Case Profile Series on
Land Trusts as Climate Change Solution Providers

Addressing Critical Climate Impacts through Landscape-Scale Partnerships: The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's Story of Collaboration and Innovation

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INTERNATIONAL LAND CONSERVATION NETWORK

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CASE OVERVIEW FOR EDUCATORS

Topic: Networks for Conservation

Subtopics: Land Management, Fire management, Interjurisdictional organization and governance

Timeframe: 2014-2022

Primary Learning Goals: (1) Better understand how regional collaborative networks can develop across sectors, departments, organizations, and municipalities. (2) Move through a case analysis that considers, in sequence, situation, challenge, proposed solutions, implementation, and results.

Secondary Learning Goals: (1) Gain an understanding of the key factors that can lead to a successful regional land management network. (2) Develop an understanding of how to measurable land stewardship goals and practices can be developed across jurisdictions and organizations.

Primary Audiences: (1) Land Conservation organizations and practitioners. (2) Public Land Managers and agencies. (3) Public decision-makers and regulators. (4) Staff, directors and supporters of NGOs, community organizations, (5) climate policy analysts and advocates, and (6) interested members of the general public.

Prerequisite Knowledge: General knowledge regarding climate change and the conservation of land and biodiversity

Summary: This case explores how the partnerships and networks developed among land managers at organizations around Mt. Tam have led to their collective increased impact and the proliferation of similar partnerships and networks. Through incubation in and support from the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, two regional collaborative networks have developed: One Tam, a partnership of land management organizations that are responsible for the lands surrounding Mount Tamalpais; and the California Land Stewardship Network. This case explores the factors most critical to their success, and shares learnings from these projects that can be applied across a variety of regional land conservation collaboratives. These lessons may inform the efforts of land managers, government agencies, private landowners, and NGOs operating in complex conservation landscapes globally.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Addressing Critical Climate Impacts through Landscape-Scale Partnerships: The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's Story of Collaboration and Innovation

Executive Summary

Climate change is driving historic wildfires, sea level rise, flooding, drought, and habitat loss across California, threatening the state's plant and animal species, protected habitats, and human livelihoods.[1] 2020 set the record for the greatest number of acres lost to wildfire in a single year since CalFire (the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) began tracking fire data more than 100 years ago,[2] underscoring the urgency of land management agencies and land trusts to respond to and prepare for future climate impacts. However, California's land managers are limited in their ability to pursue critical stewardship projects at the scale and speed necessary to safeguard ecosystem health by a fragmented geographic and land management landscape, and by outdated environmental regulations.

While property and organizational boundaries often define how and where natural resources are stewarded, the needs of the plants, animals, and people who depend on those resources, as well as with the climate impacts that threaten them, are interjurisdictional. In order to address the three-pronged challenge of climate change, fragmentation, and outdated systems and policies, landscape-scale partnerships can be seen as a central part of the solution. The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (the Parks Conservancy), founded in 1981 to build community support and care for national park sites throughout the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, has established itself as a leader in the landscape-scale partnership space. Under the leadership of Sharon Farrell, the Parks Conservancy's executive vice president of projects, stewardship, and science, the Parks Conservancy has led the formation of the One Tam Collaborative (One Tam) and the California Landscape Stewardship Network (CLSN), two successful partnership networks that highlight the benefits, efficiencies, and results that can be achieved through collaborative stewardship.

Built on a foundation of trust and respect, these partnerships leverage the combined skills, resources, and expertise of public and private partners to achieve economies of scale and develop collaborative solutions to California's unique land stewardship challenges. In doing so, these partnerships have established themselves as trusted voices within their communities and the land conservation and stewardship space alike and are seen as thought partners to state agency staff and policymakers throughout California.

While partnerships are highly context dependent, the success of the One Tam and CLSN has produced a number of important and transferable lessons learned for land trusts interested in landscape-scale conservation, partnership networks, and policymakers alike. Partnerships are dynamic, iterative bodies that require a significant investment of time and resources at every stage of development; the reality is that growth, organizational change, and efficiency are truly

never finished. In order to achieve the best long-term success, it is critical that partners engage in processes where they can identify common land management goals and other collective needs to focus on, while ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to address the group's shared vision.

However, as Greg Moore, founder, president & CEO emeritus of the Parks Conservancy highlights, "a vision without resources is a hallucination." The best-laid strategic plan can be stymied if the requisite resources are not in place to support development. To pave the way for successful landscape-scale partnerships, it is critical to identify innovative solutions to obstacles and challenges that limit resources or increase costs. For example, increased efficiencies can be found if public agencies reform lengthy permitting processes that delay and drive up costs of environmentally-beneficial projects, as well as streamline grant applications and regulations to ensure funding gets to critical stewardship projects as quickly as possible. With these policy changes in place, landscape-scale conservation can continue to scale up its impact and respond to climate change with the urgency and speed required to address the climate crisis.

Introduction and Context

Since 1981, the Parks Conservancy has partnered with the National Parks Service (NPS) to connect communities and help steward more than 80,000 acres across 37 national park sites in the San Francisco Bay Area. These park sites, known collectively as the Golden Gate National Parks, include the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (one of the most-visited park sites in the NPS system), Muir Woods National Monument, and the Fort Point National Historic Site. Together, these iconic landmarks attract more than 19 million visitors each year.[3,4] In addition to constituting some of the world's largest national parks in an urban setting, the Golden Gate National Parks are incredibly diverse, including more than 1,000 plant and 250 bird species, and span 19 separate ecosystems in seven distinct watersheds.[5] The popularity of these spaces, coupled with their high ecological value—the parks have been designated a "biological hotspot" by UNESCO—make these landscapes challenging and expensive to manage, a reality that inspired the founding of the Parks Conservancy.

Non-profit cooperating associations, also known as Friends Groups, have been around for nearly 100 years. The Yosemite Museum Association, for example, known today as the Yosemite Conservancy, began in 1923.[6] However, these associations did not take off at scale until the 1980s when the Parks Conservancy was formed. As Greg Moore of the Parks Conservancy explained, "at that time, the NPS really pushed the theory of partnerships, and the idea that parks needed people who cared about them and donated their time, their efforts, their talents, and their money to supporting them." Moore noted that this trend stemmed from a realization within the NPS that innovations came from outside of the government context because "non-profits could be more nimble in their approach."

In the decades since the Parks Conservancy's founding, the organization has grown from three staff members, who supported local national park sites by selling books and postcards on Alcatraz Island, to a team of more than 220. Sharon Farrell, executive vice president of projects, stewardship, and science at the Parks Conservancy, noted that the organization quickly found different ways to achieve its mission by developing programming and other initiatives that enabled its NPS partners to do their work more effectively. The cumulative effects of these efforts have been substantial; the Parks Conservancy has provided over $550 million in support to the Golden Gate National Parks, leveraged more than 275,000 volunteers, and developed innovative park stewardship and education programs that have laid a successful framework for Friends Groups across the globe.[7]

Over time, the Parks Conservancy has become known for its collaboration, innovation, and unique approach to partnerships, not only with the NPS, but with other land trusts, regional parks departments, state agencies, and more. As Greg Moore puts it, partnership models enable more inputs to enter the decision-making process, whether they be opinions, expertise, financial and political resources, or community support. These additional inputs, he explains, allow the unknown to become known, and the impossible to become possible. "It is once you have that wind in your sails that people believe they can try new things without risk and that they can work together effectively while still maintaining their organizational identity." Moore notes that once organizations begin to see what they can accomplish in partnership, the positive effects can snowball and become almost routine. "And then we ask, 'Why didn't we always do it this way?'"

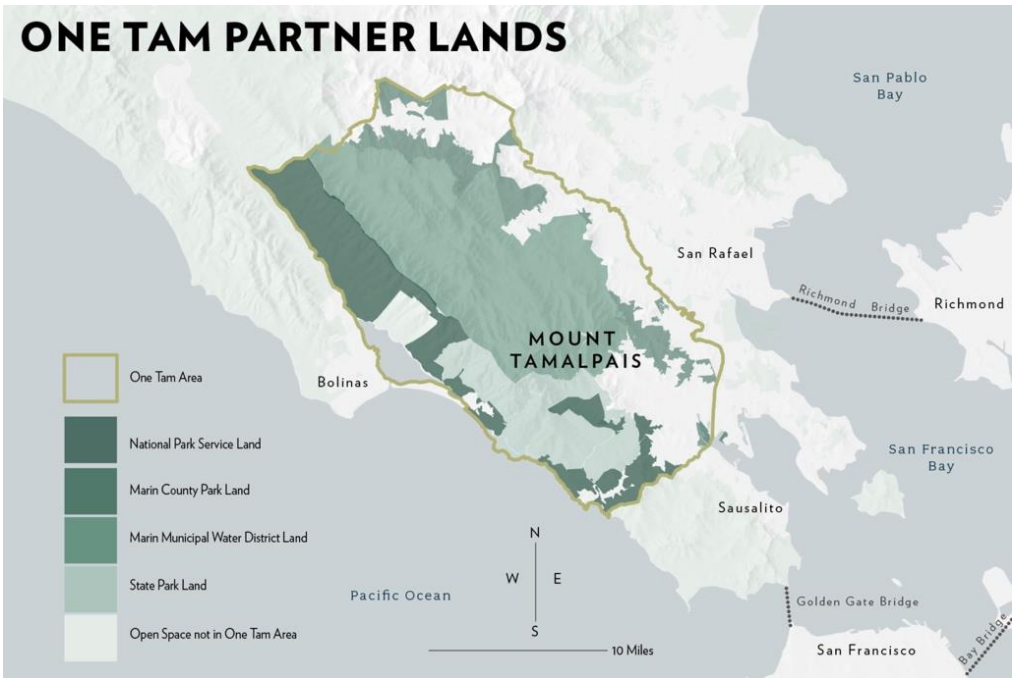

Figure 1: Map depicting the land management breakdown of lands within the One Tam partnership area. Image courtesy of the Parks Conservancy and Bay Nature Magazine, sponsored by the California Landscape Stewardship Network.[8]

While the Parks Conservancy has been involved in numerous collaborative efforts with the NPS and other local partners over the past four decades, two recent efforts spearheaded by the Conservancy—One Tam and CLSN—have made it clear that California's diverse landscapes can be managed more effectively in a collaborative, partnership-based structure as opposed to a fragmented agency-by-agency basis. One Tam was formed in 2014 to bring together the skills, expertise, and resources of the Parks Conservancy with the four land management agencies overseeing a mosaic of parcels on Marin County's Mount Tamalpais (Mt. Tam): the National Park Service, California State Parks, Marin Municipal Water District, and Marin County Parks (*Figure 1*). Mt. Tam is one of the Golden Gate National Parks best-loved components – by itself, Mt. Tam is an iconic landmark in the San Francisco Bay Area, receiving more than five million visitors each year, and providing water resources to more than 186,000 residents in Marin County.[9]

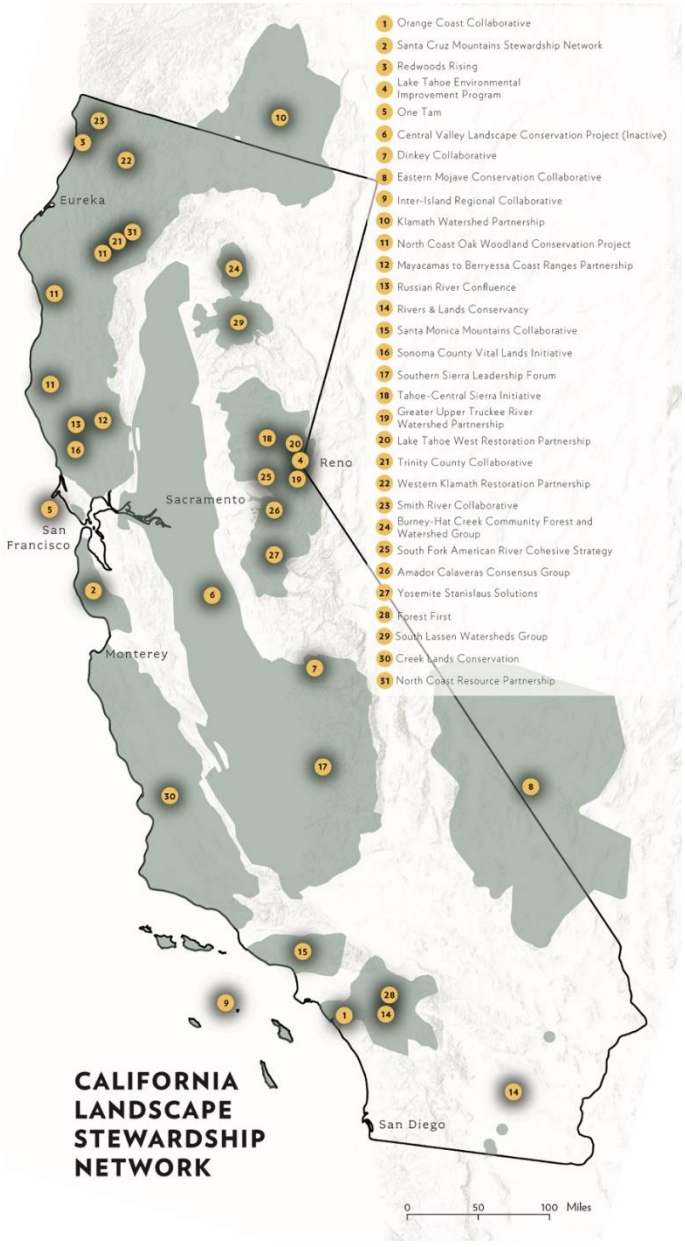

Figure 2: Map depicting membership and land distribution of California Landscape Stewardship Network Partners. Image courtesy of the Golden Gates National Parks.

By approaching stewardship at the landscape-scale, One Tam is able to help agencies work across jurisdictional boundaries, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of management of Mt. Tam's natural resources and changing landscapes.[10]

Building on the success of One Tam, the CLSN was founded in 2016 to innovate statewide solutions that reduce obstacles and barriers to working at a landscape scale, and to build support for collaborative landscape-scale management statewide. The network originally brought together six collaboratives consisting of representatives from federal, state, and local agencies; nonprofits; academic institutions; and private land managers to help change the way in which conservation and stewardship are approached by land managers and policymakers. As CLSN

describes, “although our individual home partnerships are different, we all believe that cross-boundary, landscape-scale stewardship is how we care for the places we love, enjoy, and depend upon, and how we continue to renew and sustain these places for current and future generations.”[11] Today, CLSN’s network supports more than 30 place-based collaboratives, representing more than 200 agencies and organizations.

Individuals from One Tam and CLSN interviewed by the author for this case profile (see Acknowledgements section of this case profile) routinely refer to the Parks Conservancy as the “glue” that holds these collaboratives together, by providing administrative capacity, convening agencies, setting agendas, and moving projects forward. Alison Forrestel, chief of natural resource management & science at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, explained that as a nimble nonprofit with close relationships to various land management agencies, the Parks Conservancy is “uniquely positioned” to fill this role. Not only is the Parks Conservancy adept at bringing collective visions to fruition through these various collaboratives, but in the process, it has developed a toolkit for collective, landscape-scale stewardship that can serve as a model for non-profits, conservancies, and government agencies across the United States and abroad.

Problem Statement

Within the Golden Gate National Parks, and in California more broadly, efficient and timely landscape-scale conservation is hindered by a number of social, political, and economic factors.

A Rapidly Changing Climate

In California, climate change is driving historic wildfires, sea level rise, flooding, drought, and habitat loss, threatening the state’s protected habitats, plant and animal species, and human livelihoods.[12] “That has all kinds of cascading effects to people, to the economy, to air quality, and to wildlife species,” explains Jonathan Jarvis, 18th director of the National Parks Service and executive director of UC Berkeley’s Institute for Parks, People, and Diversity. “We aren’t just having more fires, but the habitats are not coming back the way they were because it is dryer, hotter, and there are new alien species that have come in. We are basically replacing these ecosystems with new ecosystems that are probably going to be even more prone to fire than the previous ones.”

When it comes to managing the Golden Gate National Parks and other natural areas throughout California, Alison Forrestel explains that climate change stressors are the biggest challenge. “We don’t know how our ecosystems are going to shift. There are so many unknowns, and figuring out how to manage for that is very challenging.” The impacts are already being felt across the Golden Gate National Park sites. “Some of our most heavily used trails and bikeways are flooded,” says Greg Moore. “Climate change is very real and present in that way.”

While the impacts of sea level rise may be more predictable, wildfires continue to be a dynamic challenge to manage in California. The Golden State has experienced worsening wildfires over

the past decade, with 2020 setting numerous unwanted records. As of December 3, 2020, nearly 4.2 million acres had burned in 9,279 separate fire incidents. Not only was this the greatest number of acres burned in a single year in CalFire history, but more acres were burned in 2020 than in the previous three years combined.[13] "Because of the past few years of intense and frequent wildfire, people are really seeing that climate change is impacting communities in disastrous ways," says Greg Moore. The result? "There is so much anxiety from the community," explained Max Korten, director and general manager of Marin County Parks and Open Space. "There is a strong desire for us to do anything, to do something" when it comes to wildfire risk management. But as this fire season made clear, wildfires are not constrained to jurisdictional boundaries. Nor are issues of declining forest health, continued drought, and increasing water resource stress. In order to protect communities and natural areas, management strategies need to be undertaken at a landscape scale. By working at the landscape scale, networks can address this suite of ecosystem health issues through multi-benefit solutions that simultaneously address multiple factors, such as fuel reduction, mitigating fire risk, and improving long-term forest health.

Fragmentation

The population of the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area grew by 8.5 percent between 2010 and 2019, outpacing any other region in the state.[14] In the area surrounding the Golden Gate National Parks in particular, this urban development is creating a growing urban-nature interface. While this interface poses challenges for invasive species management, as plants often make their way from private urban backyards and gardens into natural protected areas, Alison Forrestel highlights that a history of development has made it difficult to manage regional changes across the landscape. "We are challenged by having a fragmented landscape with a lot of urban development. It is not one big, cohesive open space that is all connected," she explained.

Furthermore, as the ecosystem is subdivided, so too is the landscape's management structure. Kevin Wright, government and external affairs coordinator of Marin County Parks, noted that while Marin County's geography is very interconnected, particularly in the region surrounding Mt. Tam, there are federal, state, and local agencies managing different aspects of the landscape, all of which have their own unique goals and business models. "One of our key focus areas [at the County] is recreation, whereas at the Marin County Water District, it has been very clear for a long time that they are to provide water; recreation is a far secondary priority." Despite these differing agency goals, visitors to Mt. Tam see the mountain as one property and are largely unaware of jurisdictional boundaries. According to a 2018 report, it is normal for hikers and other visitors to cross agency property lines multiple times in a single trip.[15]

Additionally, management decisions made on upstream properties will have direct impact on the land and watersheds downstream. These interconnections make it difficult for land management agencies to implement mutually beneficial strategies in isolation.

Differences in agency management goals have become particularly challenging when it comes to addressing larger environmental risks, such as sea level rise and fire control. Kevin Wright highlighted that when designing sea level rise mitigation strategies, for example, it is important to consider how developing a project in one area will impact other areas nearby. Management decisions cannot be made in a vacuum; he highlighted that it is critical for agencies to consider questions, such as "If you harden [infrastructure] in one area, will currents and flooding impact a different community that may be underserved?" Alison Forrestel explained that similar questions are being raised in the wildfire prevention space, leading to a statewide push for collaborative fuel management work across boundaries.

However, despite the benefits of a landscape approach to stewardship, the bureaucratic constraints of fragmentation do not make this easy. "Thinking beyond jurisdictional boundaries is challenging for agencies," explained Forrestel. "It might not be part of their mission, or depending on the administration, it might be more or less frowned upon." Furthermore, she explained that some funding streams prevent agencies from working outside of their physical boundaries, making flexible strategies to address cross-regional issues more challenging.

Environmental Regulations

In order to improve resilience, and ensure ecosystems are able to recover from and respond to California's rapidly changing climate, large-scale restoration efforts are needed now.[16] Unfortunately, current regulatory processes, including the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970—which were enacted to guide permitting and approval of projects to ensure environmental protection—inadvertently limit agencies and conservancies from responding at the scale and speed necessary to meet the urgency of climate change. In short, regulations put in place to safeguard the environment against damaging projects are unintentionally slowing down the pace and increasing the cost of critical restoration projects. *Cutting Green Tape: Regulatory Efficiencies for a Green Environment*, a 2020 report from CLSN in partnership with the California State Natural Resources agency, found that as much as one-third of public funding for restoration projects goes to planning and permitting, and beneficial environmental projects that take weeks to implement can take years to receive permit approval.[17] In order to ensure land trusts and public agencies can respond to the needs of rapidly changing ecosystems with the necessary urgency, it is essential to streamline the permitting and regulatory compliance processes for environmentally beneficial projects.

Strategy and Implementation

"Our business model is a little different than some conservancies," says Sharon Farrell. "We don't own any land, and yet we support long term stewardship and care of the incredibly rich region here in the San Francisco Bay Area. We support endangered species monitoring and we operate four large native plant nurseries on behalf of our partner, the National Park Service." Farrell explains that over the years, the Parks Conservancy has found different ways to achieve its mission, from generating income, to fundraising, to implementing agreement-based work. Yet while the ways in which the Conservancy achieves its goals varies, Farrell highlights that when it comes to addressing the three-pronged challenge of climate change, fragmentation, and outdated environmental regulations, cooperative, partnership-based work is always at the core.

Establishing Collaborative, Landscape-Scale Partnerships

One of the key benefits of a collaborative model, according to Jon Jarvis, is that it allows problems to be tackled at the landscape scale. Property and organizational boundaries often define how we steward our natural resources, yet the needs of the plants, animals, and people who depend on those resources are not constrained within those same lines.[18] Moreover, Jarvis highlighted that the current land use divisions in the United States—residential, agricultural, endangered species habitat, industrial, and so on—are based on stable climate conditions and no longer work for today's environmental reality. "The climate is moving across the landscape and the conditions are changing. In order to accommodate that change, we have to operate, think, and collaborate at the landscape scale." This means that conservancies and government agencies cannot operate in isolation and need to deploy a separate set of communication skills.

Greg Moore explained that partnerships are able to rise to this challenge because partners, working together, assemble the toolbox that organizations and agencies can draw from when approaching their work. "Each partner has different strengths and weaknesses, expertise, and culture. By forming a team, an organization that has expertise on forest health, for example, can contribute to the whole group without each individual organization needing to hire and fund all elements." Alison Forrestel added that this element of partnerships is critical for achieving economies of scale. "The challenges we are trying to address are not individual. If we look at the long-term health of the environment and the land that is going to be stewarded, we can do the work collaboratively to limit resource burdens and have shared learning."

Building the One Tam Collaborative: The Many-Cups-of-Tea Approach

With the benefits of collaborative, landscape-scale partnerships in mind, when it came time to address the growing environmental challenges facing Mt. Tam, the question for the Parks Conservancy was not whether a partnership was the appropriate strategy to deploy so much as what would an ideal collaborative look like? To identify the best possible structure, Sharon Farrell deployed what Greg Moore refers to as "the many-cups-of-tea approach." Farrell set out

to meet with as many organizations, community leaders, elected officials, and other stakeholders as possible—mostly over tea—to listen to and discuss their goals, priorities, and hesitations about collaborating. While there was buy-in from many of the land management agencies in the Mt. Tam area, some organizations and concerned community members worried that establishing a stewardship partnership would detract from each agency's individual autonomy. "She was willing to meet with everyone, even the folks not on board," explained Moore.

Once the land management agencies and community organizations got to know Farrell, the benefits of forming a partnership felt tangible. To develop their structure, the four public agencies and the Parks Conservancy then began an 18-month, six-step partnership formation process that established a new, shared approach: "a long-term, cross-boundary collaboration to advance a collective vision for Mount Tamalpais as one connected landscape."[19] On March 21, 2014, the five partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding, making the One Tam partnership official.

Laying a Foundation for One Tam: Management, Trust, and Respect

The partners decided that as the non-profit representative, the Parks Conservancy would serve as the fundraising arm of the collaborative, supporting communication, providing infrastructure, and building the culture and accountability to ensure the partnership was able to make progress on its goals. "We started as a steering committee putting ideas up on the wall and agreeing to sort it all out together," explained Kevin Wright of Marin County Parks. Yet over time, the Parks Conservancy began providing more refined project management for One Tam, coordinating initiatives among the agencies, connecting the dots between larger conservation goals and funding opportunities, and grant writing for the collaborative. "That is largely why this has been so successful; there has been someone there to make sure we are making progress and reaching goals," said Wright. He highlighted that the Parks Conservancy's leadership provides three key functions: strategic planning, unlocking capacity, and being the motivational force behind One Tam's work. "When I think of Sharon Farrell, I think of her finding funding that can achieve things I never imagined and certainly government [agencies] couldn't have imagined."

Beyond the organizational structure provided by the Parks Conservancy, Wright says that trust and connectivity are the keys to One Tam's success. He explained that the collaborative has looked for creative ways to build human relationships, and that means avoiding meeting only around a boardroom table. "We have dinner together and get to know one another at a personal level. That is what really unlocks potential in the future." Building personal connections has enabled the collaborative to develop a seamless network among the various land management agencies on Mt. Tam.[20] By combining their skills and resources, the partners have been able to undertake cross-boundary ecological restoration projects, implement trail improvements and wildlife monitoring, develop streamlined signage across the mountain's trail systems, and roll out successful volunteer and youth-engagement programs. According to the collaborative's website,

the agencies have realized that "by working together, we can leverage our combined skills and resources to do more together than we ever could alone."[21]

Scaling Impacts: Creating the California Landscape Stewardship Network

Seeing that landscape-scale partnerships were an emerging innovation strategy in California outside of the Mt. Tamalpais region, the Parks Conservancy commissioned a four-year study of the One Tam partnership with the goals of measuring the value of landscape-scale collaboration, and identifying how to optimize collaboration for sustained impact.[22] The study resulted in a report, *Generating, Scaling Up, and Sustaining Partnership Impact: One Tam's First Four Years*. Beginning in June 2014, a team of researchers began conducting interviews, site visits, and surveys to answer such questions as: "The idea of collaboration intuitively makes sense to most people, but how do we know that the sum is truly greater than its parts?"[23] In parallel with this study, Farrell set up a series of learning exchange meetings with stewardship collaborative leaders across the state, from Eureka to Los Angeles, in late 2015 and early 2016. "When we traveled around the state, we started identifying key conversation areas that all of these different statewide partnerships were bringing up." As interviews and roundtables progressed, Farrell noted that the various organizations were identifying similar barriers and desired areas for innovation. Given the overlapping themes, the Parks Conservancy decided to bring together approximately 20 representatives from six regional stewardship partnerships—including One Tam—in 2016 to answer the question: "Is there value in forming a network of networks?" The answer, according to Farrell, was a resounding "yes."

Thus, the California Landscape Stewardship Network was formed to help advance landscape stewardship at scale across the state. Seeing the early successes of their One Tam partnership, the four land management agencies and Farrell saw this larger "network of networks" as being a vehicle for landscape-scale stewardship practitioners to share and exchange lessons learned and resources, meet collective priorities, and achieve landscape-scale efficiencies.[24] According to Kevin Wright, CLSN is able to improve the statewide stewardship community by raising a broad awareness of what everyone is tackling, and enabling partnerships to make better decisions. "A huge benefit of the network is the ability to get out of your own bubble and interact with other practitioners who are outside of your own daily routine," says Darcie Goodman Collins, CEO of the League to Save Lake Tahoe and steering committee member of the CLSN. "It's a rejuvenation for yourself."

Goodman Collins explains that, like One Tam, the CLSN has built its success on a foundation of close relationships and shared understanding between members. She noted that the Network received seed funding to convene gatherings in-person, which proved invaluable for identifying common problems that the collective could tackle together. While the COVID-19 pandemic has derailed in-person gatherings, she noted that it has encouraged the group to be creative with how they collaborate. "We originally thought that being in-person was the key to our success, but in going virtual, we realized that there was a lot we could do online, and partners have more

availability." To facilitate interaction across geographies moving forward, the CLSN plans to have a combination of in-person and virtual offerings to ensure maximum accessibility for the partners.

Results

The Parks Conservancy's work on landscape-scale conservation is having real climate benefits across multiple scales, as their partnerships enable them to work at the organizational, regional, and statewide levels.

Success at the Regional Scale through One Tam

Alison Forrestel highlights that when looking at the impacts of One Tam, the partnership has enabled agencies that were neighbors to become true partners with the ability to coordinate, think bigger, and collaborate across scales. "[The Parks Conservancy] brings capacity in terms of tackling some of the harder problems that can be challenging on the agency side." She highlights that One Tam has improved ecological resilience in tangible ways, such as by providing funding for an invasive species early-detection, rapid-response team in areas of the mountain where no agency was doing this work previously. "They're literally making the landscape more resilient by removing invasive species that have yet to establish themselves and are still at a point where they can be controlled in an economically-feasible way."

Beyond nuts-and-bolts stewardship projects, Greg Moore highlights that landscape-scale partnerships have provided the fundamental backbone for the success for short- and long-term planning at the organization, agency, and regional scales. "[One Tam] provides a blueprint for what we want to do together and how we're going to get that result." One such example comes from the collaborative's effort to leverage economies of scale to collect much-needed landscape-scale data. "We thought that LiDAR remote sensing was the approach, but our individual budgets were not big," explained Moore. Agency partners could all see the benefits of tackling this challenge comprehensively, and so in 2017, they pooled their individual resources to leverage a partnership with a local philanthropist to conduct a landscape-wide inventory. That collective response enabled the agencies to prioritize their resource allocation more efficiently, and help plan for the future impacts of climate change.[25] Similarly, using a technical methodology first developed in Sonoma County, Marin County was able to fine-tune a regional collaborative funding model that included public-private partnerships and leveraged agency resources. The benefits of this collaborative effort have been felt beyond Marin County, as San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz counties have each been able to pursue fine-scale vegetation and landcover mapping, using the business model developed in Marin County.

1,698,600 acres

*The **amount of fine-scale vegetation and landcover mapping completed** in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties using the methodology and business model deployed by the One Tam Partnership in Marin County.*[26]

With all of its partners working together, One Tam has also been able to develop a number of other mountain-wide initiatives to better engage with local residents. These initiatives range from *Measuring the Health of A Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources,* which provides a set of scientifically-based and publicly meaningful ecological indicators to help track the overall ecological health of the region, to the launch of the One Tam Youth Initiative in 2015, which offers immersive environmental education opportunities for local elementary, middle, and high school students. Both initiatives are being adapted beyond Marin County, with the ecological health framework being used in both northern and southern California. Beyond the climate and community impacts of the collaborative, the *One Tam Four-Year Partnership Study* highlighted that working together contributed to building morale in each partner agency. "The collaborative made them more energized, more productive, and happier about their work," explained Moore. Max Korten added, "we have been able to work together to change our culture, and better support people to grow within our organization."

278 percent

*I**ncrease in connectivity** between One Tam Partners and the community in the first four years of the partnership.*[27]

$6.3 Million

*The **amount of private funding raised** by One Tam in the first four years of the partnership. These funds increased capacity by enabling the hiring of new staff members and supporting priority programs and initiatives.*[28]

185 percent

*I**ncrease in weekly interactions** among One Tam partners from before the partnership was formed to year four.*[29]

Part of this culture change has been an increased focus on racial equity and environmental justice amongst One Tam agency partners. “As part of an urban community and any community, we need to be a part of the solution because we’re impacting people’s lives,” says Greg Moore. For One Tam, that means agencies working collectively to reach out to local communities that may not feel welcomed or have access to open lands in the County. “Equity had been a goal of [the County Parks Department] for several years, but we had a scattered approach,” said Max Korten. In forming an equity committee, the collaborative was able to launch a library pass program, which enables community members to reserve passes to Marin County Parks, Marin Municipal Water District sites, and Mount Tamalpais State Park sites free of charge from their local library branch.[30] According to Max Korten, the park pass was the second most utilized item in the entire Marin County Library system in 2020.

Success at the State Scale through the California Landscape Stewardship Network

Within CLSN, the geographic diversity of participants and the Parks Conservancy’s ability to engage the right people around the same table means that impacts have been at a different scale. “There is the ability for real statewide policy change,” says Alison Forrestel. According to Darcie Goodman Collins, CLSN’s growth from 2016 to 2018 aligned the organization as a key thought partner for state agencies. “We were growing ourselves at the same time that the administration was changing over, and that enabled us to bring in some high-up folks early on,” a reality which she says helped the network build momentum. One of the most impactful policy results of this partnership is the Cutting Green Tape Initiative (CGT), which CLSN undertook in partnership with the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA).

According to a 2020 report by the California Landscape Stewardship Network, CGT has been identified by the State of California as a priority initiative to increase the “pace and scale of environmental restoration,” by addressing the ways in which projects that are beneficial to the environment are slowed down by the processes and procedures that are designed to protect it.[31] As CLSN describes:

> Much like the familiar term, “red tape,” “green tape” represents the extra time, money, and effort required to get environmentally beneficial work done because of inefficiencies in our current systems. Cutting Green Tape means improving regulatory processes and policies so that this work can occur more quickly, simply, and cost-effectively.[32]

CLSN has been spearheading this effort in partnership with CNRA, hosting a series of roundtables with more than 150 conservation leaders across the state to identify key strategies for delivering restoration projects more time and cost-efficiently.[33] “Sharon Farrell and her colleagues are masterful in understanding the environmental review processes and Sharon is so perseverant,” said Greg Moore. “Because they [especially Kellyx Nelson who leads the CLSN Working Group on Regulatory Efficiencies] understood [the process] so well, they were really able to see where impediments were and could push forward.” By bringing key recommendations and a sustained

process for CGT forward, the Parks Conservancy and CLSN have shown the power of landscape-scale partnerships to influence policy and action at the state level.

Analysis and Implications

Deciding on Scale and Scope

A unique strength of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy is its ability to deliver results across a wide variety of scales. For Sharon Farrell, this comes down to a strategic understanding of goals, themes, and opportunities at multiple scales, including the local, regional, state, and national levels. "You can undertake different actions at different scales," says Farrell. "If I am going to invest my time and energy, what is the most strategic place to focus my efforts to achieve a specific collective outcome? What can you do best at a regional level versus at the state level?" Farrell notes that there is no definitive answer to this question. The question does, however, highlight the idea that One Tam and CLSN paint clear pictures of the types of initiatives that succeed at the regional and state levels, respectively, and the important interconnectivity between the two.

At regional scales, Farrell explains how it is possible to address specific land management goals and strategies in a collective way. "When you think about the purpose of partnerships for something at the scale of One Tam, you can undertake direct action on a landscape that can involve volunteers and activate staff," says Farrell. In the case of One Tam, this direct action has led to collaborative trail management, forest health and wildfire risk reduction, and community-facing programs—all specific, tangible deliverables which directly achieve the land management goals of the participating agencies. An intimate understanding of the watersheds, ecosystems, and land management units at a regional level make this type of specific, on-the-ground action possible.

Other regional partnerships within the CLSN have also seen the value of leveraging collaboration to achieve local stewardship objectives. For Redwoods Rising, a partnership between Redwoods National and State Parks and the Save the Redwoods League, collaboration has focused on the collective management of old-growth redwood stands, along with the restoration of second-growth forests.[34] By taking a landscape-scale approach to restoration, the partners are able to strategically prioritize projects that connect old growth stands as well as improve forest resilience and watershed health across the 120,000 acres of Redwood National and State Parks.[35] Shortly after formalizing their partnership through an MOU in 2018, the Redwood Rising collaborative applied for and received joint NEPA/CEQA approval to begin restoration in the Greater Prairie Creek (GPC) and Greater Mill Creek (GMC) areas. These two projects, which are estimated to take 25-30 years to complete, focus on invasive species removal, vegetation management, and removal of more than 300 miles of abandoned and failing roads within the park systems.[36] Partnership has not only encouraged the collective management of these valuable redwood forest ecosystems, but it has also leveraged the unique strengths of partners, improved efficiency, and has helped bring in additional project funding.[37]

$1 Million	**44,380 acres**
The amount of grant funding Redwoods Rising received from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation to support the development of the GPC and GMC Projects.[38]	*The total area collectively managed by Redwoods Rising partners under the joint NEPA/CEQA documents for the GPC and GMC projects.*[39]

Scaling up to the state level, Farrell explains that the opportunities for engagement change, and possible interventions should focus more on particular policy initiatives, systems change, communications, or broader scientific frameworks, as opposed to on-the-ground action. "At the state level, for example, you can think of policies, large landscape peer learning and exchange, and the ability to shape funding guidelines for statewide grants." While regional-level partnerships certainly have the opportunity to support policy change, effective, representative statewide partnerships such as the CLSN can carry the weight needed to strategically influence real systems change within landscape stewardship, as is evidenced by the success of the Cutting Green Tape Initiative. Farrell notes that although these actions may not activate a specific set of land management actions, collective state-level engagement helps pave the way for agencies and other landowners to meet their own goals of land stewardship.

The question of whether partnerships should focus on on-the-ground action versus policy and guidelines reform is largely dependent on organizational and agency goals; however, Sharon Farrell highlights that the Parks Conservancy has been grappling with how to bridge these two objectives when it comes to national-level stewardship. "We're being asked to administer new climate adaptation goals and policies. While some of those endeavors are best achieved at a regional level, they need statewide frameworks." The Parks Conservancy has been able to position itself at the intersection of these two scales by serving as the backbone to both regional and statewide networks, ensuring that work is linked, and that there is a good flow of information from the region to the state, and vice versa. "[The Parks Conservancy] is a common voice, and we can gather information and carry it across all scales." By facilitating conversations with partners, and representing the collective outcomes of network convenings, the Parks Conservancy is able to strategically inform policy changes. This role enables the Parks Conservancy to help regional initiatives achieve statewide goals, while also shaping state policy to support the regions in administering their own priority projects. Through a combination of direct action and the thoughtful convening of partners, the Parks Conservancy is able to ensure that networks are undertaking the appropriate work at the appropriate scale, which reduces redundancy and enables limited stewardship resources to be spent efficiently.

One Tam Partnership Impact Model [40]

To understand the implications of One Tam's work for the field of landscape-scale conservation more broadly, the Parks Conservancy enlisted a team of researchers to conduct a study of the collaborative's first four years. The result, a 2020 report by Amy Mickel, Ph.D. and Leigh Goldberg entitled *Generating, Scaling Up, and Sustaining Partnership Impact: One Tam's First Four Years*, outlines what Mickel and Goldberg refer to as the Partnership Impact Model. Based on the work of the One Tam Collaborative, the Partnership Impact Model identifies 11 interdependent, scalable factors that influence the delivery and value of landscape-scale collaboratives.[41] According to Mickel and Goldberg, the Partnership Impact Model is a framework that helps partnerships identify what impact looks like for them.[42]

The 11 partnership impacts (Figure 3) are differentiated between foundational, operational, and outcome impacts, and progress sequentially. The foundational impacts of connectivity and trust represent the upfront investment in relationship-building—between individuals, between organizations, and between stakeholders and community members—required to form effective partnerships, a necessity echoed by many One Tam and CLSN partners alike. According to Mickel and Goldberg, "these 'relationship-building' impacts are essential building blocks for a highly functioning partnership, as it is unlikely that the other impact classifications (operational and outcome) would be optimized or sustained without these foundational impacts."[43]

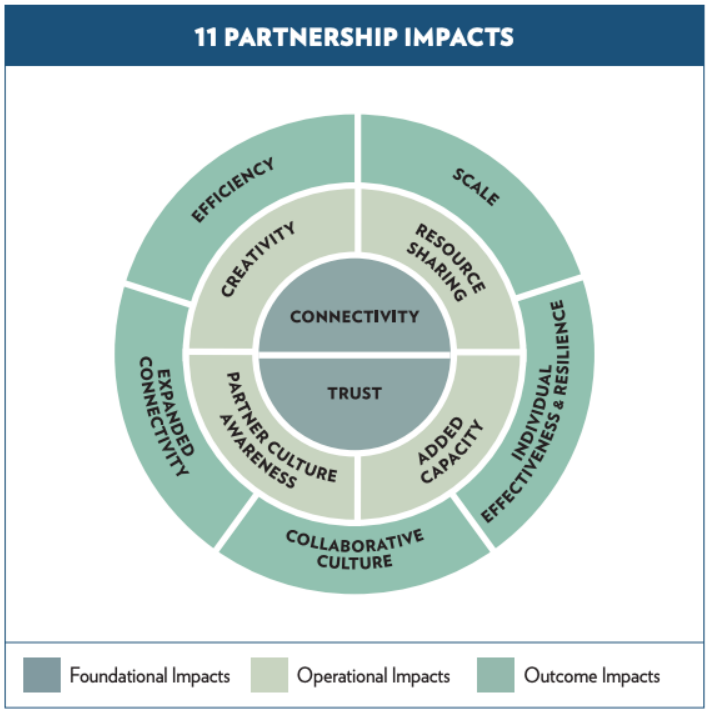

Figure 3: Graphic depicting the 11 foundational, operational, and outcome impacts as defined by the Partnership Impact Model (Image from One Tam First Four Years, page 50). The Partnership Impact Model™ was created by Amy Mickel, Ph.D. and Leigh Goldberg based on the findings from their Four-Year Partnership Study that investigated the work and impact of the One Tam collaborative. The project was funded by the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, commissioned by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, guided by One Tam Director Sharon Farrell, and supported by One Tam agency partners.

Once a foundation is established, operational impacts of **creativity**, **resource sharing**, **added capacity**, and **partner culture awareness** can begin to be realized at the organizational level, impacts which Mickel and Goldberg highlight are often "the most salient impacts generated through the partnership."[44] Finally, the combination of foundational and outcome impacts facilitate what the Partnership Impact Model refers to as outcome impacts:

efficiency, scale, individual effectiveness and resilience, collaborative culture, and expanded connectivity.[45] These outcome impacts represent the long-term goals that partnerships often identify as part of strategic planning processes, as well as those unintended benefits that often arise as a result of effective, lasting partnership structures.

Overall, the Partnership Impact Model not only elucidates the impact and structure of the One Tam Collaborative. It also outlines the sequential building blocks and impacts that partnerships can expect to invest in and receive as they progress and grow as a collaborative. As Sharon Farrell explained, the model outlines a set of tools that creates a shared language for organizations to talk about impact, training, communication, and more in the partnership space. Moreover, as Mickel and Goldberg highlight, the model reveals that "the value added of a partnership is a dynamic, iterative process,"[46] meaning that they must be cared for, maintained, and invested in over time.

Lessons Learned

Partnership building is highly context dependent, thus it is not possible to simply take one successful model and apply it to another region of the county or world. However, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's work highlights several key lessons learned for partnership-based, landscape-scale conservation. As Jon Jarvis put it, "there is not a recipe for successful partnerships, but there is a list of potential ingredients."

Invest in Relationship Building

"The fundamental ingredients to success are trust and collegiality," said Greg Moore when describing the elements of a strong partnership. He noted that while organizations may think that a robust strategic plan is enough to set their partnership on the path to success, that is simply not enough. "As the case study, [*One Tam's First Four Years*] showed, there is a time investment you need to put into relationship building; if you're not sitting side by side with someone every day, and you're trying to work across organizational cultures and missions, you need to invest in getting to know one another and building trust." *One Tam's First Four Years* underscores that this investment must happen on three distinct levels: between individuals, between organizations, and within the community. "Without the foundational impacts of connectivity and trust," the report states, "it is unlikely that partnerships will be effective in generating operational and outcome impacts."[47]

Ensure All Parties are Represented

"Getting the right people in the room at the beginning is helpful and hard to do," explains Darcie Goodman Collins. Yet putting in this work is necessary for ensuring that partnerships are truly representative of the region or field. Goodman Collins suggested engaging closely with practitioners, who are already doing the work on the ground, and are well-acquainted with the key individuals, agencies, and organizations working across a landscape. Particularly in the area

of large landscape conservation, Jon Jarvis underscored that there has been a historic underrepresentation of indigenous communities in coalition partnerships. “Native American communities have been stewards of these lands for thousands of years and have traditional values and ecological knowledge that could be incredibly helpful for how we think about large landscapes.” Yet, Jarvis notes that they are, unfortunately, rarely at the table. It is critical that coalition organizers engage with the communities and organizations that are often underrepresented in the field of conservation and excluded from the decision-making process.

Identify Essential Skills and Leadership Structure

Members of both the One Tam Collaborative and the CLSN cited the project management oversight provided by the Parks Conservancy as pivotal to the success of their partnerships. “Sharon Farrell is a mastermind and driver,” said Alison Forrestel. “Having that one person who has the capacity to keep moving things forward is so important. Where I’ve seen collaboratives struggle is when one person doesn’t have the bandwidth to hold it.” When thinking about the desired skills of a coalition linchpin, Greg Moore says that it is important to identify folks who are able and willing to get into the messy details. “You need to go all of the way from the big-picture vision to the procedures and relationships,” says Moore. “That sums up Sharon Farrell; she’s a visionary person who will smash through any toolbox she needs and reinvent it. She will always get it done.”

Farrell added that, while there is a large focus placed on the technical aspects of running a partnership, more emphasis needs to be placed on collaborative leadership -- that is, the ability and processes to engage individuals and organizations across silos and inspire them to work toward common goals.[48] A coalition leader should be able to not only model collaborative leadership, but to help train coalition partners. “These skills are necessary not only to help facilitate a partnership, but also to be an active part of a partnership,” says Farrell.

Identify Commonalities

In setting partnership goals, Sharon Farrell emphasized that it is critical to identify a shared purpose and vision, acknowledging that this can take time to fully emerge. “We have limited resources and the things we face are not individual,” Farrell explained. By focusing on the common problems and opportunities that partners are trying to address in their work, the collective can ensure that resources are being allocated efficiently to address the most pressing shared needs. Moreover, this strategy can build momentum by helping the partnership to achieve early, shared wins. The One Tam Partnership Impact Model also suggests capitalizing on “low-hanging fruit” to demonstrate success in the early stages of partnership development.[49]

Explore a Mix of In-Person and Remote Meeting Structures

When it comes to choosing a venue for a coalition kickoff meeting, Jon Jarvis noted that a neutral location can help set expectations for a horizontal leadership structure. “You need to find

a location where all parties feel equally at home," he explains. This means that opting for a third-party venue rather than the office of one of the coalition partners could be a good option if funding allows. While many coalition partners emphasized the value of in-person events for building camaraderie, many noted that statewide or other geographically dispersed coalitions may opt for a combination of in-person and virtual convenings. "The [COVID-19] pandemic has emphasized that Zoom can provide an opportunity for much broader participation," said Kevin Wright. Alternating between in-person and virtual gatherings can also provide cost savings for partnerships and enable partnerships to gather more regularly.

Diversify Funding Streams

"A vision without resources is a hallucination," says Greg Moore. When designing a collaborative partnership, it is necessary to identify funding to cover operational and administrative costs as well as programmatic initiatives. When approaching grant writing, Kevin Wright emphasized that it is critical to think beyond traditional funding sources. "In California, resource agencies tend to focus on the State for all of their funding needs." This strategy, he suggests, leaves agencies and collaboratives vulnerable in times of financial uncertainty or budget shortfalls. "Agencies need to think differently about their business plans; they need a diversified funding source," Wright urged. Seeking out foundation and other private sector funding can help broaden the resource pool. Wright notes, however, that this will require a "massive cultural shift" in many agencies, as state sources have been a primary source of funding for so long.

Steward Long-Term Partnership Health

The ongoing maintenance of partnerships does not end when partners have been selected and goals have been prioritized. According to the One Tam Partnership Impact Model, "supporting and maintaining partnership health and effectiveness are essential precursors to generating, scaling up, and sustaining partnership impact."[50] Careful attention must be paid to the operations of a partnership at all stages, from startup, to building, to maintaining and sustaining. "A partnership should not approach the impacts of trust, partner culture awareness, or efficiency as ever being 'done' or 'achieved'" say Mickel and Goldberg.[51] Finally, in order to ensure long-term stability and support, it is critical that organizations plan for long-term funding to provide staff time for partnership management. Creating a funded position within an organization or agency will ensure continuity of operations in the case of staff turnover.

Policy Recommendations

Policymakers and practitioners hoping to support collaborative, large-landscape conservation efforts should consider the following.

Utilize Partnerships and Networks as Resources for Identifying and Integrating Regional Priorities

Regional and statewide collaboratives can be excellent resources for elevating conservation policy priorities to legislators and other state agency staff members. "As creators of regional forums, we can bring voices together," says Kevin Wright of One Tam. "This helps legislators hear voices at the local and regional level; not just individual voices, but collective priorities." *One Tam's First Four Years* also highlights that by identifying the investments and resources needed to advance their collective goals, landscape-scale collaboratives are able to pitch a coherent, streamlined message to partners, public and private funders, and policymakers alike.[52] Policymakers should ensure that organizations from representative, established partnerships are seen as thought partners, consulting them when establishing new statewide programs, funding guidelines, and policies relevant to their work.

"Cut Green Tape" and Increase Permitting Efficiencies and Effectiveness

Responding to the immediacy of climate change in California and beyond requires land managers to implement urgent interventions to protect and restore landscapes. However, regulation such as NEPA and CEQA, which are designed to protect the environment, are unintentionally slowing down and adding significant expenses to environmentally beneficial projects. "When you think about managing for sea level rise and climate adaptation, you often need to go into sensitive landscapes and do things that are the exact opposite of what experts used to recommend," says Max Korten, highlighting how critical projects to protect and restore riparian areas by adding silt, for example, have led to lawsuits and lengthy approval processes. "These projects are only going to be useful for 50 years, and CEQA is going to take 5 years. How can we reduce this burden before the project you proposed is completely obsolete?"

To ensure critical ecosystems protection and restoration projects can proceed at the scale and speed necessary to respond to climate change, it is critical that policymakers take steps to increase efficiencies in the approval processes for environmentally beneficial projects. For a complete list of recommended policy changes, policymakers and regulatory agency staff should refer to the CLSN's November 2020 report, *Cutting Green Tape: Regulatory Efficiencies for a Resilient Environment*, which outlines 14 specific recommendations for making both small- and large-scale environmentally-beneficial projects more efficient and cost-effective.[53] This report, which was developed in partnership with the California Natural Resources Agency, draws on input from more than 150 stewardship practitioners and provides a comprehensive overview of opportunities for improving stewardship through regulatory change.

Ensure Grant Funding Supports Operating and Capacity Building Costs

Both One Tam and CLSN partners noted that their funding largely comes from state agencies. "A lot of [CLSN's] work from an advocacy perspective is finding public funding," says Darcie Goodman Collins, "and one of the big burdens that we talk about is funding beyond the project level." As Goodman Collins explains, large landscape conservation, particularly at the partnership level, requires extensive operating expenses in the form of project management, maintenance, and monitoring. CLSN's white paper, *Capacity Building for Collaboration: A Case Study on Building and Sustaining Landscape Scale Stewardship Networks in the 21st Century* highlights that landscape scale networks have unique capacity needs, namely dedicated leaders who can serve as "connective tissue" and facilitate ongoing coordination, problem-solving, and accountability.[54] The ongoing development and growth of partnerships is time and resource-intensive, and while these overhead costs are necessary for delivering effective landscape-scale stewardship projects, grant guidelines often restrict or prevent grantees from spending funding on these expenses. Outside of public grants, agency partners in CLSN highlighted that regulations often prevent agency staff from dedicating resources and staff time to projects outside of their jurisdictional boundaries. These restrictions make it difficult for networks to address large landscape projects and challenges collectively. To support partnerships, removing financial barriers to collaboration is key.

Increase Efficiencies and Coordination for Funding Applications

While the State of California has many different funding streams available to support stewardship projects, conflicting application guidelines, grant deadlines, limited indirect cost allocations, and reporting requirements make it difficult for projects to receive and utilize comprehensive funding. "In California, there are a number of state grants focused on sea level rise, forest health, wildlife corridor projects, etc., however many have their own grant guidelines," explained Sharon Farrell. While regional partnerships might be doing comprehensive planning that addresses all of these collectively, when it comes time to fund their work, they often need to separate their projects into subcomponents that match the different funding streams. "Now you have three different funding sources from the State, and you need to think about the timing of when these grants are all available, and whether you can even be competitive, and how you integrate them with regional and private funding" says Farrell. This type of resource-specific funding structure limits land managers from planning for and sequencing adaptation projects that climate impacts strategically, collectively, and efficiently. By creating centralized funding applications and other online tools, state agencies could coordinate funding across sectors, simplify application and reporting guidelines, and make it easier for funds to reach critical conservation projects.

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It was an honor to delve into the work and history of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. From conversations with Conservancy staff and partners, as well as representatives from the One Tam Collaborative and California Landscape Stewardship Network, it is clear that the Conservancy is a respected leader and trailblazer in the landscape-scale conservation space.

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Appendix 1: Study Group Questions

One of the several uses of this case profile is in an academic setting. Following are several questions that an instructor can pose to their study group to engage participants in the details of the narrative.

1. Is this a novel initiative? What critical components lead to the success of these two distinct networks?

2. Is the solution profiled in this case measurably effective and strategically significant for the practice of land and biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation and mitigation? Why and why not?

3. Is the solution emerging from this case transferable to other jurisdictions and will it endure?

4. Is this a large landscape solution that crosses sectors and political jurisdictions? Who are the key players from various sectors essential to the success of this initiative? What are the key technologies and organizational methodologies?

5. If you were a participating organization leader in the One Tam or CLSN projects, what would be your priorities for action in the next year? Over the next ten years?

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