SCIENCE FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE:
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) herald new role for nature conservation in international development

400 experts from 200 organizations participated to date; Number of Expert Working Groups to increase from 19 to 25 by 2018

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA/ BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, August 10, 2015 – At the opening of the 100th Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), the Science for Nature and People (SNAP) partnership announced plans to dramatically expand its activities in response to growing demand for solutions to challenges in nature conservation and human development. This demand is expected to increase further when the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are announced at the UN General Assembly in September.

The Science for Nature and People partnership was founded in 2013 by two of the world’s biggest conservation organizations, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), together with a world leading synthesis institute, the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The aim of the partnership is to rapidly develop new models, policy guidelines and conservation interventions that can support the next phase of nature conservation, by synthesizing global datasets and leveraging international collaborations. The Science for Nature and People partnership will be holding a symposium at the ESA on Tuesday, August 11th which will present more about their new approach to conservation science, under the title “Ecology, Conservation and Human Well-Being: Improving Outcomes for Nature and People.”

So far 400 experts from 200 organizations and 34 countries have participated in 19 multi-disciplinary Expert Working Groups in five key thematic areas: Water Security, Food Security, Commerce and Conservation, Climate Resilience, and Measurement & Evaluation (M&E). As the first Expert Working Groups move into implementation mode, the partnership is announcing plans to expand its activities, with a target of hosting 25 Expert Working Groups at any one time.

Craig Groves, Executive Director of the Science for Nature and People partnership, said: “No single organization has all of the answers but we live in a connected world where partnership is possible on a global basis. The Science for Nature and People approach is reinvigorating conservation science to make it more evidence-based and open, and is already delivering innovative solutions for UN agencies, governments, businesses, and civil society. We’re now looking for new partners to support the next round of Expert Working Groups, as well as to scale up our delivery internationally.”
One of the Expert Working Groups, Amazon Waters, is in the process of completing the first ever basin-wide analysis of the freshwater ecosystem, fisheries and the infrastructure in planning or already built along the Amazon River. The Group spent two years forging cross-border partnerships with government departments and civil society organizations in support of a new initiative that will roll out over the coming months.

The Coastal Defenses Expert Working Group has meanwhile developed the first global cost-benefit analysis of measures to protect coastlines from flooding, storm surge and erosion, comparing natural infrastructure such as mangroves, coral reefs and marshes, with the traditional approach of installing concrete sea walls. Group members include experts from the World Bank, Rockefeller Foundation, engineering firms, insurance companies, research institutes, financial services, universities and NGOs.

Results include an online searchable database of nature-based coastal protection projects globally, policy briefs, and guidance on different coastal protection approaches for decision makers including government ministries, and the World Bank.

Following this year’s call for proposals*, the partnership has launched two new Expert Working Groups and the scale-up of a third. The first is Biocultural Indicators across Pacific Island communities, and the second is Faith Groups & Conservation. These will meet for the first time later this year. The Evidence-Based Conservation Working Group started earlier this year and will now expand considerably. The Group has already built and analyzed a database of 1,200 studies to establish the evidence base for conservation efforts benefiting human well-being. Its interim conclusions will be presented at the EAS, and include that surprisingly little research has been undertaken to demonstrate the health benefits of nature conservation.

Groves explained: “The Science for Nature and People partnership is uncovering gaps in our knowledge that we didn’t know existed. These are gaps that conservation science must fill, and we can only do so by working with other disciplines. By removing the constraints to partnership, we can rapidly develop models that help governments, businesses, and communities protect nature and also make development more sustainable. In this way, we can transform the relevance and mandate of nature conservation, and the role of the conservation scientist.”

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About the Science for Nature and People partnership:
The Science for Nature and People (SNAP) partnership is the premier innovation engine of conservation and sustainability science — providing creative, timely and credible scientific answers to the most pressing questions about the links between nature conservation and human well-being. Visit: www.snap.is

* Any non-governmental organization, academic institution, or governmental agency is invited to apply for Expert Working Group funding through the partnership’s open annual Call for Proposals.