



Conservation Coaches Network

Strengthening conservation strategies and practice through coaching

Welcome to *CCNet Stories* September 2024!

The stories in this newsletter show how CCNet coaches and the Conservation Standards are supporting conservation efforts across the globe. Enjoy!

Coaches Around the World



Photo (above): Conservation Standards training participants at work under the guidance of coaches Pip Walsh and Stuart Cowell. Photo by Tim Cuff.

Conservation Standards Training in Aotearoa New Zealand Helps Scale Up Collective Impact

Story from [Haojin Tan](#), CCNet Australia and Aotearoa NZ

In May 2024, The Nature Conservancy Aotearoa New Zealand (TNC NZ) and Tasman

Environmental Trust hosted a highly anticipated training on the Conservation Standards. The course saw strong participation from government agencies, conservation groups, and iwi/tribes from the Tasman-Nelson-Marlborough-West Coast region. This interest stemmed from a planning process led by TNC NZ to implement the Kotahitanga mō te Taiao (KMTT) Alliance's strategy using Conservation by Design/Conservation Standards.

The training was designed to be inclusive based on feedback from past participants and other conservation groups in New Zealand. It spanned three weeks with the first part (covering scope, vision, conservation targets, and threats) delivered through four half-day online sessions followed by a three-day in-person segment in Nelson. This format allowed greater participation from those unable to commit to a continuous five-day in-person course.

The in-person sessions sparked numerous collaborative ideas for enhancing cooperation among agencies and groups within the same landscape. The next step for the collective is to scale up their impact across the KMTT region (which covers 3.4 million hectares of the South Island), building on the significant work already being done by iwi, community groups, government agencies, and private landowners.

“The Conservation Leaders programme is an amazing example of a methodology that enables indigenous voices to be heard and put at the forefront of conservation project planning. It was useful to see how the training has been adapted in aboriginal communities through “Healthy Country Planning” and how this could be applied in an Aotearoa New Zealand context with iwi-Māori kaitiaki/stewards. I can see how this methodology and tool can support and build capability for iwi-Māori kaitiaki aspirations in the conservation space and provide effective collaborative outcomes such as those outlined in KMTT. We hope to understand how this tool can be applied and used with iwi across the motu to advance equitable iwi-led conservation and kaitiaki outcomes for Te Taiao/ Nature”

– Aneika Young, Te Ao Māori Advisor, Kotahitanga mō te Taiao /TNC

This training was hosted by TNC NZ and Tasman Environmental Trust and led by CCNet coaches Pip Walsh, Stuart Cowell, and Haojin Tan. Other support was provided by Aneika Young (Te Ao Māori advisor, KMTT/TNC) and Debs Martin (KMTT Programme Manager, TNC). Training funding was provided by the Jobs for Nature Programme.

To learn more, see the [training report on LinkedIn](#) or contact [Haojin Tan](#).



Photos (above): Local coordinators and herders work with facilitators to create a management plan for a community-based organization in Mongolia. Photos by Narangerel Naranpurev, Gungaatseren Purevsuren, and Baljnyam Batjargal.

Adapting the Conservation Standards for Mongolian Herders

Story from [Narangerel Naranpurev](#), CCNet Mongolia

In Mongolia, a new approach to conservation has been taking shape for past several years. Instead of conservation being led only by experts, local nomadic herders are now getting involved in protecting their areas. This shift to community-led conservation is exciting, but it also brings challenges—especially when it comes to creating management plans. These plans are necessary for community-based organizations (CBOs) to make formal agreements with local governors about how to protect their land. However, herders and local coordinators think that CBO management plans are the most challenging part of their job duties.

For many herders, who have never heard of a management plan before, creating one can feel overwhelming. To help, the leaders of CCNet Mongolia, Munkhchuluun Basan and Tuguldur Enkhtsetseg, translated and introduced the Healthy Country Planning approach, an adaptation of the Conservation Standards that helps guide communities in planning their conservation efforts. However, even this approach needed to be simplified further to fit the needs of Mongolian nomadic herders.

An example of the adapted approach can be seen in the Bayanbulag CBO in Dornod aimag's Bayantumen soum. There, the local coordinator, Gungaatseren Purevsuren, helped guide the herders through the planning process. Gungaatseren started by explaining what community-led conservation means and why it is important. The turning point came when the herders began to draw maps of the areas they wanted to protect. This simple activity made the process clearer and helped the herders see what natural resources and species were in their area—some of which were new even to the CBO members. As they worked on their maps, the herders decided which conservation targets were the most important to protect. They also talked about how healthy these targets were. This part of

the process was eye-opening. Because the facilitators (CCNet coaches Baljnyam Batjargal, Baasansuren Erdenebat, and Narangerel Naranpurev) had not visited every area, they relied on the herders' local knowledge. The herders shared how the land and ecosystem had changed over time. One herder remembered, "When I was a child, 20 years ago, the feather grass was so tall that if horses lay down, we couldn't see them." This kind of information is very useful for planning and helps the herders understand how quickly ecosystems can change, motivating them to protect their land for the future.

By simplifying the Conservation Standards with easy-to-understand mapping and drawing activities, we kept the key ideas while making the process easier for smaller CBOs with fewer members, fewer stakeholders, and smaller areas. This adapted approach has worked well—not just in creating management plans but also in encouraging local herders to take the lead in protecting their land. A key aspect of this approach is that local herders, coordinators, and specialists are learning together. This shared learning experience builds trust and strengthens their commitment to conservation. They are not just following instructions but actively participating in every step, making the conservation efforts more meaningful and effective. Now, 206 CBOs in Mongolia (out of 316 total) have management plans based on this simpler version of the Conservation Standards.

For more information, contact [Narangerel Naranpurev](#) and [Baljnyam Batjargal](#).



Photo (above): CCNet Europe's newly minted coaches pose with their trainers in Mount Medvednica Nature Park, Croatia, May 2024. Photo by Felix Cybulla.

New Conservation Coaches Minted at Training in Europe

Story from [Montserrat Suarez](#), CCNet Europe

In May 2024, CCNet Europe organised a coach training at Mount Medvednica Nature Park, Croatia. Twenty-two conservation practitioners from Croatia, Germany, The Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United

Kingdom attended. It was a diverse group with participants who work for NGOs, universities, government agencies, foundations, and donor organisations as well as some independent consultants.

The participants already had a good understanding of the Conservation Standards and had previous experience with planning and implementation processes. During the five days of the training, the group focused on the fundamentals of leading and helping teams use the Conservation Standards to identify strategies, develop measures, explicitly articulate and capture a team's uncertainties, and encourage ongoing assessment and learning. The participants had time to reflect about coaching and what makes a "good coach" and had the opportunity to learn and practise many different facilitation techniques that will help strengthen their skills as coaches.

It was a very busy week, packed with learning and fantastic group discussions. The participants really enjoyed meeting conservation professionals and coaches from other countries and organisations to share their experiences and learn from each other.

We welcome this new cohort of highly motivated conservation coaches and we look forward to seeing the positive impact they will have on conservation efforts in Europe and beyond.

This training was hosted by CCNet Europe, CCNet Global, and The Nature Conservancy Europe and facilitated by CCNet coaches Catherine Payne (Alcedo Conservation) and Ilke Tilders and Annette Olsson (both FOS Europe). The training was funded by CCNet Europe and CCNet Global.

For more information, contact [Montserrat Suarez](#).



Photo (above): Group of coaches who attended the 2024 European Rally in Mount Medvednica Nature Park, Croatia, May 2024. Photo by Felix Cybulla.

European Coaches Gather for Rally

Story from [Montserrat Suarez](#), CCNet Europe

At the CCNet European Rally in May 2024, a group of 42 coaches from 15 countries across Europe gathered together in beautiful Mount Medvednica Nature Park, Croatia, for mutual learning and shared fun.

Rally participants attended a wide variety of sessions on the Conservation Standards and recent developments. Participants reported that the sessions were highly relevant, informative, and applicable with a good balance between theory and practice. During the sessions, participants shared new innovations and lessons learnt, worked in teams to practise skills, and deepened their knowledge on key topics such as how to integrate climate-smart conservation practice into projects, using evidence-based learning to improve conservation, scaling projects for achieving a bigger impact, and practical tools we can use to pause and reflect and take a team full cycle.

During the Rally, we had the opportunity to welcome the new coaches who had just finished their new coach training, connect with each other, hear inspiring stories, share delicious food during our “International Buffet,” and even go on a treasure hunt! It was a fantastic event to celebrate our network and community. Participants appreciated meeting and connecting with a diverse group of knowledgeable coaches with so many different experiences. Many described it as meeting (old and new) friends and feeling like a family.

As part of the Rally program, we also held the CCNet Europe 2024 General Assembly. We had a chance to review the main achievements that happened during the last year, and the board presented the 2023 financial report. We also heard updates from the different working groups and their plans for the future.

Organising a Rally involves a lot of work and preparation. We would like to thank all the coaches who committed their time and dedication to make it happen. We really appreciate your effort! We also would like to thank The Nature Conservancy Europe for their support with the logistics of the event. Funding for this event was provided by CCNet Europe.

For more information, contact [Montserrat Suarez](#).

Feature Story

Creating Confident Conservationists: the wider benefits of Conservation Standards training

Story from [Catherine Payne](#), Alcedo Conservation

In the conservation sector, success is so often dependent on individual passion, dedication, and commitment to preserving and restoring our natural world. Thus, cultivating and strengthening our confidence and self-belief as conservationists must surely be a key ingredient to successful conservation outcomes.

As coaches, we know that the Conservation Standards (CS) help teams design and manage effective conservation projects, but can learning and using the CS also create confident, resilient conservationists? Survey results from our online training course have

inspired me to start exploring this idea.

[“Getting Started with the Conservation Standards”](#) is an accessible, engaging, and supportive online course where participants dive into the key principles and tools of the CS cycle through short presentations and practice in small groups with real-life case studies. The course also provides opportunities for coaches-in-training to practice their coaching skills.

Through participant surveys, we are seeing consistent increases in both knowledge and confidence in applying the specific topics, skills, and tools covered in the course. We also ask the participants to rate their confidence and belief in their capabilities more broadly. Summarising these data from over 100 students from 40 different countries revealed some remarkable results: the percentage of participants who reported feeling Very or Extremely Confident and Very or Extremely Capable increased substantially across five key areas (see Figure 1).

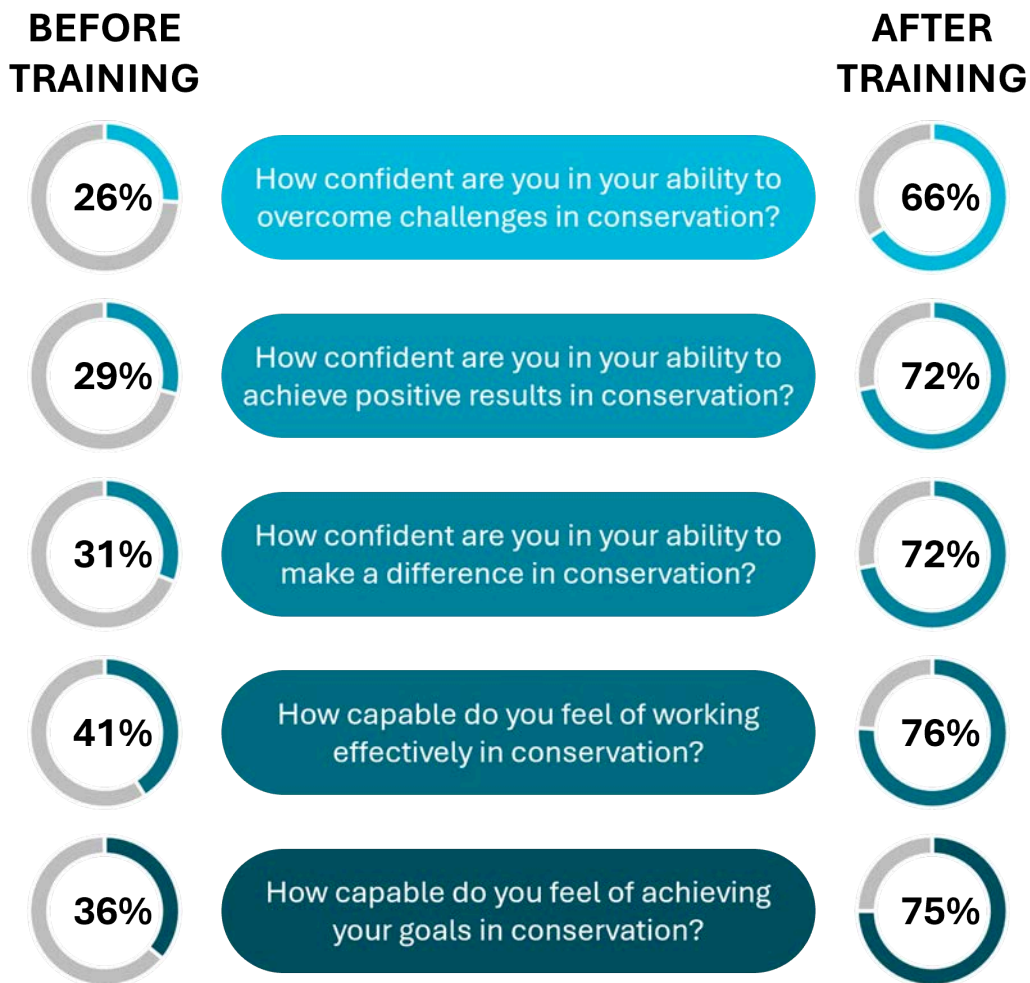


Figure 1: Percentage of participants who reported feeling Very or Extremely Confident (top three questions) and Very or Extremely Capable (bottom two questions) before the training course compared with after the training course.

This suggests learning about the CS does not just develop knowledge and confidence in using the specific tools; it also strengthens overall confidence and self-belief of conservationists. The written feedback shared by participants tells a similar story. When asked to describe the Most Significant Change they experienced because of the course, they responded with things like:

- **Feeling empowered to set their project's direction:** "I am also going to be more hands on in my approach in developing my own threat reduction strategies. Previously I relied mostly on others doing that for me but now, I am more confident in doing this myself and also helping to teach and inspire my team!"
- **Seeing the CS as a source of support during difficult times:** "Having these standards that I can go back to when it gets overwhelming (and it often gets overwhelming) gives me some comfort and quite a lot of confidence that I can implement a project properly."
- **Being inspired to become changemakers:** "I feel I now have the knowledge, and importantly confidence, to start a process of change within the organisation which will ensure projects are designed well...so that we can track progress, adapt effectively and demonstrate impact."
- **Learning and sharing with like-minded individuals:** "Realizing that the conservation community around the world is not only supportive of each other but also has many issues in common and can learn from each other."
- **A new sense of hope:** "Looking at the real case studies and the happy confident faces [of] our coaches and participants...that provides me a guarantee that we altogether can make big positive changes in conservation! And we are a real power!"

These results and stories lead me to wonder: what if the CS are providing a toolkit that conservationists can fall back on when we start to lose hope or feel lost and providing a space to gather our thoughts, communicate effectively, connect with others, and create a sense of control in a highly uncertain and challenging vocation. This has certainly been true for me, and I am sure many of you feel the same. Is it time we start more formally exploring and communicating the benefits of the CS beyond just projects to conservationists themselves?

To learn more about Alcedo Conservation and our training courses, please [visit our website](#) or email [Catherine Payne](#).

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