learning possible. We suggest that appreciation of the relationship between network form and learning outcome can refine use of this innovative conservation planning and management approach to address cross-scalar challenges. We conclude with ideas for a networking learning assessment that can assist practitioners in selecting the right networking strategy to meet their needs.

References

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