# WIS 6934   Strategic Planning of Biodiversity Conservation Projects (3 Credits)

Instructor:
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Course Description:

The world is in the midst of a crisis
of biodiversity loss, and
conservation practitioners have
extremely limited resources (money, time, and people) to combat this loss. To be effective with
those limited resources, conservation practitioners need to carefully choose and prioritize their
conservation strategies, monitor whether they are being effective, and adapt strategies when they
are not working. In addition, to obtain support from funders, partners, or stakeholders,
practitioners need to be able to clearly communicate their goals and strategies, demonstrate their
effectiveness, and rely on clear, transparent decision-making.
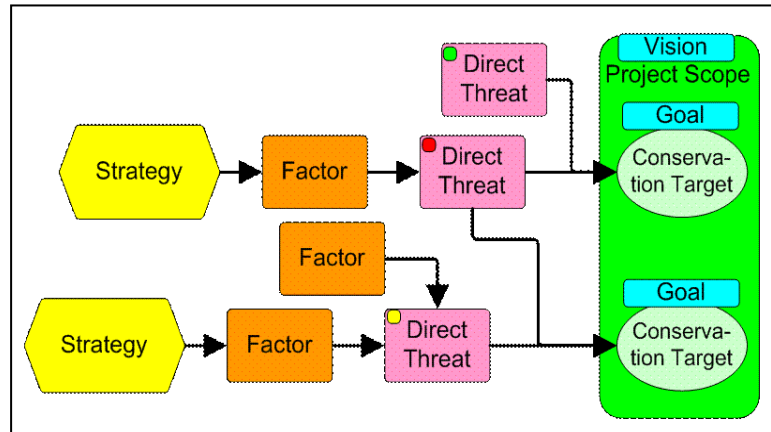
This course is designed for graduate students who are interested in applied conservation, as a
career or in terms of supporting conservation projects conducted by others (e.g., through applied
research). The goal of the course is to provide students with training and experience in a strategic
and adaptive process for planning conservation projects to meet the challenges described above.
This hands-on course will be structured around the Conservation Measures Partnership's (a
consortium of leading international conservation organizations) cycle for planning and
implementing biodiversity conservation projects. Each student team will develop a conservation
plan for an area chosen by the team and conduct peer-review of other teams' plans throughout
the semester.

Course Objectives:

 By the end of this course, students should be:

- ➢ Fluent in the language of conservation planning
- ➢ Familiar with the basic steps for planning and implementing a conservation project
- ➢ Skilled at developing clear and useful visions, goals, strategies, and monitoring
  frameworks
- ➢ Familiar with approaches and challenges associated with selecting focal biodiversity and
  human well-being targets
- ➢ Comfortable using planning tools such as conceptual models, threat assessments, and
  results chains or theories of change, and Miradi Project Planning software

Course Materials:

➢ Each student will need to bring a laptop computer (Windows or Mac) to class each week.

➢ **Prior to the second class,** each student should purchase and install a copy of the software program Miradi on their laptop. The program can be purchased and downloaded for a very reduced, student price at https://www.miradi.org/download/.

➢ Students are not required to purchase a text. However, we highly recommend the following books, as they will be excellent references for the class and many years to come:

> Salafsky, N. and R. Margoluis. 2021. Pathways to Success: taking conservation to scale in complex systems. Island Press, Washington, D.C.
>
> Groves, C. R. and E. T. Game. 2016. Conservation Planning: informed decisions for a healthier planet. Roberts and Company, Greenwood Village, CO.
>
> Groves, C. R. 2003. Drafting a Conservation Blueprint: a practitioner's guide to planning for biodiversity. Island Press, Washington, D.C

➢ Other electronic reading material will be provided on the course website or by email.

Course Structure:

Conservation planning cannot be effectively learned in the abstract. It is best learned by doing. Therefore, during the course, students will work in small groups (3-4 students) to plan conservation of a specific place in which they are interested (e.g., a protected area, a multi-use landscape, etc.). Students will use the conservation planning software Miradi to proceed through phases 1, 2, and part of 3 of the CMP Project cycle.

Course is currently hybrid, with most classes in-person on the UF campus. We will meet weekly for one 3-hour period most weeks during January-February and for two intensive 3-day workshops (Saturday-Monday) in March.

Most class periods during the course will begin with brief presentations by student groups on work completed since the last class session. These presentations will be followed by a short lecture and discussion of the next planning steps. The remaining part of the meeting will be dedicated to starting on the planning tasks to be completed prior to the next class meeting. Workshops will focus on designing strategies to address threats identified in a situation assessment developed prior to the workshop, developing theories of change that demonstrate how strategies will reduce threats, and establishing a monitoring framework to evaluate success at meeting goals. The class will end after the workshops with team "pitch presentations" of projects as if presenting to potential donors.

Topics to be covered are below. The pace at which we cover each topic will depend on the needs for your project.

Introduction. Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1A: Define the project team, scope, and vision. Form a team, choose a place, define its scope, make a map, write a vision statement.

Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1B. Compiling critical information. Create a preliminary list of direct threats to biodiversity and create a list of threatened and endangered species and ecosystems within your project area, list important jurisdictions, compile a list of stakeholders and make a map of stakeholders that demonstrates their potential to impact your vision.

Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1C: Identifying focal biodiversity and human wellbeing targets. Prepare a list of biodiversity targets and ecosystem services provided by these biodiversity targets, and a list of human wellbeing targets. Prioritize targets and place in Miradi diagram.

Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1D: Viability assessment and setting goals. Conduct viability assessment and complete goals for biodiversity and human wellbeing targets.

Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1E: Assessing threats/barriers and conceptual modeling (situation assessment). Prepare a list of direct threats, conduct threats assessment, rank threats; place threats on the conceptual model for targets.

Conceptualizing your project, Stage 1F: Identifying indirect factors that influence threats. Complete list of indirect factors (social, cultural, political factors, etc. that influence threats) and enter in Miradi. Develop preliminary conceptual model.

Workshops begin here and will include completing the situation assessment with a conceptual model (above), peer review of conceptual model, and then all the steps below.

Planning Areas, Actions and Monitoring, Stages 2A&B: Setting quantitative goals and identifying strategies. Finalize goals for all your targets; brainstorm and rank draft strategies for addressing threats. Begin working on results chains (theory of change for your strategies, i.e., your hypotheses about how the strategies will work).

Planning Areas, Actions and Monitoring: Stage 2D: Clearly defining your desired results. For your top strategies, finalize results chains and peer-review results chains of other

groups. (i.e., show how the top strategy that you have chosen to address the threats will resolve the problems; teams conduct peer review).

Planning Actions and Monitoring: Stage 2E: Defining measurable objectives and activities. For your results chains, define objectives and activities. What do you plan to accomplish? By when will you accomplish this?

Planning Actions and Monitoring: Stage 2F: Developing monitoring frameworks for demonstrating results. For your results chain, define indicators (with desired future state), describe monitoring methods, and prioritize monitoring; develop a budget; describe milestones.

 Group presentations (Final Exam): – 30 minute "Pitch" presentations to either a local community partner or a funder. Include clear milestones (short-term and long-term) of success.

Grading:

Grades will be assigned based on three criteria:
50%   Weekly in-class presentations and any submitted copies of homework assignments
40%   Participation in discussion and peer reviews
10%   Final "Exam" (Pitch presentation)

UF's required grading scale: A (94% or greater), A- (90%-93%), B+ (87%-89%), B (84%-86%),
 B- (80%-83%), C+ (77%-79%), C (74%-76%), C- (70%-73%), D+ (67%-69%), D (64%-66%),
 D- (60%-63%), E (<60%)

UF requires the following on all syllabi:

Academic Honesty, Software Use, UF Counseling Services, Services for Students with Disabilities

In 1995 the UF student body enacted a new honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. When students enroll at the university, they commit themselves to the standard drafted and enacted by students.

In adopting this honor code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the university community. Students who enroll at the university commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the honor code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the honor code is bound by honor to take corrective action. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon community acceptance and enforcement of the honor code.

The Honor Code: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: "**On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.**"

The university requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. A fundamental principle is that the whole process of learning and pursuit of knowledge is diminished by cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. In addition, every dishonest act in the academic environment affects other students adversely, from the skewing of the grading curve to giving unfair advantage for honors or for professional or graduate school admission. Therefore, the university will take severe action against dishonest students. Similarly, measures will be taken against faculty, staff and administrators who practice dishonest or demeaning behavior.

Students should report any condition that facilitates dishonesty to the instructor, department chair, college dean or Student Honor Court.

Software Use:

All faculty, staff and students of the university are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against university policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

Campus Helping Resources

Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. Both the Counseling Center and Student Mental Health Services provide confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career or academic goals, which interfere with their academic performance. The Counseling Center is located at 301 Peabody Hall (next to Criser Hall). Student Mental Health Services is located on the second floor of the Student Health Care Center in the Infirmary.

- *University Counseling Center*, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, **www.counsel.ufl.edu**
- *Career Resource Center,* CR-100 JWRU, 392-1602, **www.crc.ufl.edu/**
- *Student Mental Health Services,* Rm. 245 Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, **www.shcc.ufl.edu/smhs/**

  Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (ASAP)
  Center for Sexual Assault / Abuse Recovery & Education (CARE)
  Eating Disorders Program
  Employee Assistance Program
  Suicide Prevention Program

Students with Disabilities

The Disability Resource Center coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes registering disabilities, recommending academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services and mediating faculty-student disability related issues.

0001 Reid Hall, 392-8565, **www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/**