



Conservation Coaches Network

Strengthening conservation strategies and practice through coaching

Welcome to *CCNet Stories* February 2025!

The stories in this newsletter show how CCNet coaches and the Conservation Standards are supporting conservation efforts across the globe. Enjoy!

Coaches Around the World



Photo (above): Reina Alegria (left) and Lluliza Melendez (right) weaving all-purpose mats from palm fronds. Comunidad Nativa Sinchi Roca, Ucayali, Peru. April 2023. Photo by Jason Houston for USAID.

Step 5 in Action: Building a Learning Community through the Conservation Enterprises Impact Lab

Story from [Megan Hill](#) (USAID) and [Kyia Leeper](#) (Environmental Incentives)

Conservation enterprises are businesses that provide economic and social incentives for

communities to transform behaviors and attitudes around environmentally harmful practices. By offering alternative livelihoods and linking sustainable economic activities with biodiversity protection, they aim to both reduce biodiversity threats, improve conservation outcomes, and enhance the wellbeing of local communities.

USAID's Conservation Enterprises Impact Lab is a unique learning series that helps teams improve the effectiveness of their conservation enterprise approaches. From May to September 2024, nine teams from seven countries across Latin America, Africa, and Asia participated in the fourth iteration of the Lab. Through peer-to-peer and team-specific sessions, USAID staff and implementing partners involved in conservation enterprise projects received tailored support to develop or refine their results chains and engage with each other to share challenges and successes. Bringing together diverse teams from different regions to share insights directly reflects Step 5 of the Conservation Standards, "Foster a Learning Environment," and encourages collaboration and adaptation to local contexts. At the end of the Lab, each team presented a poster outlining their activity's theory of change, key assumptions, and valuable lessons learned. The final webinar served as a key moment in consolidating this collective knowledge.

Here are some takeaways:

1. **Fostering the right market for the product and community:** Teams emphasized prioritizing local and national markets over international certifications, which may not be suitable for remote communities. Strategies included strengthening relationships with the private sector, like USAID/Colombia's partnership with Nutresa to integrate nature-based solutions into cacao supply chains.
2. **Building relationships along the value chain:** Successful conservation enterprises depend on strong, long-term relationships among stakeholders, including local communities, the private sector, and government. Madagascar's annual fishery meetings, where stakeholders discuss fair pricing, were highlighted as a key strategy for sustainability.
3. **Capturing and communicating the link between biodiversity and enterprise success:** Demonstrating the link between biodiversity and enterprise success through community participation in scientific monitoring—such as fish stock surveys—is essential. Teams also discussed how shifting mindsets and generating evidence can drive long-term sustainable practices.

For more information, contact [Megan Hill](#).



Photo (above): Happy team members with certificates after the training, keen to implement their new learnings. Photo by Jenny Hertzman.

Welcome New Coach, Maria Pentzel!

Story from [Annette Olsson](#) (FOS Europe), [Jenny Hertzman](#) (Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management), [Xavi Escuté](#) (FOS Europe), and team

Maria Pentzel—a Senior Marine Conservation Warden at Marine Parks and Reserves Unit in Tanzania—is now a coach in Conservation Standards, and she has already put her training into practice by coaching multiple Tanzanian marine parks in 2024. Maria is responsible for coordinating the conservation managers from the four marine protected areas of the Tanzania mainland. She has been working together with the [Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management](#) (SwAM) since 2022, building capacity around adaptive management using the framework Conservation Standards.

In 2022, Maria first participated in a Conservation Standards workshop with the Mafia Island Marine Park team (organised by SwAM and [Foundation of Success](#) - FOS Europe). Maria was engaged in applying the methods and practice of adaptive management. After transferring to the Marine Parks and Reserves Unit (MPRU) headquarters at the national level in 2023, Maria kept up work with adaptive management and provided support as a co-coach for the Dar es Salaam Marine Reserves System and Tanga Coelacanth Marine Parks and Tanga Marine Reserves System teams. To sharpen her knowledge and facilitation techniques, SwAM supported Maria's participation in a Conservation Standards coach training in Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2024 (organized by [CCNet Africa](#)).

Maria says, "So far, it has been a learning process and self-improvement. I am stepping out of my comfort zone. It is not easy to transform knowledge into action and create meaningful impact but I believe I will get there. I have been empowered to protect nature with clarity, skill and purpose through adaptive management using the conservation standards and would love to see it in my MPRU team and all relevant stakeholders in the conservation sector in Tanzania and Western Indian Ocean region as whole. My great appreciation to SwAM and FOS for their support in making this possible."

Maria has already put her training into practice. Two teams of marine managers from Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park and Mafia Island Marine Park came together for a



four-day training on adaptive management in November 2024. Maria did an impressive job, coaching the team together with Annette Olsson (FOS Europe) and Jenny Hertzman (SwAM). The teams focused on objective-setting for core values of biodiversity and human well-being of their sites. The marine managers analysed threats and prioritised their actions to fit the reality of limited staff resources. This will be a valuable input to the general Management Plans that are under revision right now. Networking between staff members of the two marine parks was especially appreciated. The atmosphere was bubbling from the learnings and exchange between the participants helped build new connections and relationships for future inspiration. Redfred Ngowo, the Warden-in-Charge of Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park reflected, “Now we really understand what adaptive management means and how we can implement this in our ordinary and concrete

management actions at our site”.

For further information, please email [Jenny Hertzman](mailto:Jenny.Hertzman) or marineparks@marineparks.go.tz.



Photo (above): Spanning three counties in West Virginia, the heavily-forested Cacapon Watershed is heavily-forested is one of the most ecologically diverse in the eastern USA. It is home to more than 50 rare and endangered species and is an important wildlife migration corridor. Plus, it's home to many people, provides clean water to millions, and is a popular recreation destination. Photo by Tyler Evert.

Conservation Planning for the Cacapon Watershed Collaborative in West Virginia

Story from [Quinn Shurtliff](#) (NaturePlan) and [Marika Suval](#) (Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust)

At the end of 2023, coaches Marika Suval ([Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust](#)) and Quinn Shurtliff ([NaturePlan](#)) teamed up to oversee the completion of a seven-year strategic conservation plan for the [Cacapon Watershed Collaborative \(CWC\)](#) in the Central Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia, USA. The Conservation Standards-based plan has been hailed as a “[blueprint for collaborative planning](#)” in the Chesapeake Bay region, and regional conservation leaders are in talks with the CWC about using their plan as a model for other watersheds.

As coaches, we are excited about the commitment of the CWC to establish an adaptive management culture for long-term implementation success. We have guided the team to hold quarterly meetings during which four established working groups report on their implementation progress, solve challenges together, and lay out priorities for the upcoming quarter. In December 2024, the CWC held its first annual pause-and-reflect meeting where partners came together to review and adapt elements of their plan, evaluate the past year’s results, and update their high-level work plan, allowing working groups to finalize 12-month work plans for the year ahead. In addition, we are working to codify the implementation process into a set of standard operating procedures and to strengthen the leadership team so that eventually the collaborative can operate smoothly without coach support.

We feel that planning and implementation success thus far has benefitted from:

1. A synergistic two-coach support system;
2. Leveraging existing evidence and experience to simplify the planning effort and avoid planning fatigue;
3. Quarterly and annual focus on relationship building among partners during team meetings;
4. Showing progress right away during quarterly meetings so the team could experience early success and inspiration.

This project is one more confirmation that the Conservation Standards is an excellent framework to facilitate landscape-level stakeholder collaboration, evidence-based planning, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation and results.

For more information, contact [Quinn Shurtliff](#) and [Marika Suval](#).



Photo (above): Comunidad Indígena Quechua Puquios Ollagüe, Región Antofagasta, Chile. Photo by Proyecto: Planes de Conservación Sitios AZE Ollagüe.

Integrating the Spirituality of Quechua Aymara and Mapuche Peoples into Conservation

Story from [Paloma Bravo Cordova](#) (Ciénaga)

As a coach in the management plan development process for Ollagüe (an Alliance for Zero Extinction site) and Cerro Illi (a Nationally Protected Asset) in Chile, I had the opportunity to witness the integration of the spiritual and intangible into planning. This unique and enriching experience not only reflected a profound connection with local Indigenous worldviews, but also enhanced conservation strategies.

The conservation approach in Ollagüe and Cerro Illi goes beyond the mere protection of natural ecosystems. The spiritual and intangible are recognized as fundamental dimensions for a sustainable and adaptive management of the territory. In Ollagüe, *Rimanakuy*—the Quechua concept of ancestral dialogue—emerges as a valuable conservation target. This ancestral practice acts as a bridge connecting people to their natural and social surroundings, fostering balance and reciprocity. It is essential for social cohesion and spiritual connection to nature. By identifying it as a conservation target, this living knowledge is safeguarded.

In Cerro Illi, *Kimün*—the ancestral wisdom of the Mapuche Williche people—is also considered a conservation target. This wisdom manifests through spiritual and ecological practices where *ngen*—the protective spirits of nature—play a central role in the preservation of natural resources. Integrating this ancestral knowledge not only protects biodiversity, but also strengthens community and cultural ties, ensuring that future generations continue practices of respect and stewardship over the territory.

The experiences in Ollagüe and Cerro Illi highlight the importance of incorporating Indigenous worldviews into conservation processes. Recognizing the spiritual and intangible as conservation pillars fosters an inclusive and adaptive approach that respects both biodiversity and cultural heritage. This holistic perspective redefines conservation challenges, demonstrating that environmental protection and cultural preservation are inseparable. The spiritual dimension enriches the cultural identity of communities and reinforces the resilience of ecosystems.

For more information, contact [Paloma Bravo Cordova](#).

This work also involved Javiera Zamora (Ollagüe) and was funded by Proyecto GEF CERO Extinction -Ministerio del Medio Ambiente

David Valdés and Antü Campos (Cerro Illi) Racolab - Ministerio Bienes Nacionales Chile.

Feature Story

Innovation and Generative AI: Technology as an Ally in Education for Conservation

Story from [Paloma Bravo Córdova \(Ciénaga\)](#) and [Eduardo Gómez Toro \(Ciénaga\)](#)

Conservation faces challenges that require effective planning and a deep understanding of the processes involved. A recent educational program focused on implementing conservation plans has empowered students and educators to tackle these challenges using the Conservation Standards framework.

This program, developed at Universidad Austral de Chile, was made possible through the collaborative efforts of Paloma Bravo, an expert educator in the Conservation Standards, and Eduardo Gómez, an instructor specializing in Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Educational Technology. Our initial approach focused on providing practical tools and participatory strategies that placed students at the center of the learning process. Among the methodologies employed, the following stood out:

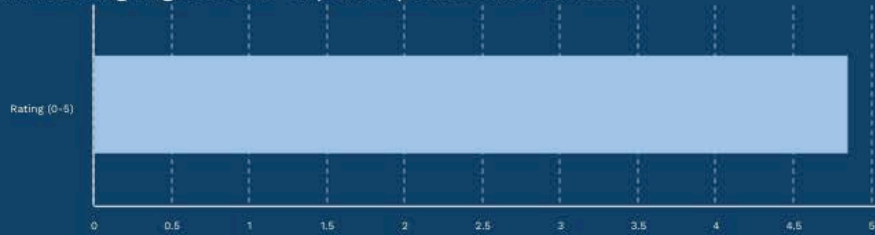
- **Project-Based Learning:** Students addressed real-world problems by applying the Conservation Standards to develop practical, contextualized solutions.
- **Gamification:** Engaging activities and role-playing games boosted motivation and commitment, making learning more accessible.
- **Case Studies:** Practical scenarios challenged students to make informed decisions, fostering critical and reflective skills.

The program achieved an average rating of 4.85/5 for overall satisfaction and 4.92/5 for its contribution to professional performance. These figures reflect a high level of acceptance of the active methodologies employed and suggest that the program's pedagogical design is highly effective and will enable students to effectively apply the Open Standards in real-world contexts.

Participants also highlighted the clarity of the instructors with feedback such as, "Professor Paloma demonstrates excellent knowledge of the subject," and "The practical approach made it easier to understand how to apply the concepts in real-life scenarios."

High Overall Satisfaction

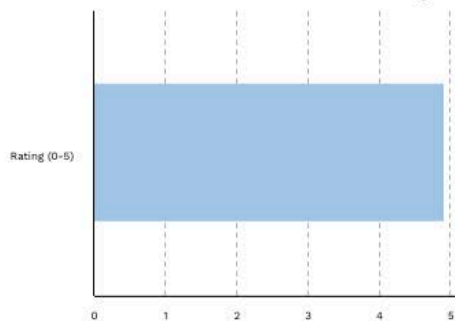
The training course received an average satisfaction rating of 4.85, indicating high levels of participant contentment.



Positive Impact on Performance

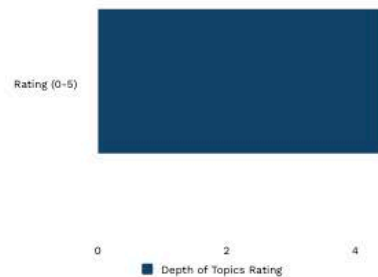
Participants indicated a strong belief that the course will contribute positively to their professional performance.

Contribution to Performance Rating



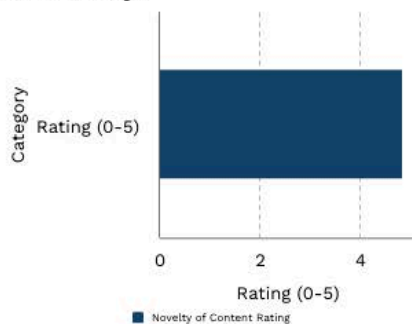
Depth of Content

The course was generally well-received in terms of its depth of content, with an average rating of 4.54.



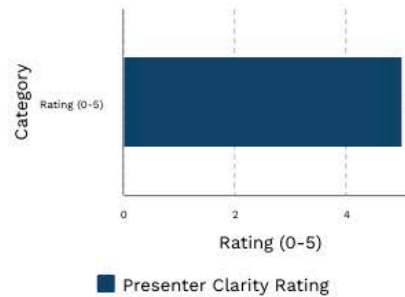
Novelty of Content

The course was found to have novel and engaging content, with an average rating of 4.85 for novelty.



Presenter Clarity

The presenters were highly praised for their clear and engaging delivery, achieving a perfect score of 5.00.



During the program's implementation, we realized that students could benefit from an additional resource to reinforce their learning independently. Based on these observations, we developed a [generative AI-based chatbot](#) designed to:

- Provide clear and accurate answers to specific questions.
- Offer interactive exercises to reinforce key concepts.
- Supply practical guides to support conservation plan development.

Currently in its beta phase, the chatbot evolves continuously, thanks to feedback gathered through an integrated form, ensuring it remains a valuable tool for the educational

community. [You can explore the chatbot here.](#)

This educational program exemplifies how combining reflective pedagogy and technology can enrich conservation education. From active methodologies to technological tools, the lessons learned reinforce the importance of exploring innovative approaches to inspire students and educators to face today's challenges with creativity and commitment.

For more information, contact [Paloma Bravo Córdova](#) and [Eduardo Gómez Toro](#).

This work was funded by the Universidad Austral de Chile.

CCNet & CMP Rally coming up in Chile!



We look forward to seeing many of you at the first joint CCNet & CMP Rally in the stunning city of Valdivia, Chile, from March 10-14, 2025. We will share news from the Rally in our next edition!

The primary aim of the Rally is to engage and celebrate the Conservation Standards community, provide opportunities for practitioners and conservation coaches to refine existing skills and acquire new ones, and strengthen the collaboration between CCNet and CMP. We have an exciting array of topics that will be covered including CS Guidance and Tools, Planning with Indigenous & Local Peoples, Conservation Technology & Skills, Protected Area Management, and more, as well as fantastic networking opportunities.

Visit the [2025 CCNet & CMP Rally website](#) to stay updated and prepare for an unforgettable experience with over 180 dedicated colleagues from 40 countries

Want to share some love and contribute to our Rally Crowdfunding campaign to enable conservation practitioners to attend? [DONATE HERE.](#)

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