



**THE KNOWLEDGE  
NETWORK**

# **YEAR ONE REPORT**

**THE KNOWLEDGE NETWORK IS DESIGNED TO  
SUPPORT BHP FOUNDATION ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESILIENCE GSP PROJECTS TO SUCCEED.**

**BHP** | **Foundation**



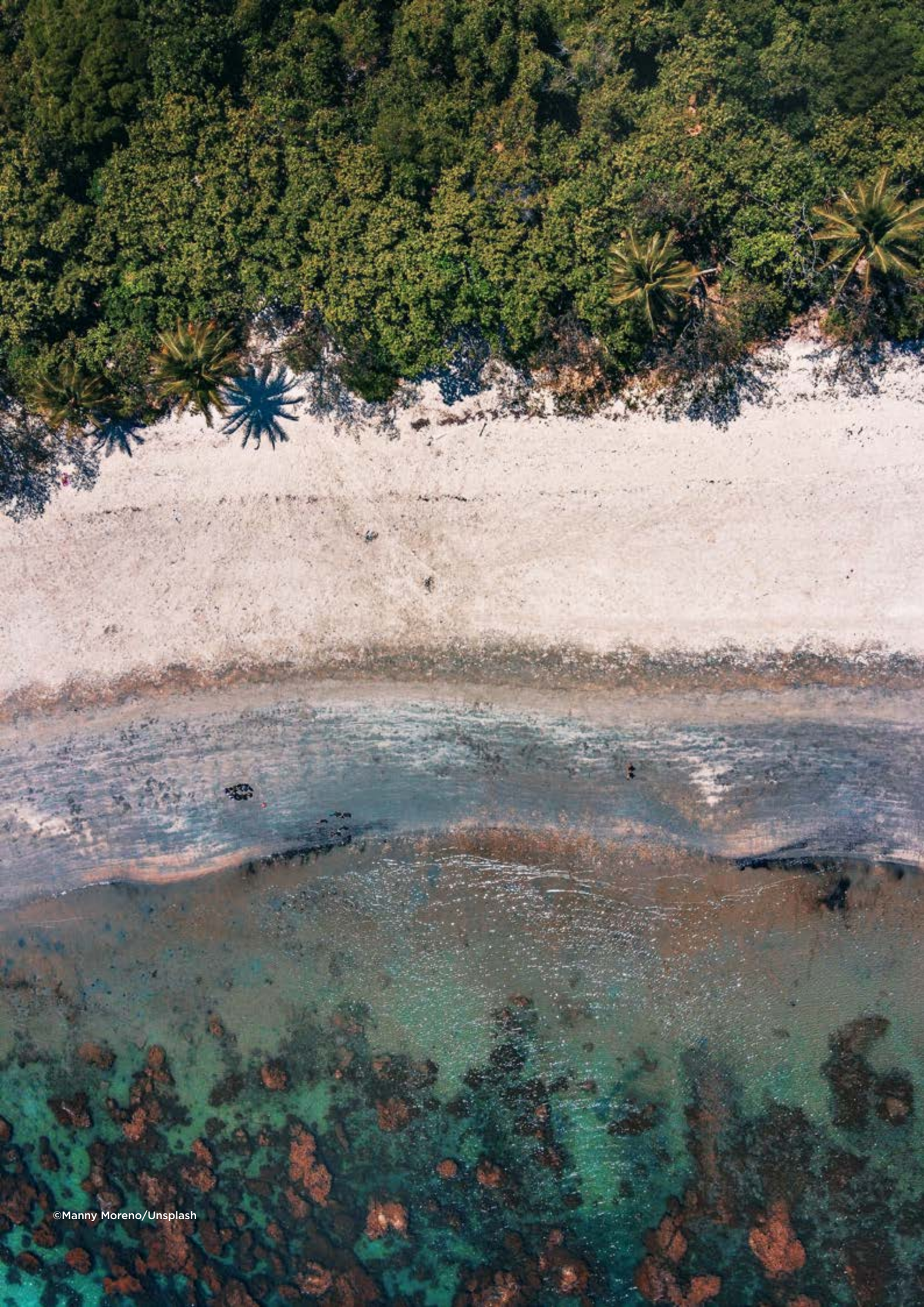
Left to right: Diego Dourojeanni, Devon Ballantyne, Ari Gorring, Benji Kenny, Mel Macleod, Diane Ballantyne, Pancho Tanques, and Percy Summers at the Indigenous Desert Alliance Conference, the cornerstone event of the Targeted Exchange. ©The Knowledge Network

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**“There’s so much to learn from each other ...  
The opportunity to get together face-to-face  
and find the synergies, build connections, and  
personal relationships is the greatest benefit”**

**Henry Tepper, Chile Conservation Corridor**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The seven projects supported by the Environmental Resilience Global Signature Program (GSP) aim to change the way we achieve conservation at landscape scale. They focus on supporting Indigenous peoples, local communities and new markets in locations as diverse as the snow-covered Boreal Forest in Canada, World Heritage Listed coral reefs, Mediterranean habitats in Chile, tropical rainforests in the Peruvian Amazon and Australia's vast desert landscape. All the Projects are bold in their ambition and complex in their nature. They are testing innovative approaches that aim to set new standards, engage multiple stakeholders through complex networks and deliver new ways of achieving durable conservation outcomes.**

The BHP Foundation invested in a 13-month pilot (pilot year) of the Knowledge Network as an innovative way to support the Projects to be successful. The pilot year commenced on 6 June 2019 with the aim of sharing knowledge, embedding learnings and weaving a connected community of practice amongst the Environmental Resilience GSP partners.

The Network model is based on a 'learning while doing' approach: testing activities, harvesting learnings and continuously improving the program design. Over the pilot year a suite of activities were codesigned and tested with Network members. To date, all project teams have actively participated in events including leading key activities:

- The 10 Deserts Project hosted the Alto Mayo and Boreal teams on the first cross project exchange;
- Chile Conservation Corridor and 10 Deserts presented at the Private Lands Conservation 2019 conference in Adelaide;
- Alto Mayo Project virtually hosted the 2020 Annual Partners Workshop from Peru; and
- Resilient Reefs and LandScale Projects led Topic Based Forums to share their strategies with other project teams.

In addition to supporting these activities, we created a database of members and external friends of the Network with over 100 contacts.

During the pilot year, six Knowledge Network newsletters - showcasing project stories and highlighting Network activities - were sent to members. These were viewed more than 1000 times by people in eight different countries.

We built and launched an online portal as a virtual space for members to follow-up on topics of common interest, share information, find people working on common challenges and post questions for group discussion.

A clear message from members during the pilot year has been 'the knowledge is in the network'. Based on this key learning, the activity plan changed early on from a focus on bringing in outside expertise to creating the space for members to share their knowledge, connect on topics of common interest, and explore future pathways together.

A second recurring theme has been the value of face-to-face connection to build relationships. Fortunately, we had the opportunity to facilitate a number of face-to-face activities before the coronavirus had a significant impact on in-person meetings.

In response to the impact of coronavirus the activity plan was redesigned with all content shifting online. The virtual program includes a suite of working groups on topics of common interest including peer to peer learning groups; a project leaders forum 'Hablemos'; and groups to codesign new activities. Given the complexity of the external environment the program continues to centre on virtual sessions, with the key objective to create space for project teams to share how they are redefining project delivery models.



# BACKGROUND

## PROJECT PORTFOLIO

The BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience GSP invests in a portfolio of seven large scale Projects that are aiming to change the way conservation is achieved. The Program strategy focuses on conserving landscapes and establishing conservation corridors; delivering environmental, cultural and socioeconomic benefit to Indigenous peoples; and delivering climate change mitigation and adaptation outcomes.

The seven Projects within the Environmental Resilience portfolio are delivered by a diverse array of partners spanning global conservation groups to local Indigenous organisations. Each delivery partner is unique and brings different capabilities, strengths and knowledge to project implementation.

## PROJECT SYNERGIES

Despite the differences there are many commonalities shared by the Projects. These synergies and points of common interest were identified by partners at the inaugural Environmental Resilience Partners Workshop held in February 2019, and include:

- **Governance** models and project strategies – All of the Projects are piloting innovative approaches that aim to set new standards, engage multiple stakeholders through complex networks and deliver new ways of achieving durable conservation outcomes.
- **Enterprise**, new markets and innovation – Many of the Projects focus on place-based economies founded on a diverse mix of local enterprise complemented by income streams from new and emerging global markets.
- **Sustainable financing** models – A common element of the Projects is a focus on long-term financial sustainability. Many of the Projects aim to shift from donor-centric funding models to financial self-sustainability.
- **Indigenous leadership**, empowerment and engagement – A number of the Projects focus on empowering Indigenous peoples by unlocking human potential and supporting community-based livelihood models. Across the portfolio of Projects, the focus on Indigenous peoples spans from project leadership to community engagement.

- **Networks**, partnerships and knowledge exchange – All of the Projects are managing multiple partners and relationships, many are facilitating local or global networks.
- **Tracking impact** – The Projects are interested in different approaches to evaluation at a local scale, and measuring how each Project is delivering on elements of the Environmental Resilience GSP Strategy.

## AIM OF THE NETWORK

The aim of the Knowledge Network is to share experiences, embed learnings and weave a connected community of practice. Over the pilot year these outcomes have been achieved by:

- **Building connection** amongst the project teams and partners;
- **Providing targeted expertise** on financing strategies and carbon and biodiversity markets to refine and shape project strategies;
- **Contributing to Project-specific knowledge** on governance, resilience planning, livelihood and enterprise models;
- **Exchanging strategies** for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks, governance models and other Project tools;
- **Sharing approaches** to Indigenous engagement in a way that strengthens leadership and empowerment; and
- **Developing joint communication opportunities** to promote the collective impact of the Projects.

During the pilot year the Knowledge Network membership was clearly defined to be a targeted community of about 100 people that includes: the seven Project teams; key people from within partner organisations; supporting organisations – EcoAdvisors and Pollination Group; members from BHP Corporate Sustainability team; and the BHP Foundation. All members have been active participants engaging in activities facilitated by the Knowledge Network.

# SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

## ENGAGEMENT

Over the pilot year all Project teams have been active participants in the Knowledge Network. Their engagement achievements include:

- The 10 Deserts hosted the first exchange;
- Alto Mayo virtually hosted the 2020 Annual Partners Workshop;
- Resilient Reefs volunteered to lead the first Sharing Project Strategy Forum;
- LandScale Initiative shared their project strategy;
- Boreal Conservation Project staff and First Nation delegates attended the exchange;
- The Chile Conservation Corridor promoted their work with 10 Deserts Project and BHP Foundation at Australia's Private Land Conservation Conference;
- EcoAdvisors and Pollination Group contributed their expert knowledge, and BHP Corporate participated at a number of the presentations; and
- All members have been kept informed of activities via regular newsletters.

Building relationships was pivotal to this early success. Participating in site visits provided local context, the opportunity to establish relationships and build trust with project teams. A consistent message from Project teams has been the value of face-to-face activities and the benefit of sessions that allow members to explore project synergies and points of connection.

To ensure the activities of the Knowledge Network are targeted and valued by members, project teams were engaged in every stage of design by:

- Identifying synergies and common points of interest at the inaugural partners workshop in February 2019 at the BHP Offices in Melbourne.
- Consultations with each project team on priority topics and activities for the Network pilot during June and July 2019.
- Providing feedback on activities via one on one conversations, interviews, surveys, and email.
- Participation in monthly and quarterly meetings with Project teams, BHP Foundation and EcoAdvisors.

- A structured evaluation session during the Annual Partners Workshop in April 2020.

The activity plan was initially informed by a series of consultations and meetings with Project teams in June and July 2019. Feedback from the consultations was incorporated into a 12 month schedule that was sent to members in mid-August 2019.

From September 2019 to March 2020 a suite of activities were tested. These included:

- A cross project exchange;
- Working groups and project strategy forums (formally Topic Based Forums);
- Program promotion; and
- A monthly newsletter.

Participation and feedback data was collected from September 2019 to March 2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of these activities.

The evaluation data was presented to members at the April 2020 Annual Partners Workshop (see [link](#) for session outline). Feedback from the participants at the Workshop included offering a suite of activities to strike a balance between structured discussion and informal catch-ups on day-to-day project operations.

The updated activity plan - to be piloted from May 2020 to April 2021 - integrates feedback from the workshop and aligns more closely with the needs of projects grappling with the impact of coronavirus. The activities will continue to be refined based on a 'learning while doing' approach.

Each activity is designed to support BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience Projects to succeed. This is achieved by designing activities that create the space for members to share experiences, embed learnings and weave a connected community of practice.

Following is a summary of each activity, each section includes a snapshot of Network member engagement with an indication of early outcomes and/or key learnings gleaned from the evaluation data captured during the pilot year.

## NEWSLETTERS

The aim of the newsletter is to build connection and knowledge sharing between members, communicate Network activities, highlight events, and showcase stories of impact.

Seven editions of the Knowledge Network newsletter have been distributed to a mailing list of 102 Network members. Each edition was viewed more than 150 times across eight countries that include Australia, Canada, USA, Peru, UK, Netherlands, Mexico and Chile, totalling more than 1000 views over the year.

Content included updates on Network activities, stories submitted by project teams, and links to more in-depth articles and visual diaries from site visits. The cross project exchange content had the most views with the exchange [visual diary](#) viewed 99 times and the [web story](#) seen by 85% of Network members. The third edition of the Knowledge Network Newsletter included two stories submitted by Alto Mayo and Chile Conservation Corridor Project teams, indicating the newsletter is read and valued by members.

The lowest rating content are the visual diaries with the first 10 Deserts site visit video viewed only 12 times. However, over the 12 months visual diary views increased and by June 2020, there have been 2,700 impressions with 158 views of the six videos on the Knowledge Network Vimeo account.

Due to travel restrictions, future opportunities for developing visual content will be driven by projects sharing stories and images from the field. This has been considered in the design of the online portal that supports sharing of photographs and other visual information.



**Reflection:** Based the increasing number of Newsletter views (relative to number of members) access to the stories hosted on external sites, and several Project teams submitting stories for inclusion, it appears the Newsletter is a valued source of information for members.

## WEB PORTAL

The aim of the Web Portal is to create a private online community where members can exchange information and the knowledge generated from activities can be stored for easy access.

In February 2020, Telstra Purple was engaged to undertake a needs analysis to identify the key problems and pain points the portal was aiming to solve. Based on the feedback they ran a design sprint to identify software options that would deliver the priority functions identified by members. Based on their analysis, a network and tech consultant was engaged in May to build the site using an online community platform called Hivebrite, and to populate it with content generated over the pilot year.

The Portal was in final stage of build in late June 2020, with key features and functions including:

- a space to share outcomes and key learnings arising from Network activities;
- a resource centre for easy access to previous newsletters, workshop and project reports, project tools and other related materials;
- chat forums that allow members to post questions and discuss issues;
- a calendar of activities that highlights upcoming Network events;
- a snapshot of each project;
- a database to profile member expertise including contact details; and
- a media centre for project visual diaries, videos and recordings of online Forums and Seminars.



**Reflection:** Initial feedback from testing the portal with small group of Network members was positive. Over the next 12 months, from July 2020 to June 2021 (**pilot year two**), data analytics on member access and use will be captured to ascertain the true value of the portal to members.

## WORKING GROUPS (FORMERLY TOPIC BASED FORUMS)

The aim of the Working Groups is to share knowledge and expertise on topics of common interest.

The initial concept centred on engaging outside experts to present on strategic topics of common interest to members. Based on feedback from members during the design phase this transformed into a peer to peer approach that draws on the knowledge that exists within project teams and partner organisations.

As a result, the approach now centres on connecting members to share knowledge and experience on topics of common interest. Over the pilot year a suite of working groups emerged based on member interests and requests.



**Reflection:** Based on increasing participation, requests from members to focus on *'the knowledge within the network'* and early outcomes, it is evident that the working groups are a highly valued activity.



Left to right: Peter See, Mel Macleod and Henry Tepper at the PLC19 event.  
© The Knowledge Network

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)

In response to a request from Network members a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) learning group was convened in October 2019. Members initially included four representatives from 10 Deserts, Resilient Reefs and Alto Mayo Projects, and EcoAdvisors. Over eight months, the membership grew to eight people and expanded to include the Boreal Conservation Project, along with additional team members from 10 Deserts and Resilient Reefs and BHP Foundation.

The focus of the group is a two-way learning space to share approaches to M&E, align reporting and consider ways to track collective impact. To date the learnings have included:

- A presentation and discussion on each projects approach to M&E.
- Focused discussion on the purpose and approach to mid-term evaluations.
- Deep dive into the strategies used by Projects to capture community voice and data.



**Reflection:** Early outcomes based on sharing approaches include:

- The adaptation of the 10 Deserts evaluation method for the Resilient Reefs Project. The approach includes capturing insights from participants at workshops via text and photograph. The Resilient Reefs team, during their Learning and Capacity Building workshop in December 2019 in Townsville, set up a WhatsApp group and encouraged participants to share images and insights with each other which were then incorporated into the visual diary of the site visit.
- The sharing of tools and strategies used with sub grantees to collect M&E data from partners and community members while in the field.

## CARBON AND BIODIVERSITY MARKETS

A Carbon and Biodiversity peer to peer group was established in January 2020 based on a request from members to share knowledge on this topic. The group has met three times and currently includes members from 10 Deserts, Boreal Conservation, Chile Conservation Corridor, EcoAdvisors and BHP Foundation. Key insights from the group were shared via the Newsletter, sparking interest from other members in the discussion which has resulted in an increase participation and group membership. There have been requests for exemplars of best practice carbon projects, simple summaries that break down the complexity of international markets and trading, and updates on movement towards establishment of a global biodiversity market



**Reflection:** Early outcomes from the exchange of ideas include:

- Input into the design of a session for annual partners workshop which didn't eventuate due to impact of coronavirus but the intent and momentum was built for future convenings;
- Collective feedback on the concept of a Marketplace for Nature currently being designed for Australian context; and
- Investigation of a carbon strategy for the Chile Conservation Corridor.

## COMMUNITY BASED ENTERPRISE

A suggestion at the Annual Partners Workshop was to hold innovation calls that would be targeted, unstructured, one off conversations to 'throw the beanbag' around on issues of common interest. The first call was held in May 2020 with a focus on community-based enterprise with members from Boreal Conservation Project, 10 Deserts and Valdivia Coastal Reserve joining the discussion.

The group had a rich discussion and agreed at the end of the session that they would continue the conversation by forming a peer to peer learning group.



**Reflection:** Despite an initial intent to encourage rapid knowledge sharing, the group provided feedback during the call that they were keen to slow down the pace and take the time to hear each other's approaches to community based enterprise. At the end of the session the group asked to keep the conversation going through a peer to peer learning group.



Left to right: Diane Ballantyne, Mel Macleod, Percy Summers and Diego Dourojeanni  
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## SHARING PROJECT STRATEGIES

The 'Sharing Project Strategies' sessions aim to draw on the expertise within the Network and consider if elements of project strategies can be adapted for use by other project teams. The forums create the space for team leaders to share their Project model, delivery strategy and the tools they are using to implement their activities. Presentations are made quarterly.

The first session was hosted by Amy Armstrong, Project Director Resilient Reefs. Over 20 people from four projects including the Chile Conservation Corridor, Boreal Conservation, Alto Mayo and 10 Deserts Projects along with EcoAdvisors, Pollination Group and BHP Corporate representatives participated in the Forum. Amy openly shared project challenges and invited feedback from Network members. Directly following the Forum, a number of emails with positive feedback were received, such as this one below:

**"I can definitely see a lot of correlations between the Resilient Reefs project and our own and while I wasn't able to formulate any pointed questions that could be answered in a couple of minutes, it was a good discussion that attendees could follow-up on individually."**

Marshall Birch, Boreal Conservation Project, Nature United

The presentation and group discussion was recorded and shared via a Knowledge Network newsletter. To date there have been 81 impressions of the recording, although no-one has watched the full one-hour video in its entirety.

The second session was led by the LandScale Initiative. Sophie Percy, Project Lead for the LandScale Initiative, presented on the ambition of LandScale and described the tools and approaches the team at Rainforest Alliance are applying to reach their goals. A similar number of participants attended, with a mix of members from Chile Conservation Corridor, Boreal Conservation Project, Alto Mayo, 10 Deserts Project, EcoAdvisors, Pollination Group and BHP Foundation participating in the session. There was a lively Q&A session and a poll run at the end of the session identified that 25% of participants could see the framework being applied in their context, with the remaining 75% responding 'maybe, but would need more information'.



**Reflection:** Based on the feedback and participation in these sessions, it appears that they are achieving their initial goal of sharing strategies between Projects. Continued monitoring during pilot year two may reveal more clearly if elements identified, in particular the strategies and tools shared during these sessions, are adopted by other Projects.

## NEW ACTIVITY WORKING GROUPS

The aim of the New Activity Working Groups is to provide feedback on the design of new activities for the Knowledge Network. The two new working groups are exploring 'Indigenous Leadership and Empowerment' and 'Team Support and Retention Strategies', as both topics were identified at the inaugural 2019 Partners Workshop as critical to the long-term success of projects.

The role of the working groups is to identify priorities and provide feedback on the design of new activities. Individuals from a cross sector of project teams and EcoAdvisors have been invited to participate in these groups based on their interests, knowledge and expertise on these topics.

These meetings started in July 2020 with a series of discussions planned for pilot year two. Insights and reflections on the effectiveness of the New Activity Working Groups as a codesign strategy will be provided in the pilot year two report.

## HABLEMOS 'CATCHUP TIME'

The aim of Hablemos 'catchup time' is to create an informal space for team leaders to connect and discuss topics of common interest. It was added as a new activity based on feedback from participants during the Annual Partners Workshop for a regular catchup between project leaders facilitated with a light touch from the Network team.

Starting in May 2020, two sessions with representatives from six of the seven projects participating, have now been held. The majority of the discussions have centred on the impact of coronavirus, how each country and partner communities are responding, and an overview of the strategies project teams are testing out as they respond and adapt to the changing circumstances.



**Reflection:** General feedback during these sessions has identified the benefit of 'knowing we are all in this together, no matter where we live in the world' and the importance of staying connected and building connection through sharing experiences during this complex time.



Left to right: Mel Macleod, Diane Ballantyne, Amanda Karst and Deb Froeb taken during a site visit to the Boreal Conservation Project in September 2019. © The Knowledge Network

## TARGETED EXCHANGE

The aim of Targeted Exchange program is to immerse team members and community partners in a project location in a 'learning journey' experience. The tailored program of activities and events are designed to highlight innovative approaches to cross project challenges, reveal synergies and inspire new solutions.

The first exchange was facilitated in November 2019. Six team members and Indigenous partners from Alto Mayo and Canadian Boreal Conservation Projects were hosted by the 10 Deserts Project. The aim of this exchange was to share approaches to Indigenous engagement in a way that strengthens leadership and empowerment.

The group engaged in a week-long learning experience that included meetings with nine Indigenous led programs delivering community-based solutions to enterprise, regional governance, women's empowerment, community-led natural resource management, and protected area management. The centrepiece of the exchange was the Indigenous Desert Alliance conference in Uluru. The exchange group was immersed for three days with 300+ people, mostly Indigenous rangers, hearing about the work of rangers on country, the opportunities and challenges of Indigenous-led conservation, and different approaches to enterprise and livelihoods that sustain people living on country.

The group identified exchanges as a valuable opportunity to see through the eyes of others and expand their vision. They recognised the opportunity to step out of the inward focus required to deliver complex projects as one of the greatest benefits: the experience provided the space and time to explore different approaches, the chance to see, touch and feel what is possible and consider new pathways. Individually, the experience provided the opportunity to understand different perspectives and stretch personal boundaries:

**“Personally, I felt like I came out of my shell. Normally I don't like to speak publicly, but since being here I've done two interviews, spoke in sessions and got up in front of 100 people and spoke up. I've had a hard time professionally doing that at home”**

Devon Ballantyne from Misipawistik Cree Nation, Indigenous Partner to Canadian Boreal Project

A collective evaluation revealed the greatest insight from the experience was that 'the cultural practices and motivations that underpin each project will enhance the resilience and long-term outcomes within these globally significant biodiverse landscapes'. Percy's reflection summaries this insight:

**“Ecosystem degradation processes also affect people through domestic violence, loss of culture and identity, loss of knowledge and poverty. Despite the different ecosystems in which our collection of projects operate – three large globally significant biodiversity hotspots that are sparsely populated but highly threatened – we share a common denominator, Indigenous people that live and understand the ecosystem. My greatest insight from the exchange is the connection of culture and land and how instrumental this is for management.”**

Percy Summers from CI Peru (Alto Mayo Project)

The Exchange [visual diary](#) is the highest rating Knowledge Network video with more than 40 views and the [web story](#) has been viewed more than 125 times. The article on exchange [learnings](#) has been opened and viewed 137 times.



**Reflection:** As agreed with participants at the end of the exchange a 12 month follow-up in November 2020 will explore how learnings from the exchange have been reflected on and adapted into project strategies. Early indications from the Alto Mayo Project team has identified that new strategies, related to women's empowerment and gender based violence, are being considered based on the insights and learnings from the exchange.

## PROGRAM PROMOTION

The aim of the Program Promotion activity is to share the collective impact of the projects supported by the BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience Program and inspire a new model for conservation globally.

In October 2019, the 10 Deserts and Chile Conservation Corridor Projects attended the Australian Private Land Conservation Conference (PLC19) in Adelaide. This was an opportunity to curate events for Network members to connect, learn from each other and showcase the BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience GSP. A plenary session at PLC19 was an opportunity for the Projects, BHP Foundation and the Knowledge Network to shape the collective impact story of the Environmental Resilience GSP.

A key insight from the Plenary 'Empowering Communities - Building Capacity from Local Through to Global Scale' session was that the people delivering these complex projects hold an incredible body of knowledge and taking the time to learn from each other is a good investment of resources.

**"There's so much to learn from each other... The opportunity to get together face-to-face, find the synergies, build connections and personal relationships is the greatest benefit."**

Henry Tepper, Chile Conservation Corridor

Curated Network events on the margins of PLC19 included:

- A dinner with Network 'friends' to explore approaches to establishing a biodiversity market. The outcome of the event is a collaboration between TNC, 10 Deserts, Trust for Nature and Pollination Foundation to facilitate a design sprint that will develop and test a biodiversity product for the Australian domestic market.
- A visit to the South Australian Museum's storage facility with 10 Deserts Project Partners to view cultural artefacts held at the facility. Rangers from Oak Valley and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands had the opportunity to reconnect with cultural materials collected at the time of colonisation. It was a highly valued activity acknowledged in spontaneous emails from 10 Deserts Project partners:

**"Just wanted to say yesterday's trip to the museum blew my mind, the stories John told, the artefacts and seeing everyone's enthusiasm was brilliant. Thank you, for organising and thank you for inviting me."**

James Theissen, Alinytjara Wilurara Natural Resources

**"We want to thank you for organising the behind the scenes trip to the SA Museum. So many amazing things to see! We were all talking about it on the way home...The men and ladies asked me to thank you for the warm welcome they received and look forward to seeing you at the IDA conference in Uluru in November."**

Philippa Mawby, Walalkara IPA Coordinator,  
Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara

Additional Program Promotion activities were to be held during the pilot year, however did not eventuate. A decision not to participate in the UNFCCC Conference of Parties was made due to limited interest from Projects in attending, political unrest in Chile and over committed end of year schedules. Additionally, abstracts submitted to the IUCN World Conservation Congress in June 2020 were not accepted. Given current complexities of coronavirus this activity will remain on hold. During pilot year two a more targeted strategy for program promotion opportunities will be explored in partnership with project teams.



**Reflection:** As evidenced by PLC19, opportunities for Projects to connect, tell the collective story and participate in curated events opens opportunities for new partnerships and generates energy and momentum for members. To achieve these outcomes requires a targeted strategy designed with projects.

## ANNUAL PARTNERS WORKSHOP

The aim of the Annual Partners Workshops is to build connection, share strategies and identify priority topics for collective action.

Planning was well advanced for the Annual Partners Workshop to be hosted by CI Peru Alto Mayo Project team in early April 2020. The convening was to be held over five days with a focus on 'learning while doing', the sessions were designed to incorporate field visits and discussion groups. A key focus was to experience the region's environment, communities and culture while reflecting on topics of mutual interest. However, in early March it became apparent the spread of coronavirus would have a significant impact on air travel and the ability to meet face-to-face.

With only a few weeks notice, the workshop was redesigned to deliver the key content online, in short sessions over three days. One advantage of the new format was that it allowed us to invite more people from each Project to attend because there were no additional travel costs or limitations on field visits; however, numbers were still limited to allow the space for meaningful discussion. More than 30 people from 11 organisations and 7 countries came together to learn from each other and share knowledge on topics of common interest.

To ensure the workshop met participant priorities the registration form asked: "what would you most like to achieve from participating in the workshop". The individual responses were grouped into common themes which included:

- Gain deeper understanding of the other projects
- Build connections with peers and find points of common interest between our projects
- Learn more about the tools, strategies and resources each project is using to achieve its aim
- Gain insight into local enterprise and conservation financing models
- Understand the collective impact of the Environmental Resilience GSP

The workshop program was designed to deliver content based on these common areas of interest and included: a snapshot of each project; identification of project synergies; conservation finance fundamentals for the Environmental Resilience Program; and feedback on the Knowledge Network activities.

A full report of the outcomes from the Annual Partners Workshop can be found [here](#).



**Reflection:** In a post-workshop survey, all participants said the workshop met all or most of their objectives. Everyone reflected that they had learnt more about the aims and objectives of peer projects and highlighted the importance of staying connected by sharing learnings with peers. This is highlighted in these statements from participants:

**"The real value of The Knowledge Network is getting together and feeling like we're a part of a bigger collective; it's a powerful and important aspect of our work."**

**"Value generated from participating in Knowledge Network activities is not restricted to direct participants – the learnings are shared within the broader project team."**

**"The Knowledge Network helps us to situate our own projects in the bigger picture and understand more broadly where conservation is heading globally."**

## NETWORK FACILITATION

The aim of Network Facilitation is to ensure the activities are aligned with Project priorities, responsive to member needs, and are communicated clearly and delivered in an efficient way.

Additional to the Knowledge Network activities, backbone facilitation and co-ordination included:

- Site visits to the 10 Deserts Project in August 2019, the Boreal Conservation Project in September 2019 and the Resilient Reefs Project in November 2019;
- Participation in scheduled Project meetings; and
- Regular catch-ups with BHP Foundation and EcoAdvisors.

Regular engagement consolidated relationships and ensured the focus of Network activities aligned with live challenges within projects. It also helped identify important milestones and celebrate success with project stories shared through the newsletter.

General coordination of activities included one on one calls and emails with Network members; scheduling and organising activities; scanning external Networks for new knowledge, points of interest and synergies; and following up with external stakeholders to tailor information and curate events specific to the needs of members.



**Reflection:** Participation in project meetings and site visits is an effective way to identify synergies and gaps as well as connect network activities to project team priorities.

Striking the right balance between codesign with over-consulting remains a continuous challenge, along with scheduling activities across multiple time zones with members who are constantly juggling competing priorities.



Exchange participants hearing from the NPY Womens Council about the painting they submitted as a visual report on the outcomes of a project funded by government. ©The Knowledge Network

# CONCLUSION

**Based on the feedback and rate of participation during the initial pilot year, the Knowledge Network is achieving its goal of sharing knowledge, embedding learnings and weaving a connected community of practice.**

One of the most important successes over the pilot year was bringing people together to share experiences on topics of common interest. This had the most impact when a member of the Network suggested we convene on a topic. For example, Hannah Cliff from 10 Deserts Project suggested we meet to share the different approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Over the year, the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group membership grew, approaches to evaluation were shared and tools were adapted for the different project contexts.

Another element critical to success has been creating a welcoming space by acknowledging that everyone has something to contribute to the discussion. Our style of facilitation focused on strengthening relationships between members, so people looked forward to participating in activities and were open to sharing their challenges. Anecdotal feedback has highlighted that membership in the Network is having an impact on projects in many different ways; a more systematic approach to assessing and capturing these impacts will provide stronger evidence for future development.

Overall, the pilot year succeeded in building connection and sense of community amongst project teams. However, there were also a number of challenges the Network team faced in the design and facilitation of activities. The most significant of these included balancing codesign with over-consulting, building connection and rapport in online meetings, and getting the rhythm of working group sessions right.

For example, we tested ‘innovation calls’ which were envisaged as fast paced ‘throwing around the beanbag’ of ideas. What we found was that people wanted to take the time to share, dive deep on some topics, and continue the conversation building on each session over time. An important technique in addressing these challenges was to be flexible by adapting and responding to feedback while continuing to maintain structure and program continuity.

What we learnt over the year is the importance of drawing out the tacit knowledge that exists within project teams. Through listening, reflecting and working together, we drew out the common themes across all projects, tailored the program to the phases of project development and designed activities to meet the needs of teams delivering complex initiatives. What we found is the power of simplicity and authenticity: the importance of creating welcoming spaces where people feel safe to share honestly, adapt and allow for unexpected moments of insight and elevate the learning that comes from the lived experiences of practitioners working in the field.

**“The different ways the projects are set up has opened my eyes about the different ways the objectives of Alto Mayo Project in partnership with Awajun can be achieved.”**

Diego Dourojeanni, Alto Mayo Project, CI Peru



The Knowledge Network is hosted and facilitated by Pollination Foundation and is designed to support the BHP Foundation Environmental Resilience Projects to succeed.

