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"Integrated Measures of Indigenous Land and Sea Management Effectiveness: Challenges and Opportunities for Improved Conservation Partnerships in Australia"

Austin, Beau J. et al.

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As partnerships between Indigenous peoples and conservation practitioners mature, new methods are being sought to assess their effectiveness. The increasing diversity of income sources mobilised by Indigenous land and sea managers in Australia is intensifying the pressures on them to demonstrate their "effectiveness" through a range of frameworks, tools and criteria. In this review, we use Indigenous land and sea management in Australia as a lens to explore the politics and practicalities of measuring the effectiveness of Indigenous conservation partnerships. We first outline current approaches to measuring effectiveness, followed by an explanation of some of the challenges. Available literature is then supplemented with the collective knowledge and experience of the authors to identify practical and achievable ways forward. We suggest four ways by which Indigenous groups and institutional investors can work together to establish meaningful criteria for ensuring effective conservation outcomes: i) develop new mutually-agreed definitions; ii) embrace the complexity of Indigenous-conservation alliances, iii) reflect regularly and collaboratively, and iv) negotiate which indicators of effectiveness can be aggregated across large scales. Well-executed evaluations of effectiveness can be powerful tools for enhancing conservation that conforms to local Indigenous values, facilitates adaptive management, and strengthens relationships between investors and Indigenous groups. By focusing on principles, process, flexibility and trust, generative "good faith" approaches have the potential to support win-win outcomes for people and the environment and contribute significantly to global conservation and sustainability targets. (Text from authors' abstract)

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Macdonald, Marc Hockings, David G. Hinchley, Fergus B. McDonald, Colleen Corrigan, Rod Kennett, Hmalan Hunter-Xenie, and Stephen T. Garnett 2018. *Conservation & Society* is available online only and is published under a Creative Commons license (CC BY 2.5).

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