

Setting Conservation Priorities in the Context of Human Activity: A Perspective on What Matters in the Long Run

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Consider peer review of Plan sections that deal with the most contentious issues.

All peer reviews were not created equal, therefore, I offer a few tips:

- **Appoint someone to serve as editor.**
- **Ask the right questions:**
 - **Be specific and focus questions on the primary issues.**
 - **Open-ended questions frequently result in opinion surveys and should be avoided.**
- **Ensure completeness and transparency: Provide reviewers with copies of your data, and all cited papers and reports, including contrary information.**
- **Pay reviewers so they will spend the time looking at the issues in-depth.**
- **Accept changes or respond to each of the comments raised. Post questions and reviews online.**

At the end of the day, the toughest reviews tend to be the most useful.

Should we call it: Human disturbance of wildlife or human-wildlife interactions?

- Calling it "human disturbance" presumes a negative effect.
- Are human-wildlife interactions uniformly negative?
- While some do not, many animals habituate to predictable and non-threatening human activity.
- Recreational use can be intense but is not necessarily 24 / 7 / 365.
- When animals may be displaced by a recreational activity, it does not necessarily mean that there is a negative impact to them or to the population.
- The most important questions to ask are:
 - What are the specific cause and effect mechanisms?
 - And, is there a quantifiable risk to the population, species, or ecosystem?

Avoid potential pitfalls:

- **Avoid managing hypothetical threats as if they are real threats, thus diverting conservation resources away from far more pressing problems.**
- **Beware of over reliance on "best professional judgment" as it is no substitute for a thorough problem analysis and data.**
- **Rank conservation priorities in terms of species and habitats, and provide a defensible explanation for the rankings chosen.**
- **Plan ahead for identifying and quickly responding to emerging issues.**
- **Don't lose sight of the big picture by thinking too locally.**

Suggested reading:

Conservation in the Anthropocene: Beyond Solitude and Fragility

by Dr. Peter Kareiva, The Nature Conservancy.

<http://thebreakthrough.org/index.php/journal/past-issues/issue-2/conservation-in-the-anthropocene>