

Investing in Landscape-Scale Stewardship:

THE TAMALPAIS LANDS COLLABORATIVE CASE STUDY 3



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Faced with complex challenges such as climate change and uncertain funding mechanisms, many resource managers are seeking new paradigms for managing, stewarding, and sustaining our public lands. Landscape-scale stewardship is one of those new paradigms. There is a growing consensus within the national conservation community about the importance of thinking, planning, and acting at the landscape scale. According to one expert in the field, there are likely at least 500 landscape-scale initiatives underway in the country today.¹ Looking ahead, the United States is expected to see an emergence of more nascent landscape-scale partnerships, as well as deepening levels of collaboration and integration among existing partners.²

What exactly is landscape-scale stewardship? As one case study interviewee shared, the core philosophy of landscape-scale conservation and stewardship is recognizing that working with adjacent public lands “produces a larger benefit by virtue of their contiguity.” According to *Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action*, landscape conservation initiatives can be defined by three criteria: 1) multi-jurisdictional—conservation goals cut across political and jurisdictional boundaries; 2) multi-purpose—they address a mix of related issues, such as environment, economy, and community; and 3) multi-stakeholder—they include public, private, and nongovernmental actors.³

While these criteria help define what is or is not considered a landscape-scale initiative, it is important to highlight that initiatives meeting these criteria range dramatically in size from less than 10,000 acres to nearly 500 million acres.⁴ As some leaders in the field have proposed, the emerging movement of landscape-scale collaboration is less about the geographic scale of particular initiatives and more about a transformative shift in land management mindset that involves much greater consideration of resources outside a single landowner’s jurisdiction.⁵

Despite the growing consensus of the crucial need to adopt this landscape-scale paradigm, the field is still emerging. While regional planning for land acquisitions has been a more common practice for many years, successful examples of direct action to steward protected lands on a bigger, landscape scale—sustained over time through projects and programming across property lines—appear to be less common.⁶ Because many of our public parks in the United States abut another agency’s land, landscape-scale stewardship presents tremendous opportunities for managing resources, trail corridors, and visitor experience across jurisdictional boundaries. But as one stakeholder underscored: “make no mistake, this is a huge amount of work. Conservationists have certainly embraced working at the landscape scale conceptually, but it’s really sophisticated work we’re endeavoring to do.”



While there is support conceptually for landscape-scale stewardship, resource managers face big challenges when it comes to operationalizing, funding, and sustaining collaboration at scale.

WHY STUDY THE TAMALPAIS LANDS COLLABORATIVE?

In California, land managers have been paying close attention to and investing in landscape-scale collaboration as a pathway to manage and steward the state's public lands and natural resources for greater impact and resilience. The Tamalpais Lands Collaborative (TLC) is one example being examined to advance our understanding of what it takes to make direct action happen on the ground, at scales beyond a single landowner's jurisdiction.

One of the TLC's participating partners is California Department of Parks and Recreation (California State Parks), which manages over 280 parks covering 1.6 million acres in the state. As California State Parks makes headway on implementing its multi-year systemic transformation of the department, it envisions an increase in the scope and scale of its partnerships.⁷ To help advance its vision, the department has called for a heightened priority to manage its land at landscape and ecosystem levels. To further demonstrate this stewardship-at-scale approach, California State Parks has identified two pilot landscape stewardship initiatives: the North Coast Initiative⁸ and the Irvine Ranch Conservancy-Crystal Cove Collaborative.⁹ Both of these pilot initiatives drew inspiration from the goals and collaborative process of the TLC.¹⁰

The TLC case studies are designed to share lessons learned from collaborators in Marin County with other conservation practitioners in the state and across the nation who might be contemplating, launching, or building a new partnership or cross-jurisdictional land management approach. Reviewed together sequentially, these case studies on the TLC illustrate how qualitative and quantitative change happens over time through the vehicle of an emerging landscape-scale partnership. In addition to these case studies, a five-year study is underway, designed to understand the value, outcomes, and impact of the partnership. The findings of this study will be published in 2019-2020.¹¹



Four public agencies and one nonprofit formed the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative in March 2014.

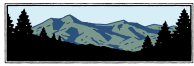
PURPOSE

This case study is the third in a series of case studies designed to examine the evolution of an emergent partnership, the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative. While the first case study (*Managing Public Lands for Impact and Sustainability*, July 2014) highlights the six steps to partnership formation beginning in 2013, and the second case study (*Developing Landscape-Scale Partnerships*, September 2015) describes the initial phase of collaboration ending in June 2015, this third case study examines the partnership development during the 18-month period between July 2015 and December 2016.¹² This third case study:

- Identifies ways in which this collaborative can serve as a model to help inform other multi-jurisdictional partnerships and the social sector at large
- Highlights the key lessons learned, challenges, and resources needed to build and sustain the TLC
- Illustrates the partnership's growth and impact in Year Three

WHO IS THIS CASE STUDY DESIGNED FOR?

This case study is an educational resource providing a deeper exploration of the function, practices, impact, and challenges of the TLC. It functions as both a mirror and a telescope for the TLC partners



and stakeholders, and also as a resource for land stewardship colleagues and stakeholders around the state and country. Key stakeholders include community members, elected officials, and funders. This case study will also be available for the benefit of leadership and staff of California State Parks, and national members and followers of the Network for Landscape Conservation.¹³

HOW CAN YOU BENEFIT FROM THIS CASE STUDY?

While there is no one-size-fits-all partnership model, this case study illustrates mindsets, strategies, and practices that have facilitated deeper levels of collaboration and positive outcomes for the TLC and its stakeholder network. Many of the principles and approaches enlisted by the TLC can be universally applied to other geographies through scaling up for larger landscapes and scaling down for more modest initiatives. When reading this case study, it is helpful to consider how the TLC partnership is similar to and different from other partnership types or circumstances, and how one might apply the challenges and lessons learned in other environments.

When forming and growing a new partnership, the answers are oftentimes not readily apparent; but, it is important to ensure that partners continue to ask the right critical questions as the partnership evolves. To that end, this case study features “Questions to Consider When Working in a Partnership” for each of the nine lessons referenced. The intent of these questions is to inspire resource managers and partners in their thinking, planning, and operating when seeking to achieve collaborative outcomes.

It is important to remember that when it comes to sustaining strategic partnerships¹⁴ in the larger context, the odds are not in favor of success. Half of marriages end in divorce, and 80% of business partnerships such as alliances and joint ventures dissolve or fail to produce meaningful results.¹⁵ Thus, there is a tremendous amount of risk involved in attempting a long-term, strategic partnership. Not surprisingly, risk-taking can produce fear and apprehension in those embarking on new terrain with uncertain outcomes and unfavorable odds. This is why it is valuable to recognize, study, and learn from partnerships attaining high impact. While the TLC is still young in

terms of its partnership lifecycle, it is clearly gaining traction and momentum, and has done so in a relatively short period of time. With this in mind, this case study can offer a sense of possibility and confidence for others who are investing in catalyzing meaningful and sustained change in their communities.

METHODOLOGY

The findings contained in this case study were developed by an independent researcher and are based on primary and secondary research. Forty-one individual interviews were conducted with partner staff, executive leadership, and boards of partner organizations, as well as with scholars, funders, community members, and key stakeholders. Interviewees were asked to shed light on their direct experiences with the TLC or serve as subject matter experts to provide contextual information for this case study. Secondary research included a review of all partnership outreach material, guiding documents available on the TLC’s website, including the 2016 Annual Report and 2017 Proposed Work Plan, and other materials. This case study is also informed by recent literature on landscape-scale conservation and stewardship, and collective impact models of collaboration.



CASE STUDY

LAND MANAGEMENT OF MT. TAMALPAIS



Jurisdictional boundaries of the Mt. Tamalpais region

Mt. Tamalpais is an iconic natural landmark in the San Francisco Bay Area and the highest peak in the Marin coast range. Mt. Tamalpais provides its visitors and community with clean, ample water and fresh air, as well as a stunning natural landscape for renewal, solitude, inspiration, and recreation. The mountain and its watershed lands provide water resources to 186,000 Marin County residents. While Mt. Tamalpais is seen by the community as one mountain, the land is actually owned and managed by four adjacent but separate public agencies—Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) under the National Park Service (NPS), Marin County Parks, Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD), and California State Parks.

While the mountain's land ownership resembles a mosaic, its ecosystems and natural processes are not confined by property lines. Activities on lands up stream have a direct impact on the quality of downstream habitats. Jurisdictional boundaries are also less meaningful to most visitors who recreate on the mountain. It is common for hikers and other users to cross property lines multiple times during an outing.

As discussed in the first case study, within the past decade, Mt. Tamalpais's land management agencies had become increasingly aware that they shared numerous complex and costly challenges, as well as many untapped opportunities for enhancing their approach to land management—including coordinating stewardship and education programs, managing biological resources across jurisdictional boundaries, and improving signage and trail corridors mountain-wide. Readers can learn more about the history of the TLC partnership formation in the first case study, *Managing Public Lands for Impact and Sustainability*.¹⁶

HOW CAN THE TLC SERVE AS A MODEL?

Interviewees appreciated the opportunity to reflect on the important question: how can the larger community of professionals and stakeholders nationwide relate to and learn from the challenges and lessons experienced by the TLC? Five core themes emerged:

1. Landscape-Scale Stewardship Initiatives
2. Collective Impact Initiatives
3. Translating a High-level Vision to On-the-Ground Results
4. Grassroots Approaches to Social Change
5. Early Successes with High Impact

1. Landscape-Scale Stewardship Initiatives

As discussed earlier, Mt. Tamalpais is unique in that it has four different agency landowners in a relatively small geographic area. The TLC's focus area for its work begins at the highest peak of Mt. Tamalpais and radiates out to the base encompassing 52,715 acres. Relative to other landscape-scale initiatives in the United States, the footprint of the TLC is considered to fall at the smallest end of the spectrum.¹⁷ Many interviewees felt that having a discrete geography was one advantageous factor in terms of achieving relatively rapid project and program implementation across property lines. By producing timely results, the

"Just the notion of having your primary goal as joint outcomes and joint capabilities, pooling of data, resources, and people across jurisdictions, from governance to getting the job done on the ground, has value and takeaways over any scale." —Working Group member



TLC serves as an example for achieving landscape-scale stewardship goals that can be scaled up or down in other geographies in the state and nationally. As discussed earlier, California State Parks has referenced the TLC as a useful comparative model for two identified and newly emerging landscape-scale pilot projects in the state.



The 52,715-acre area of focus for the Tamalpais Lands Collaborative

From its onset, TLC partner staff have been committed to actively participating with the representatives within the landscape-scale conservation community in California and nationally. By fielding inquiries from colleagues in other geographies; methodically maintaining the One Tam website with the latest news, work plans, and budgets; and presenting on the TLC at numerous conferences, the partners value the significance of being a “learning lab” for the benefit of all. This case study highlights what it takes to collaborate across multiple jurisdictions physically (through staff meetings and project and program implementation in the field) as well as virtually (through data sharing and integration to common systems).

2. Collective Impact Initiatives

As discussed in the second case study, *Developing Landscape-scale Partnerships*, the TLC’s partnership structure embodies the conditions and principles of the Collective Impact framework, as defined in 2011

by John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG Consulting.¹⁸ Their *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article on this topic has led to ongoing examination of the critical ingredients for achieving transformative social change around complex community problems. This case study is relevant to the growing community of practitioners of collective impact and may inform the community’s evolving discernment of the work.

“Anytime you have a regional clustering of entities working around a common theme, and one of those entities has more administrative capacity than the others, it can provide support to drive the others forward. There’s a center that holds the collective efforts and is constantly looking for opportunities for collective impact.”

—Stakeholder

“The work of the TLC can be a model far beyond land management. Neighboring governments and municipalities can benefit from this approach. The give and take among sister agencies is badly lacking, locally and at state and federal levels.”

—Stakeholder

3. Translating a High-level Vision to On-the-Ground Results

Many interviewees acknowledged that successfully translating a big vision into direct, tangible results is paramount for sustaining multi-organizational partnerships. It is important to underscore that the TLC partners identified demonstrating early success as a critical priority from its onset. From determining the partnership’s right size, scope, and governance structure during the initial partnership formation process, to defining its project selection criteria and communications systems, the TLC has continually strived to position itself to achieve results and demonstrate its value.

Research for this case study highlighted the critical importance of proving value early on in terms of 1) partnership momentum and staff motivation, 2) public understanding and support, and 3) the partners’ ability to fundraise. As one interviewee emphasized, “piloting projects and building upon successes is essential.”



“If the vision is bold enough, the resources will follow’ is just not the case. It’s always a matter of deciding what are we going to get done and how are we going to do it given the mix of resources we have available.”

— Executive Team member

“It’s easy to say but really hard to operationalize.”

— Stakeholder

4. Grassroots Approaches to Social Change

TLC partners are starting to see how working in partnership is slowly changing the face of land stewardship on Mt. Tamalpais. From Day One, community awareness and engagement has been a foundational element of the TLC. Many interviewees cited this as a critical factor of its ability to grow its programming and impact. During Year One of the TLC, the partners piloted a whole new approach to community engagement that has continued to evolve and expand. Through more than 90 “cups of tea” (informal, social gatherings of two to five people usually taking place at local coffee shops) and attendance at over 50 community events, partners have continually nurtured the public’s understanding of their work and endeavored to listen, understand, and integrate the community’s diverse voices.

“One Tam” was created as a community initiative to engage the broader community in the work of the TLC. Importantly, rather than attempt to brand an umbrella entity, the partners chose to focus all of the attention on how everyone is needed to care for the mountain as a whole. For example, the partners provide actionable stewardship programs so community participants can easily see the role they can play in caring for Mt. Tamalpais and be inspired to become more deeply involved in its stewardship.

Both the TLC’s community engagement efforts and communications strategies can inform other bottom-up approaches to engaging communities to get involved in solutions to the most pressing problems in their “own backyard.”

“What really surprised me is I thought the partnership would be more inside baseball for the agencies. I didn’t expect the TLC to be such a great vehicle for building community support for stewardship of Mt. Tamalpais in such a positive, hopeful way.”

— Executive Team member

“The TLC is a powerful case study for how communities can work together to solve their own problems.”

— Stakeholder

“The TLC has shown that a grassroots approach to stewardship has a lot of value.”

— Working Group member

5. Early Successes with High Impact

Interviewees pointed to a range of areas where they believe the TLC has experienced relatively rapid traction and successful results.

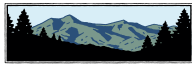
Three of those areas can inform other partnerships:

- Reporting on the health of a larger landscape and engaging the community through a science summit
- Multi-organizational data analytics sharing and integration
- Building effective multi-organizational, cross-sector teams

Two additional areas can inform partnerships as well as individual organizations:

- Youth engagement, mentorship, and internship programming
- Building a collective brand under the banner of land stewardship

While this case study touches upon these five areas, practitioners and others interested in further exploring these topics are encouraged to review onetam.org and contact the One Tam team directly with questions at info@onetam.org.



COLLABORATIVE OUTCOMES FROM YEAR THREE

Since this case study is focused on highlighting important lessons learned from Year Three, it will not include an overview of the results and outcomes of the TLC's work. You can learn about the partnership's collaborative outcomes in the 2016 Annual Report, which is available at onetam.org.¹⁹

KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM YEAR THREE

During the analysis of Year Three of the TLC, nine key lessons emerged. The following section examines each lesson, along with related questions to consider for practitioners working in a partnership context.

LESSON 1: Risk-taking and investing considerable sweat equity by the partners have been crucial to achieving the TLC's collective outcomes.

As was noted in the first and second case studies, the partners had to dramatically increase their level of interdependence to achieve a common vision for collaborative stewardship of the mountain as a whole. They agreed to move from previous transaction-based and short-term, project-based collaboration to a new partnership model of long-term, aspiration-based collaboration.

Research findings demonstrated how implementing the transformational goals of the TLC has been an immense undertaking requiring considerable investment of time, attention, sweat equity, and financial resources by multiple organizations and many hundreds of people. That investment has yielded tremendous impact and results. Communication and coordination between partners happen daily—during meetings, in the field, and for community events—under the umbrella of the TLC. Because of the defined scope and scale of the collaborative, having an investor's mindset has been key for the partners. Very little that has been

attempted by the partners has been done as a transactional or “one-off” activity. Virtually every conversation, action, task, and project is done with an eye toward how it fits into the bigger vision and the impact it will have on the future.



Published in 2014, *One Mountain, One Vision* describes the TLC's five-year strategy and has been a cornerstone document guiding the work of the five partners.

The investment in a robust, community-informed vision development process in 2014 is paying dividends by continuing to provide clarity on the ultimate difference this initiative must make and its overarching priorities. The five-year strategy, which is described in the *One Mountain, One Vision* publication, has remained a centerpiece of both partner and community relations.²⁰ It continues to provide a sense of purpose and clear direction for internal and external stakeholders. Because the engagement effort was a genuine investment over several months relying on the contributions of multiple stakeholders, the resulting vision continues to serve as the glue that connects the work of everyone involved.

In addition to the five-year strategy, the other guiding documents of the TLC—the MOU, four cooperative agreements, detailed project statements, and annual work plans—are routinely consulted by members of the Working Group, Committees, and Subcommittees to help guide agendas for meetings and day-to-day activities of staff.²¹

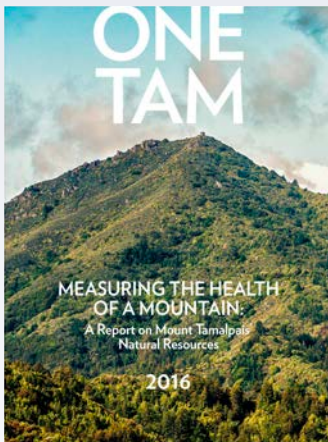
“The secret sauce is the TLC's ability to execute the work of the partnership, to prioritize outputs, and being very disciplined about this. The partners' team-building approach has been a huge driver of this.” — Stakeholder



TLC GOALS

These four overarching goals provide the foundation for all of the TLC's activities

Awareness & Engagement	Projects & Programs	Philanthropy & Investment	Partnership & Collective Impact
Build community awareness of Mt. Tam's natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resources and engage the community in stewarding and enjoying the mountain	Fund and implement priority projects and programs that have far-reaching benefits for the stewardship of natural and cultural resources and the enjoyment of Mt. Tam	Promote community support of Mt. Tam by securing investments of time and funding to further stewardship and public enjoyment	Leverage the talents and resources of the five partners with community groups and friends to achieve greater results through collaboration



Published in 2016, *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* is a new guiding document central to the efforts of the TLC.

In 2016, the TLC invested over nine months in developing a new cornerstone document called *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources*. This unprecedented collaboration resulted from the contributions of 60 scientists from the four agencies, their nonprofit partner Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Parks Conservancy), and the regional scientific community, including universities and nonprofit research organizations such as Save the Redwoods League, the Pepperwood Preserve, and Point Blue Conservation Science. The project culminated in a two-day One Tam Science Summit in October, which was attended by over 300 partner staff, scientists, students, and community members who gathered to better understand the current state of Mt. Tamalpais' natural resources. The comprehensive 369-page report is already proving to be a critical guide to the ongoing strategy, investments, and resource conservation actions of the partners' collaboration across property lines.

When it comes to funding projects, partners are investing resources across the mountain as a whole. As one member of the Working Group highlighted, the partners continue to transcend concerns around equity and instead embrace the idea that "the sum is greater than its parts" when it comes to advancing project priorities.

Here is one recent example of this approach. Using the data of *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources*, agencies were able to better coordinate how to meet critical data gaps in 2017. Three top priorities included inventorying bats, pollinators, and seeps and springs. With a clear understanding of these priorities, the partners could review their budgets and each reallocate resources to complete these projects collectively, reducing costs considerably. By clearly understanding what each agency can contribute, the Parks Conservancy is able to negotiate costs and leverage additional funds through grants and philanthropy to fill those gaps.

Several case study interview participants emphasized that the sharing of resources between the four agencies also helps to diversify funding for the TLC, which reduces the risk for any single agency. By employing a strategy similar to diversifying an investment portfolio, the four agencies are better positioned to respond to changing "market conditions" related to the socio-economic-political-environmental landscape at the national, state, regional, and local levels.

"Partner staff are not caring about resources in terms of equity across partners. They are really thinking about the long-term investment in the mountain and the best ways to grow that investment." — Working Group member



As discussed earlier, partnerships are risky undertakings with unfavorable odds of success. After completing the third year of the TLC and assessing its outcomes and impact to date, Working Group members took stock of some of the key risks taken by the partners during their initial and ongoing investment in the collaborative. Here is a summary of those key risks:

- Partner staff invested a significant amount of time during the development of the TLC framework and infrastructure for programs and projects on the promise that it would yield a greater return.
- Partners launched the initiative with programs rather than projects. This is counter to how the Parks Conservancy typically launches new initiatives as it is less risky to launch with discrete capital-funded projects that do not necessarily require a sustained effort. The TLC programs were critical to establishing value and cultivating greater understanding of the initiative and public engagement and trust.
- The NPS had to “share” its primary park partner, the Parks Conservancy, to help launch the TLC with the risk that this could result in less support for its own work.
- Investing in the concept of consistent desired conditions and shared metrics and thresholds for measuring the health of Mt. Tamalpais’ natural resources seemed unattainable from the start. Agencies had to consider modifying some of their own standards, trust in other agencies’ data, and develop agreement around shared metrics that could be communicated throughout each agency and the interested public.
- Partners had to invest great trust in their belief that they could accomplish their shared vision and goals without being distracted or adversely affected by their partners’ planning and engagement challenges.
- The partners took a tremendous leap of faith that their candid conversations, verbal commitments, and ability to stay the course to achieve a shared vision would work and not compromise their respective organizations.

One Working Group member underscored how, as the partners realized success in their collective work, each accomplishment led to further investment by the partners. Here are a few examples:

- Success of the Health Assessment Advisory Committee and larger Conservation Management Committee facilitating the development of the Mt. Tam Science Summit and the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais’ Natural Resources* led to commitment to working together to collectively fund and undertake the mountain-wide bat and pollinator inventory and monitoring work.
- Success in collectively identifying shared weed mapping and reporting metrics led to the collaborative pursuit of modifying an existing Weed Manager database to support those needs. Successful first phase improvements to the database led to investment in the second phase of improvements.
- Success with Year One of the LINC (Linking Individuals to their Natural Community) program for youth led to the second year, plus the expansion of high school and college internships.
- Increased relationship-building and feelings of productivity and meaningful meeting outcomes resulted in the Working Group increasing their investment in meetings, from two to three hours each month.

Related to the investor’s mindset, one rising national trend identified in the case study interview process is federal land management staff speaking more and more about their work in terms of “portfolios of partnerships.” It was also noted how the sheer volume of

“We must take the long-term view and think about diversified funding. By pooling our collective resources together, we are minimizing risk of any one agency failing or falling behind. Pooling collective resources together creates more resiliency.” — Working Group member



partnerships is increasing, as well as the network of entities involved in those partnerships. At the same time, the nature of their partnering work is deepening. As federal agencies are moving beyond “transactional” partnerships to more integrated levels of cooperation and collaboration—which requires shared decision-making—they are recognizing that the intellectual and strategic management frameworks for deeper partnering is indeed a long-term investment.



From left to right: Rosanna Petralia, California State Parks, Mia Monroe, GGNRA/NPS, Nancy Benjamin, One Tam Ambassador, Mike Swezy, Marin Municipal Water District

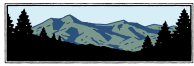
BOTTOM LINE ▼

- Be clear with your partners about the type of investment necessary for the partnership vision and goals. The deeper the partnership, the greater the investment.
- Early investments in developing foundational guiding documents are paying dividends for the TLC partners.
- Strategically combining financial resources of multiple partners helps to reduce cost and risk and build resiliency.
- Think like an investor. Continue to measure your partnership’s impact against the investments made by the partners.
- Be prepared for success. Success breeds further investment.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. How interdependent are we with our partners?
How integrated are our goals?
2. Do we share the decision-making accountability with our partners?
3. What level of initial and ongoing investment will our partnership require?
4. What investments do we need to make today that will set us up for success in years to come?
5. How prepared are we for success and thereby further investments?

“Every time we experienced positive results from our work, we faced an opportunity to renew our vows and invest further.” — Working Group member



LESSON 2: An effective, consistent, yet fluid facilitator for collaboration has been essential for the TLC.

The previous two case studies described the deliberate partnership structure and the TLC's three guiding bodies of the Executive Team, Working Group, and Committees, as well as the distinct role of the Parks Conservancy as the Backbone Organization of the three bodies. Those case studies also stressed the value of having a dedicated conductor or convener of the partners' collaborative work. The research for this third case study continues to support that concept, but with a slightly modified theme.

The interviewees consistently pointed to the critical role played by the Parks Conservancy in advancing the work of the TLC. Almost all of the interview participants cited the steadfast presence and capabilities of the Backbone Organization staff as being vital to the positive evolution of the partnership. While raising funds to hire a dedicated Initiative Manager for the TLC remains a potential long-term goal, for now the role has been shared by two Parks Conservancy Working Group members who work in tandem. Some of the Working Group members expressed concerns about the sustainability of this approach due to the continuing challenges of balancing ever-growing workloads. This structure is likely to continue until a more sustainable solution can be implemented.

What appears to have shifted is how the Parks Conservancy staff see themselves in this "Backbone Organization" role—as well as the core purpose of that role. The role and value of the Backbone Organization has evolved from its initial conception as a "foundational pillar" to the "connective tissue" of the partners. Parks Conservancy staff described its ability to provide critical scaffolding for the agency "muscles" to flex and extend. As one interviewee described, "The Backbone Organization takes away some of the day-to-day burdens for the agencies. It helps support the professional team to work at their highest level of impact by putting a little wind beneath their wings." In this way, the Parks Conservancy's role is better described as a fluid facilitator than a solid foundation.

There are a couple factors leading to the modified perception of the role and value of the Parks Conservancy. One is a testament to the power of having solid collaborative building blocks in place, namely the partnership structure, the guiding documents, and the collaborative process. As we learned in the second case study, because those critical building blocks were so deliberately established and cultivated over time, they helped provide a strong foundation for the partners' work. It is also likely due to how the Working Group has evolved into a closely knit, highly functioning core team that appears to be serving as the spine of the collaborative. Because the Working Group relationships have become significantly strengthened since its initial formation two years prior, the Parks Conservancy has been freer to adapt its role to the evolving needs of the TLC. In Year Three, it has focused more on providing a consistent, safe container for information flow, creative thinking, disagreement, and innovation.

The findings of the interviews are supported by some of the latest literature. In *Collective Impact 3.0* published by the Tamarack Institute in 2016, the authors propose that the "Backbone Organization" condition of collective impact models—as first defined in 2011—is ready for an upgrade from "Backbone" to "Containers for Change."

For organizations considering employing a collective impact model for an initiative, or serving as the coordinator or convener of the initiative, it is important to scrutinize the various functions of this role.

"This collaboration wouldn't work without having a separate (non-landowning) entity like the Parks Conservancy involved. As a team, we are recalibrating all the time, getting on the phone, sharing emails. There is a significant amount of effort to make all this work."

—Working Group member

"Equally important is not whose idea it is but that everyone takes credit for success. This has become part of the culture of the Working Group. Everything is owned by all."

—Working Group member



Be prepared for this role to evolve throughout the lifecycle of the partnership, recognizing that the critical needs of this role will fluctuate as the group moves through the stages of development. It is possible that as the partnership starts to mature, others may naturally become part of the “Backbone” of the initiative due to stronger interpersonal bonds and greater personal satisfaction and investment. In fact, it is likely the best-case scenario for impact and sustainability that members begin to feel a strong sense of ownership and begin to self-identify as the backbone of a collaborative. Regardless of whether a partnership is employing a deliberate collective impact model, interviewees agreed that having an assigned facilitator and convener is mandatory for multi-organizational collaborative initiatives to not only take flight but to stay aloft.



The TLC Working Group celebrates its third anniversary. From left to right in back: Victor Bjelajac, California State Parks, Matt Leffert, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Parks Conservancy), Sue Gardner, Parks Conservancy, Bree Hardcastle, California State Parks, Sharon Farrell, Parks Conservancy, Mike Swezy, Marin Municipal Water District. From left to right in front: Kevin Wright, Marin County Parks, Mia Monroe, GGNRA/NPS, Janet Klein, Marin Municipal Water District.

Lisa Micheli, President and CEO of Pepperwood Preserve, was one of the presenters during the Mt. Tam Science Summit. During her presentation, she described the iconic image of a crew team rowing together on the water, and how the coxswain ensures that everyone in the boat is paddling together and pulling in the same direction. The Parks Conservancy continues

to sit in the stern and help coordinate the rhythm of the team. Interview participants felt that the partners, despite the inevitable challenges and obstacles along the way, are hitting their stride and finding their collective rhythm.

BOTTOM LINE ▼

- A designated coxswain continues to be integral to advancing the work of the TLC.
- The Backbone Organization role has provided critical connective tissue for the partners to collaborate.
- As a partnership experiences success, relationships strengthen, trust deepens, personal ownership increases, and group identity forms, the function and focus of the coordinator or Backbone Organization may likely need to evolve to support the maturing needs and goals of the group.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. What is the specific role that the coordinator/convener ultimately needs to play?
2. What skills, expertise, and experience are necessary for the coordinator/convener?
3. Who is best positioned to serve as the coordinator/convener of your initiative and why?
4. How do you intend to fund this role initially and over time?

“As a group, we have hit our stride in many ways. I feel really confident in everyone on the team. The relationships between the Working Group members are extraordinary. Despite being from such different cultures, we are so open and honest with each other. Each agency now knows what kind of person it takes to staff it [the Working Group].” —Working Group member



LESSON 3: The partnership's ability to cultivate and scale positive interpersonal relationships has been foundational to its effectiveness and impact.

Partnerships such as the TLC are fundamentally human-powered endeavors. It is significant to acknowledge the number of entities who have participated in the work of the TLC, many of whom are listed on the One Tam website.²² It is also important to analyze the individuals representing those entities and the quality of their relationships with each other.

Traditional land management paradigms might focus on the organizational charts and hierarchy in the decision-making chain within a single agency. While this structure is still core to the business of land management, it is not the complete picture. A more recent trend for illustrating the human resources required for land stewardship is using social network analysis.²³ Social network maps depict the interconnected web of human relationships stemming from multiple domains, including the community at large. The former model emphasizes the agency or institution to which the individual belongs, while this newer network or “web” model highlights the interconnectedness of the participating organizations and the level of cooperation and collaboration uniting them. Both models are important.

Social networks—like the one growing around Mt. Tamalpais—can oftentimes be less visible, but they are an essential mechanism for problem-solving, responding to change, and innovating. As the Partnership and Community Collaboration Academy teaches in its Managing By Network curriculum, understanding how to work within and cultivate formal organizational networks and decision-making chains—as well as in less formal, decentralized, peer-to-peer social networks—is crucial for successful collaboration.²⁴

While formal networks within agencies provide important discipline and rules for engagement, the peer-to-peer social networks are critical vehicles for gaining advice, information, and resources. Importantly, these decentralized social networks are also critical sources of empowerment and inspiration for staff.²⁵ Additionally, these informal networks can give professionals a feeling of greater freedom to step outside their usual roles and cultivate more personal, social bonds with peers. For the TLC partner staff, these cross-organizational relationships have offered levity, humor, and emotional connection, which elevate morale and motivation, and help people manage work stress.

A Framework for Relationships

Importantly, the TLC created a deliberate framework for partner relationships to develop and strengthen over time through both formal and informal mechanisms. Regular team meetings, joint field work, community events, informal teas, and an annual off-site staff retreat provide opportunities for partner staff to work shoulder-to-shoulder in each other's environments and in the community, to break down barriers, and to attain greater understanding of each partner's organizational cultural differences.²⁶

TLC GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



“We never take the trust that’s been established for granted. We never stop investing in building trust with our partners.” —Executive Team member



When it comes to advancing the work of the TLC, both the scale and quality of its social infrastructure has mattered. The number of active participants in the partnership grew considerably from 2015, when it consisted of 35 individuals serving on the Executive Team, Working Group, and three Committees. During 2016, the number of active participants doubled to 70 individuals. Eleven Subcommittees were added to make recommendations to the Working Group and support day-to-day project and program work and review communications materials.



In 2016, the number of active participants in the TLC doubled.

In 2015, the members of the Working Group jointly decided it was important to scale up their investment of staff time in the TLC. They agreed to assign at least two representatives from each partner agency to the Working Group. They recognized that designing a structure for greater redundancy at the tactical operations level was critical to sustain continuity and increase communications flow both between and throughout the partner organizations.

In addition to growing the entity in size, the Working Group members requested that their regular monthly meeting time increase from two hours to three hours in 2016. They agreed that there was tremendous value in giving themselves not only ample time, but permission and structure for more in-depth discussions and for the birth of new ideas that might not have been identified on the original agenda. Expanding conversations and consciously making room for the flow of creative thoughts and reflection have benefitted their collaborative process, increased levels of trust, and enhanced their joint activities. Group members also strive to always incorporate food into their monthly meetings, and celebrate fun events like the collaborative's birthday to strengthen social bonds.

In addition to cultivating a larger, stronger Working Group, other staff from each agency appear to be much more connected. Many biologists, vegetation specialists, youth leaders, and stewardship coordinators from each agency are now on a first-name basis due to their work within the TLC. As one Working Group member shared, "We team up, we talk, and compare notes. We're sharing information on weed management, salmon recovery, migrating species. I anticipate this growing."

As noted earlier, the TLC is the subject of a five-year study designed to understand the value, outcomes, and impact of the partnership. After only its second year of surveying partner staff, the study reported significant increases in levels of trust and collaboration, and in frequency of interactions between the five partners.²⁷



The TLC Programs Committee gathers for one of its quarterly meetings to share updates on public education, youth engagement, community science, and other volunteer programming, as well as to coordinate shared activities.

"We saw that it was important to have back-up for more consistency. If someone gets reassigned, we can preserve the history and consistent participation. More representation can also help instill the findings of the Working Group to the rest of the staff at partner organizations and help to infuse the TLC into their organizational cultures." —Working Group member



BOTTOM LINE ▼

- Partnerships need effective, diverse human networks to succeed.
- Peer-to-peer social networks provide critical sources of inspiration, adaptability, and innovation needed by resource managers.
- The TLC is becoming a hub of a regional network of peer practitioners.
- Establishing relationship frameworks has been essential for advancing the TLC's work.
- The TLC's social infrastructure has grown in terms of scale and quality of relationships.
- The TLC's number of active participants has grown by 100% from 35 members in 2015 to 70 in 2016.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. Who do we need to be active participants in our partnership?
2. Who is part of our partnership's broader social network?
3. How might our partnership's social infrastructure need to evolve over time in order to achieve the goals of the partnership and be sustainable?
4. How can we create a framework for cultivating positive interpersonal relationships? What does that entail?
5. How can we continue building trust in our partner relationships?

LESSON 4: Creating a common vocabulary has been a significant investment by the partners and vital for implementing cross-jurisdictional, landscape-scale stewardship.

The fundamental importance of having a shared language was demonstrated repeatedly in Year Three. It manifested in three significant ways: 1) understanding and articulating the role and value of the TLC, 2) the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources*, and 3) ongoing scientific data for inventorying and monitoring of the mountain's ecological resources. In conversations with interview participants—from Working Group and Executive Team members to other agency staff and community stakeholders—the same language was used to describe the work of the TLC and the One Tam initiative. For example, interviewees referenced the 2016 TLC Proposed Work Plan, as well as specific programs such as the Wildlife Picture Index (WPI) Project and LINC, specific legacy projects such as West Peak restoration, and specific signature trail corridor projects such as the Redwood Creek Watershed trail stewardship. This was less evident in the first case study when interviewees appeared to have less alignment around certain aspects of the partnership. It was apparent that the numerous, ongoing formal and informal conversations, cups of tea, events, meetings, and outgoing messaging have resulted in not only a shared understanding of the initiative but a common vocabulary for articulating its vision and approach. (The one instance of a language gap was with institutional funders. This topic will be discussed later in the case study in *Considerations for the Future*.)

The *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* was the second example of the TLC's efforts to create a standardized approach to assessing resource health and a common language. Not only did the report's development galvanize the partners around a baseline understanding of

"Now that we have a vocabulary about a healthy mountain for the future, that's something that everyone can subscribe to. It might manifest differently, but we have a common language that we can all own and get behind in our own ways."

—Working Group member



Mt. Tamalpais' condition and critical data gaps, the report became a centerpiece for community engagement by providing publically meaningful ways to deliver the science-based findings.

Importantly, the partners translated the 369 pages of technical scientific data into a two-page brochure and an interactive website that included health-at-a-glance infographics, compelling photography, and a four-minute video called *Measuring the Health of Mt. Tam*.²⁸



University of California, Berkeley Professor David Ackerly discusses how climate change could impact the mountain at the 2016 Mt. Tam Science Summit.

In October 2016, TLC staff hosted a two-day Mt. Tam Science Summit, which drew over 300 participants, including agency staff, scientists, and the broader community, to help the public understand the implications of the report and how to get involved in addressing those implications. The first day targeted natural resources managers and the scientific community, but was open to members of the public. The second day reached out to conservation and recreation groups, teachers, students, and other interested community members and featured short “lightning talks” and an interactive panel discussion about the vital role that a diverse public plays in caring for Mt. Tamalpais. Partner staff also participated in a radio interview aired on KQED and fielded call-in questions by the public. As one interviewee noted, “one of the most important things that we did with the report was figuring out ways to put it into the hands of the community.” Another interviewee commented how the report and the two-day Science Summit demonstrated how science can be an effective “hook” for public engagement in land stewardship.

Shared data management systems for inventorying and monitoring weeds and wildlife constitute a third example of how the partners placed a high priority on creating a shared vocabulary for their work. Getting four agencies to adopt the same system, Calflora Weed Manager,²⁹ for mapping and tracking weed infestations was a time-consuming undertaking that partner staff described as “well worth the investment.” Partners agreed there is tremendous value in being able to collect data across boundaries. In addition to the baseline data articulated in the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources*, land managers can expand their earlier detection programs collectively through added capacity from One Tam staff and better plan for management and stewardship actions across property lines. Several staff commented that with respect to inventorying and monitoring, developing systems for regional, statewide, and national data tracking is the way of the future.

For the community science-supported WPI Project launched in 2014, the 128 motion-activated cameras installed on the northern part of Mt. Tamalpais have already collected almost two million pictures of wildlife. The original intent was for each of the four agencies involved to be able to review its own wildlife data on its own land. Each agency was uploading and storing its own data on spreadsheets on its own IT system. Once the agencies realized the incredible amount of data they were collecting through the WPI project, they agreed that it would be much more beneficial to be able to aggregate all of their data and then analyze it collectively. Through a pilot partnership with Conservation International and Hewlett Packard,

“There is real interest and enthusiasm for using the [Calflora] system despite the challenges and slow process of integrating a new system. I don't see people getting frustrated. Everyone genuinely wants to be on the same page.”

—TLC partner staff

“If we can't talk to each other, collaborating becomes really difficult and less likely to continue. Cutting and pasting huge volumes of data from spreadsheets just isn't sustainable.”

—Working Group member



the TLC partners devoted a period of 15 months to replace their individual data management efforts with one cloud-based database they would all use from that point forward. (See Lesson 5 for further details on how the partners achieved this important analytics integration.)

Interviewees agreed that converting to a common system for both weeds and wildlife tracking would never have been possible without the TLC's existence. Many cited the new mountain-wide data sharing capabilities as one of the most important impacts of the collaborative to date.

BOTTOM LINE ▼

- **Both internal and external stakeholders need a common vocabulary for conveying the role and value of the partnership.**
- **Cross-jurisdictional collaborators need to invest in addressing identified information gaps and inefficiencies.**
- **Science-based data need to be presented in ways that make them accessible, compelling, and inspiring for the public.**
- **Establishing systems to communicate verbally and virtually is essential to sustainable collaboration across jurisdictional and organizational boundaries.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. **What guiding documents and tools can we develop and refine to articulate the vision, goals, and evolving work of our partnership?**
2. **Where are communications breakdowns and information inefficiencies happening?**
3. **What does the public need in order to understand the nature of our work and become inspired to be more deeply involved?**
4. **What investments can we make in data management systems to better collaborate with our partners?**

LESSON 5: Investing in grassroots community engagement early has been critical to the TLC's progress.

One of the most notable surprises of this partnership is the level of community building that it has inspired. One Tam, the name of the community initiative of the TLC, has begun to galvanize the partners and community members around their shared love of the iconic mountain to which they all feel a personal, emotional connection. Many of the interviewees pointed to the community's increased engagement as one of the most important impacts thus far of the partnership.

The five partners recognized that in order to restore and sustain Mt. Tamalpais for the next 100 years and beyond, they could not do it by themselves. They need the community's full support and participation. As discussed earlier in Lesson 1, it was critical for the partners to involve the community well before the partnership formed. During formation, TLC partners contemplated how they could step outside their respective jurisdictional boundaries to collectively communicate with the broader public in order to make their work more accessible, relevant, and inspiring. Over time, the partners embraced a whole new approach to community engagement.

They wanted their outreach activities to be relationship-based, inclusive, ongoing, inspirational, adaptable, and enriching for the public. This was a dramatic departure from a more top-down approach to public engagement that agencies have traditionally used, and reflects a potential solution to a growing need nationally for effective engagement of diverse members of the public.

Importantly, the TLC's inclusive approach appears to resonate with the community. In the spring of 2016, the partners launched the One Tam Membership Program. Mostly through word of mouth, the program reached over 350 members by the end of 2016, averaging a few people per day. Volunteer participation grew considerably through the four primary stewardship events hosted by the partners and in specialized programs such as the Bioblitzes. In 2016, over 1,200 volunteers showed up for the 60 One Tam habitat



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	
PAST APPROACH	PRESENT APPROACH
Transactional	Transformational
Procedural	Adaptable
Legally required	Proactive/Value-Added/Enriching
One-time, short-term	Continual engagement, long-term
Formal setting/Agency-centered	Informal setting/Constituent-focused
Regulatory/Institutional	Personal connection/Inspiration
Project-based	Relationship-based
Managing competing interests & opposition	Uncovering common interests & opportunities

This chart illustrates the TLC's approach to community engagement.

restoration and trail work days. The volunteer trainings for the community science WPI Project were in high demand, reaching capacity for every training.

In addition to donating time and hard work, community members are starting to give financially to the One Tam initiative. Through private and public grants and community giving, the Parks Conservancy has raised over \$1.5 million in support for the One Tam initiative. The initiative also successfully launched its first Community Ambassador program, a business program, and a schools program all designed to expand the TLC's work. Lesson 6 will further discuss how the partners have made youth outreach and mentorship a key goal of their community engagement activities.

The TLC's high level of transparency and responsiveness has been fundamental to helping the community feel informed, respected, and included. The One Tam website has been a virtual hub and bulletin board for

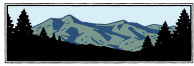
partners to keep the public informed and current. The website publishes a comprehensive archive of the partners' agreements, annual work plans, project criteria, annual reports, project descriptions and timelines, and a calendar of all volunteer opportunities happening on Mt. Tamalpais, including social and educational opportunities for the public.³⁰

The site also offers quarterly financial statements for the TLC as well as news, updates, and board meeting minutes from the four agencies. Website visitors can also be inspired by stunning photography and compelling videos hosted on the media gallery. In 2016, the One Tam website served over 36,000 unique visitors.

Importantly, the partners have demonstrated their receptivity and willingness to be influenced by their community. Lesson 9 explores how the decisions to develop both the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* and

"If you don't build trust at the grassroots level, it's unlikely to happen."

—Working Group member



the One Tam Membership Program were inspired by and designed with community input. Another example arose during discussions at both the MMWD Watershed Committee of the Board and during Tam Talk, an annual public exchange led by the Executive Team of the TLC. Several stakeholders raised concerns pertaining to individual agency accountability, specifically the adherence of TLC projects to MMWD's policies. The partners also acknowledged the importance of making each project's agency lead more visible in communication materials, and responded by ensuring this information was incorporated moving forward.³¹ In response, MMWD formed a seven-member Citizens' Advisory Committee to its Board to review the work on MMWD lands for consistency with policies and to increase transparency and build trust in the community.

During interviews, community members expressed appreciation for how the TLC was continually finding ways to harness the abundant, diverse talent living around the mountain. From painters, musicians, and a documentary filmmaker, to an eight-year-old nature enthusiast with a lemonade stand, One Tam includes many voices in sharing the One Tam message.

"We've seen success in engaging people in their 20s and younger. It's partly due to our branding and positive messaging, but it's also really key to have peers relating to peers. We have several staff who are that age. Plus our internship programs are creating relationships with youth who are in junior high school all the way through college."

—Working Group member

"We're starting to see One Tam stickers in car windows and local businesses. A woman came up to me in the grocery store because she saw me wearing my One Tam baseball hat. It's exciting to see the community starting to take hold of this initiative."

—Working Group member

"We created a framework for people to be involved. People can actually see how their contribution is adding to the bigger goal of caring for the mountain."

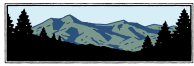
—Working Group member

BOTTOM LINE ▼

- Agencies are recognizing more and more that their work is greatly about people.
- An inclusive, bottom-up approach to community outreach can establish a core foundation for strengthened relationships and long-term engagement.
- A willingness by partners to be transparent and vulnerable breeds trust in the community.
- If a partnership wants to be influential, it must be willing to be influenced by stakeholders.
- When people feel empowered to express their interests and utilize their skills, they are much more likely to contribute their time, energy, and resources.
- If you are skilled in community engagement, your partnership has a much better chance of succeeding.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. As land managers, what does our community most need from us?
2. How can we best support stakeholders in addressing their needs?
3. How can we show more vulnerability with our partners and the public?
4. How can our partnership increase levels of understanding and trust in the community?
5. What are unconventional ways that we can build relationships in the community?



LESSON 6: Implementing cross-jurisdictional projects and programs has required a combination of three primary change strategies: innovation, invention, and adding capacity to fill operations gaps.

Direct, on-the-ground action across property lines demands a spectrum of change strategies. Strategies employed by the TLC have included improving existing systems through innovation and, when necessary, creating entirely new systems.

As discussed in Lesson 4, successful collaboration is dependent upon establishing a shared vocabulary and also shared systems. Tackling data management challenges was one of the principal opportunities for the TLC to test its change-making prowess. The partners took the following steps:

1. Understand the current systems used by each of the four agencies and for what purpose
2. Understand how these systems were being used and what reports were generated
3. Identify what information the partners collectively needed that they did not already have, and what was critical for meeting their individual needs
4. Identify if an existing individual agency system could be modified to meet that collective need
5. If not currently existing, identify a potential pathway to develop a new system

In the case of the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources*, the partners were able to use an existing National Park Service framework³² for aggregating and assessing baseline data to include defining metrics and thresholds for measuring indicator health, and to meet their

collective needs. When it came to tracking weeds and wildlife, however, the path forward for a shared data management system was less clear.

Calflora Weed Manager is a database used by some land managers in California for tracking weed infestations and treatments over time. Two of the TLC partners were already using the Calflora database to some degree, and those partners proposed that there was potential to customize it for each agency's needs, as well as their collective needs. With the approval of the TLC Conservation Management Committee, the Parks Conservancy was charged with raising funds to support the development of modifications and new capabilities to the system. The agency partners then formed a smaller working group, led by a One Tam staff member, to facilitate how to modify the functionality with Calflora staff. Modifications were made in 2016 and the cloud-based database is working well to meet both the collective and individual needs of all partners.

For managing the large amounts of data the partners were collecting through the WPI Project, the TLC partners discovered that they would need to devise a new online solution. Conservation International (CI) had a potential product, but its design was more applicable for tropical landscapes. The Parks Conservancy established an agreement with CI on behalf of the TLC partners to develop and beta test software to meet the TLC partners' collective and individual needs. This was accomplished by having the Parks Conservancy develop an MOU between the Parks Conservancy and CI (currently in draft form). The Parks Conservancy, as the Backbone Organization, then secured research and collection permits with each of the agency land managers to ensure the appropriate data management, reporting, and data privacy/ownership requirements were followed. If the beta test continues successfully, there has been an emerging interest in scaling this system regionally beyond Marin County through another partnership with the Pepperwood Preserve.

"Partner staff really want to be on the same page with each other in their field knowledge and understanding."

—TLC partner staff



Adding capacity to fill critical gaps has been a third change strategy employed by the TLC. The Parks Conservancy has played a major role in adding staff time and expertise to agency partners by both leveraging existing stewardship and conservation staff, and raising funds and hiring five program-specific One Tam staff. These newest One Tam staff members are squarely focused on supporting projects and programs on Mt. Tamalpais in three key areas: youth and community engagement, restoration and community science, and conservation management. Two seasonal staff have joined for the spring to fall field season to provide additional support, largely for surveying weed species through the TLC's Early Detection Rapid Response program.

All the One Tam stewardship-based community programs have helped propel the shared goals of the five partners originally set forth in the MOU.³³ Launched in 2015, LINC (Linking Individuals to their Natural Community), One Tam Roving Ranger (a mobile trailhead), and the WPI Project have continued to gain traction and efficiency. The partners piloted LINC as a six-week summer high school program on Mt. Tamalpais. Its aim is to cultivate career and leadership skills in the teenagers and give them direct experience with career paths in science and conservation. Seventeen students participated in LINC in 2016, and an additional five graduates from the 2015 program participated in summer-long immersive internships with specific agency partners.

New for 2017, the partners are piloting an academic internship program in partnership with the College of Marin. Through an application and interview process, five undergraduates were selected. They are gaining hands-on job experience working with agency staff part-time in the spring and full-time in the summer on Mt. Tamalpais. (See Lesson 7 to read more about the coordination and ongoing communications required for program implementation.)



LINC summer interns help to repair the trails at the Steep Ravine Cabin site at Mt. Tamalpais State Park.

“The new cloud-based system for the WPI Project has been transformative. It’s given us a common vocabulary to better understand what wildlife exists on Mt. Tamalpais.”

—Working Group member

“With the climate change and sea level rise work we’re doing, there’s a growing opportunity of working more with One Tam staff to enhance the work we do and increase our capacity. As an agency, it’s really hard to be flexible and staff up for projects with discrete timelines. Having a nimble partner who has that capacity and skills to work in partnership with our mission is helping us get to projects sooner and accomplish them faster.”

—Executive Team member



BOTTOM LINE ▼

- Successful collaborators must be effective, willing change-makers.
- Partners endeavoring to create direct, on-the-ground results are smart to anticipate the prime change strategies necessary for accomplishing identified collaborative outcomes, such as innovation, invention, and adding capacity.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. What do we collectively need in terms of data and information that we do not already have?
2. Can we modify an existing system in order to meet our individual agency and collective needs, or do we need to create a whole new system?
3. What do we anticipate as our primary change strategies for implementing direct action on the ground?
4. What resources are needed in order to implement those change strategies?

LESSON 7: As the partnership team scaled up, two-way communication also had to scale up.

As we discussed in Lesson 3, the TLC's ability to grow its team has been central to its effectiveness and impact. It cannot be overstated that ensuring inter-partner communications among 70 people who are located in different offices or in the field is a huge endeavor and has proved to be an increasing challenge for Parks Conservancy staff to efficiently manage. Coordination between partners has required much more communication in all forms, including in-person meetings, phone calls, group texts, and email. In 2016, meeting times lengthened, meeting frequency increased, and the overall volume of communications intensified. While the Parks Conservancy, as the Backbone Organization, is often facilitating some of that communication, communication between individual agencies has also increased. (Interestingly, interviewees noted that some of that communication is unrelated to TLC business; because their relationships are so much stronger due to the TLC, partners are communicating more with each other on other matters.)

The Working Group has played a key leadership role in the ongoing communication between—and coordination of—the committee members. As discussed in Lesson 3, in 2015, the members of the Working Group jointly decided it was important to scale up their investment of staff time in the TLC.

As described in Lesson 3, the TLC's governance structure expanded in order to support the delivery of programs, the increase in science-based monitoring, and the launch of key projects, which required greater communication and coordination. Most notably, the partners created 11 new Subcommittees in 2016 to advance projects and programs of the TLC: six Subcommittees were created under the Conservation Management Committee and six Subcommittees were created under the Programs Committee. Cross-jurisdictional

"Between monthly meetings, the Backbone staff do regular check-ins individually with everyone on the Working Group to get a pulse on how things are going." —Working Group member



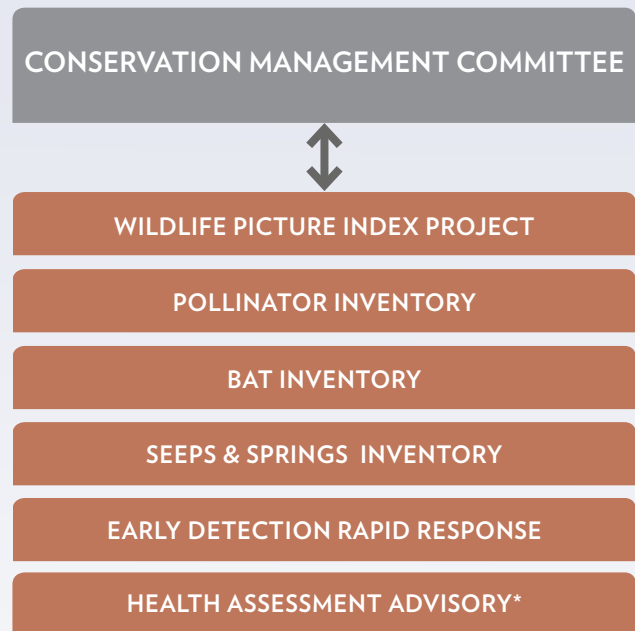
programming has been a major thrust of the partners' collective efforts and has demanded extensive communications. While led by One Tam staff, program implementation has required ongoing coordination and teamwork by multiple staff from each of the agency partners.



*In 2017 the six subcommittees were restructured and consolidated into four subcommittees.

The Programs Committee continues to function as the guiding body that oversees all activities of One Tam programs. The 16 members of the Programs Committee meet in person quarterly to review day-to-day programmatic work and formulate recommendations to the Working Group when necessary. The 16 Committee members also sit on one or more of the six Programs Subcommittees to further coordinate activities and tasks for specific program areas such as partner utilization of the Roving Ranger, volunteer work days, interpretation, youth engagement, and community science. Additionally, each One Tam staff member has a mentor team made up of a representative from each partner agency. Each One Tam staff member is expected to facilitate a bi-weekly or monthly conference call with their multi-agency mentor team to review and coordinate work plans and troubleshoot issues.

The Programs Committee members use tools such as a cloud-based server for document sharing and a shared calendar to further support partner communications.

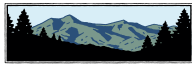


*The Health Assessment Advisory Subcommittee became a fourth committee under the Working Group in 2017.

The Conservation Management Committee continues to function as the guiding body that oversees all activities related to resource monitoring and data management. The 10 members of the Conservation Management Committee meet in person on average of once a month from September to February and communicate via email and phone calls as needed during the field season between March and August. Committee members develop the work plan for One Tam resource staff, provide guidance on the day-to-day activities of those staff, and formulate recommendations to the Working Group when necessary. In 2016, the Conservation Management Committee formed six Subcommittees to undertake and coordinate activities and tasks for specific projects and programs. The Conservation Management Committee and Subcommittee members use cloud-based tools such as a shared server for document sharing, the Calflora Weed Manager, and the shared database for tracking wildlife data.

"From how you hire staff, to running an internship program, to how volunteer days are implemented, groups nationwide could benefit from understanding how the TLC has been successful in engaging our youth."

— Working Group member



Several interviewees shared their frustrations related to inter-partner communication. One challenge of increased workflow as the team grew in size was a temptation to meet less due to limited staff time. As one interviewee explained, “we postponed a committee meeting for six months and that actually turned out to be more harmful than helpful.” Another interviewee highlighted how trying to keep up with email communication between five partners can be quite difficult and overwhelming. Not surprisingly, partner staff who were meeting with their teams the most consistently and the most frequently in person had fewer frustrations related to communication.



This image of a bobcat was captured by a motion-activated wildlife camera, one of over two million such images taken during the last three years to study animal populations on the mountain.

BOTTOM LINE ▼

- **Inter-partner communication, especially with sizable teams, is a large yet essential undertaking.**
- **A consistent, continual flow of communication is necessary for partners to feel current, connected, and well-coordinated.**
- **As the team grows, systems and structures may need to change to support increased communication needs.**
- **Making the effort and time for in-person meetings—both as a group and individually—greatly enhances partner communications, planning, relationships, and motivation.**
- **As partners become busier, avoid the temptation to meet less frequently.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. **What systems, structures, and tools are supporting our inter-partner communication?**
2. **What are our biggest challenges when it comes to ensuring a continual, consistent flow of communication between our partners?**
3. **What is missing from our communications toolbox?**



LESSON 8: As the collaborative developed and experienced positive team performance and collaborative outcomes, participation in the TLC reinvigorated staff and increased job satisfaction.

Case study interviews also revealed less overt, qualitative impacts of the TLC. In addition to innovation, creative solution development, and increased staff capacity, enhanced job satisfaction was frequently highlighted as a direct result of participation in the TLC. In a time when many public agencies face mounting challenges from environmental threats, political uncertainty, bureaucratic complexity, shrinking budgets, and greater public scrutiny, declining employee morale could likely become a growing concern.³⁴ Interviews with partner staff overwhelmingly pointed to an increase in personal satisfaction and morale as a direct result of their participation in the TLC's Executive Team, Working Group, or one of its four Committees. Here is how some agency executives and staff described their experience:

"It's exciting to have other people working through challenges with me. Oftentimes, I'm working on things alone. A team approach is fulfilling for me on a professional level. Being part of a smart, motivated team is very inspiring. I also feel like my work is having a higher value by being examined regionally."

—TLC partner staff and Committee member

"The work we do under the One Tam umbrella brings a lot of passion and enthusiasm to the staff. We get to work with a much more diverse network, so we are gaining access to new resources and getting invitations to events we wouldn't otherwise."

—Working Group member

"The energy for getting things done as a team almost builds its own culture."

—Executive Team member

"The TLC has given me something quite inspiring towards the end of my career: an amazing new vision, a new platform to get more done. It is dusting off my dreams. I love seeing systems in place moving my ideas and hopes forward. Finding ways to connect with our next generation – the TLC does that; fostering the artistic community – the TLC does that; propelling science and salmon recovery – the TLC does that."

—Working Group member

"As we take on big projects around climate change, it helps us feel like we're all together in this. There's a shared commitment to taking on these big challenges. We aren't chipping away at these things alone."

—Executive Team member

With the increased focus on human dimensions in land management agencies, executive leaders are smart to take note of the factors helping to produce an inspired workforce. Research for this case study indicates that highly functioning partnerships can have significant positive impacts on staff that will make them more effective and successful in their jobs.



Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy staff Monica Stafford and Marin County Parks staff Greg Reza co-host a volunteer work day in celebration of Earth Day.



BOTTOM LINE ▼

- Many of the TLC partner staff who were interviewed cited their involvement with the TLC as one of the most personally and professionally rewarding aspects of their jobs.
- Partnerships such as the TLC require diverse teams and extended networks. Those teams and networks are critical sources of knowledge, resources, and tools but also emotional connection, motivation, and community belonging.
- When partnerships are well-functioning and successful, they can especially serve to empower and inspire staff in their day-to-day work.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. How are my partnerships impacting my feelings about my job?
2. How can I proactively cultivate my social network to increase my access to emotional connection, peer-to-peer support, and resources?
3. How does my agency culture support its employees to thrive in their partnerships?

LESSON 9: The tricky balance of goal orientation and responsiveness has been vital to the TLC's progress.

The TLC has struck a balance between being deliberate and goal-oriented, while also being nimble and adaptable. This healthy balance of intention and non-attachment appears to be serving the partners well in their ability to keep moving forward. While they have been wholly devoted to joint planning and systematizing their workflow, they have managed to simultaneously stay open to changing course and making room for new ideas.

Interestingly, the partnership has cultivated an ethos from its early forming stage around a commitment to intention and thoughtful planning. At the same time, interviewees spoke about needing to be flexible to their partners and their stakeholder audiences. While they stay true to their overarching mission, as one Working Group member said, they “approach everything they do with an openness to learn.” Being able to effectively juggle both practices appears to be a key ingredient of success.

As another Working Group member pointed out, “sometimes the pathway you laid out might feel right, but then you learn something new and need to be flexible enough to pivot and redefine the pathway forward.”

This culture of nimbleness has enabled the partners to better respond to the needs of each partner, as well as the needs of the community. The *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* is one example of the partners' adaptability and willingness to shift gears and move into a new direction. Notably, the development of the report and the two-day Science Summit were not in the 2016 work plan. It evolved from conversations the One Tam Working Group staff, Ambassadors, and Board Committee members were having with various

“A lot of what we're doing is less deliberate. We have our over-arching intention, but we are willing to try different things and see what resonates. We aren't going in with only one way to do it.”

—Working Group member



stakeholders in the community. They wanted to better understand the current ecological condition of Mt. Tamalpais as a whole and what the trends lines are, with respect to plant and animal communities on the mountain. If community members were being invited to increase their involvement and participation in stewarding the mountain, they needed a clearer picture of its health, and why their involvement was important. The partners acknowledged that they could speak to their own respective jurisdictions, but they were less prepared to present a complete snapshot of Mt. Tamalpais as an interconnected landscape.

Admittedly, when the partners started exploring the idea of pooling all of their respective data and generating a more complete story, they were not clear where this journey would take them. There were also some fears of not knowing exactly what the data might reveal and the uncertainty of how the agencies and the public might respond. Working Group members had not forecasted what ended up becoming not only an enormous year-long undertaking but also a cornerstone report that now underlies almost every decision and action the partners make together.

Another example of organic growth is the One Tam Membership Program. It also was not in the 2016 Work Plan. It evolved out of community members continuing to ask how they could support or join the One Tam initiative beyond volunteering for a work day. In both examples, it was the fact that the TLC had an already-established framework for community input—and an ingrained willingness to listen and take the feedback to heart—that allowed the partners to pivot and be responsive to the community.

The *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* can also serve as a cautionary tale. Many of the interviewees highlighted the ensuing tension from adding this new, unplanned priority to the team's already full workloads. Several staff cited feelings of being overwhelmed,

burned-out, and frustrated by needing to make room for this new project, while not wanting to compromise the quality of their other priorities. Some interviewees proposed that moving forward it will be important to set up clearer parameters for shifting team priorities as the TLC strives to be responsive to new needs.

Another important lesson from the *Measuring the Health of a Mountain: A Report on Mount Tamalpais' Natural Resources* is the benefit of a systems thinking approach. Many interviewees acknowledged that the relationships and skills that were cultivated through the development of the report are already transcending well beyond the project scope. As one interviewee commented, “the strengthened relationships and knowledge across the region will continue to pay dividends down the road and increase odds for future success in whatever ways we decide to team up.”

BOTTOM LINE ▼

- **Striking a balance between having a clear vision and deliberate planning—while at the same time avoiding tunnel vision—is essential.**
- **Strong frameworks and systems can generate greater confidence among team members to be nimble and adaptable.**

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WORKING IN A PARTNERSHIP

1. **How is our partnership culture oriented when it comes to balancing deliberateness with nimbleness?**
2. **How well are we positioned to turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones?**

“Partnerships rarely come with a set of cookie cutters. You have to make a whole new cookie cutter.”

—Stakeholder



CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Partner staff identified several topics they are starting to pay more attention to, namely:

- 1. Incubation and Innovation:** As the TLC incubates more programs and initiatives, what will become integrated back into the agencies, or will the Backbone Organization and One Tam staff need to continually grow in order to support innovation and increased staff capacity?
- 2. Succession Planning:** How do partners best prepare for when Working Group and Executive Team members and Backbone Organization staff leave? How do the partners codify shared practices and principles and their culture of entrepreneurial spirit, humor, and transparency?
- 3. Funding the Backbone and TLC Programs:** How does the Parks Conservancy continue wearing two hats and effectively balance its role as key fundraiser for GGNRA and the TLC? How does the Parks Conservancy help institutional funders better understand and appreciate the value of landscape-scale stewardship initiatives?

CONCLUSION

In many ways, Year Three was a tipping point for the TLC. Importantly, partners proved to themselves that their partnership has value and the risks that they initially individually took were crucial stepping stones to achieving their early collective outcomes. With each successful outcome, partners “renewed their vows” to each other by investing more into the collaborative.

Year Three included considerable learning by the TLC partners. Below summarizes their nine key lessons learned:

LESSON 1: Risk-taking and investing considerable sweat equity by the partners have been crucial to the TLC’s collective outcomes.

LESSON 2: An effective, consistent, yet fluid facilitator for collaboration has been essential for the TLC.

LESSON 3: The partnership’s ability to cultivate and scale positive interpersonal relationships has been foundational to its effectiveness and impact.

LESSON 4: Creating a common vocabulary has been a significant investment by the partners and vital for implementing cross-jurisdictional, landscape-scale stewardship.

LESSON 5: Investing in grassroots community engagement early has been critical to the TLC’s progress.

LESSON 6: Implementing cross-jurisdictional projects and programs has required a combination of three primary change strategies: innovation, invention, and adding capacity to fill operations gaps.

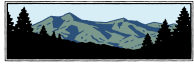
LESSON 7: As the partnership team scaled up, two-way communication also had to scale up.

LESSON 8: As the collaborative developed and experienced positive team performance and collaborative outcomes, participation in the TLC reinvigorated staff and increased job satisfaction.

LESSON 9: The tricky balance of goal orientation and responsiveness has been vital to the TLC’s progress.

The potential impact of the TLC on Mt. Tamalpais’ resources and visitors is yet to be fully realized, but there is now a burgeoning framework in place. With ongoing investment by the partners and strengthened support by the community, there is significant potential for mountain-wide, long-term gains. This case study identified many ways in which the TLC can serve as a model to help inform other multi-jurisdictional partnerships, individual organizations, and the social sector at large.

As the need for land managers to find new pathways to empower local communities to collectively invest in land stewardship becomes more and more critical, the TLC model paints a potential vision of the future of public lands management in America. Celebrating and cultivating a diversity of skills, expertise, and perspectives within a land stewardship partnership will ensure greater sustainability and resilience. The melding of inter-organizational cultures and letting go of control and conventional practices will ensure their adaptability. The staff’s willingness to be influenced by others and make room for and embrace the needs of the larger network, as well as undertake their own needs, will build increased trust and relevance. The desire and commitment by land managers to stand together with partners to face the growing complex challenges ahead will grow sustainability and ensure their impact.



STAY IN TOUCH

The TLC members are committed to actively participating in the landscape-scale conservation community in California and nationally.

If you have questions, ideas, or feedback, the members of the TLC would like to hear from you.

Please send an email including your contact information to info@onetam.org.

To receive periodic email updates on the progress of the TLC, visit onetam.org and sign up for the One Tam e-newsletter.

ONETAM.ORG



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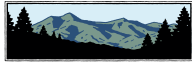
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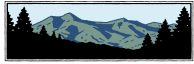
William Hough, One Tam, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Photos by: Craig Solin, Sharon Farrell, Amy Mickel, Sue Gardner, Alison Taggart-Barone, Sue Gardner, Sandy Allen



Endnotes

- 1 National approximation based on inventories conducted in the Rocky Mountain West and Northeast as shared during case study interview.
- 2 The number of landscape-scale partnerships has been slowly growing since 1900, with more rapid growth since 1990. The Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy at The University of Montana, <http://naturalresourcespolicy.org/the-center/>.
- 3 Matthew McKinney, Lynn Scarlett, and Daniel Kemmis, *Large Landscape Conservation: A Strategic Framework for Policy and Action* (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010).
- 4 Matthew McKinney and Shawn Johnson, *Large Landscape Conservation in the Rocky Mountain West* (Center for Natural Resources & Environmental Policy, The University of Montana, 2013).
- 5 *Expanding Horizons: Highlights from the National Workshop on Large Landscape Conservation*, (2014), <http://www.largelandscapenetwork.org/2014-national-workshop/>.
- 6 Based upon some interviewees' observations of the field.
- 7 Learn more about the State Park's Transformation Plan at http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=29242.
- 8 Learn more about the North Coast Initiative on the Save the Redwoods League website at <https://www.savetheredwoods.org/project/north-coast-initiative/>.
- 9 Learn more about the Irvine Ranch Conservancy-Crystal Cove Collaborative on the Irvine Ranch Conservancy website at <http://lets-gooutside.org/about/partners-on-the-land/>.
- 10 Based on information shared during case study interview with Jay Chamberlin, Natural Resources Division Chief, California State Parks.
- 11 Mickel, A. E. & Erickson, E. (2016). *Tamalpais Lands Collaborative: Five-Year Longitudinal Study, Year 2*. Unpublished manuscript.
- 12 The first and second TLC case studies can be viewed on the One Tam website at <http://onetam.org/tamalpais-lands-collaborative#-studies>.
- 13 <http://www.largelandscapenetwork.org/>
- 14 There are many different types of partnerships with varying degrees of engagement. A strategic partnership is a special type of partnership that exists when there is an intentional, interdependent collaboration between two or more entities designed to achieve specific goals. This type of partnership requires ongoing investment, structures, systems, and skills for ensuring a productive inter-organizational relationship. <http://conservationimpact-nonprofitimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PartnerRelationsContinuum.pdf>
- 15 Amanda Neville, *Why Partnerships Are Harder Than Marriage*, Forbes Magazine (March 1, 2013), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/aman-daneville/2013/03/01/why-partnership-is-harder-than-marriage/#18d38f747ec9>.
- 16 The first and second TLC case studies can be viewed on the One Tam website at <http://onetam.org/tamalpais-lands-collaborative#-studies>.
- 17 The Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy at the University of Montana defines the smallest landscape-scale initiatives as less than 500,000 acres while the largest landscape-scale initiatives are more than 100 million acres. <http://naturalresourcespolicy.org/the-center/>.
- 18 https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.
- 19 http://www.onetam.org/sites/default/files/basic/TLC_AR_2016_SinglePages.pdf
- 20 *One Mountain, One Vision* can be viewed at https://issuu.com/parks-conservancy/docs/tlc_vision_book_11_06_14_web_ready?e=5364639/10125190.
- 21 The TLC's agreements, including the MOU, can be viewed on the One Tam website at <http://onetam.org/tamalpais-lands-collaborative>.
- 22 Some partnership models designate an individual coordinator to function as the Backbone Organization. Other partnership models



designate a convening entity or organization to fulfill this role. The TLC adopted the “Backbone Organization” language, which is specific to the Collective Impact model.

23 <http://onetam.org/why-one-tam#friends>

24 Mickel, A. E. & Erickson, E. (2016). *Tamalpais Lands Collaborative: Five-Year Longitudinal Study, Year 2*. Unpublished manuscript.

25 The Partnership and Community Collaboration Academy is a national training organization serving federal employees specializing in applied training on 22 partnership and community collaboration competencies as defined by the Office of Personnel Management, <http://www.partnership-academy.net/>.

26 <http://www.partnership-academy.net/managingbynetwork/>

27 Partner Cultural Awareness is one of 22 Partnership and Community Collaboration Competencies defined by the Office of Personnel Management for all federal employees whose responsibilities include partnerships, community outreach, and stakeholder engagement. The Partner Cultural Awareness competency is defined by the Office of Personnel Management as follows: “acknowledges, understands, respects, and communicates respective partners’ cultures that are based upon missions, practices, people, governance, traditions, financial structure, capacity, and institutional histories. Finds ways that partners’ cultures can contribute to strengthen the mutual endeavor; values the difference and finds ways to integrate these differences into a workable operating culture for the overall partnership.” Learn more at <http://www.partnership-academy.net/>.

28 Mickel, A. E. & Erickson, E. (2016). *Tamalpais Lands Collaborative: Five-Year Longitudinal Study, Year 2*. Unpublished manuscript.

29 <http://onetam.org/peak-health>

30 <http://www.calflora.org/>

31 <http://onetam.org/>

32 http://www.onetam.org/sites/default/files/basic/Revised%20TLC%20project%20and%20program%20list_final_11_23_16_0.pdf

33 <https://nature.nps.gov/water/nrca/index.cfm>

34 The TLC’s agreements, including the MOU, can be viewed on the One Tam website at <http://onetam.org/tamalpais-lands-collaborative>.

35 Based upon the author’s interviews with national subject matter experts in the field.