

# EAZA Field Conservation Standards



Approved by extraordinary EAZA Annual General Meeting  
1 October 2022

---

## Introduction

The European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) is a non-profit conservation organisation.

**EAZA Vision:** Progressive zoos and aquariums saving species together with you

**EAZA Mission:** EAZA is the Membership organisation that sets the standard for progressive zoos and aquariums and other partners across Europe, Western Asia and beyond. We strive continuously to define and demonstrate excellence in integrated species conservation through a transparent and collaborative approach to population management, wild animal care and welfare, representation with international organisations, conservation education, and scientific research.

EAZA strives for its community to be a significant contributor to and driving force for global conservation and expects every EAZA Member to engage in and contribute to activities that will positively impact the conservation of species.

## Purpose of this document

The EAZA Field Conservation Standards have been developed by the EAZA Conservation Committee with the purpose of outlining what is expected from EAZA Members in relation to their contribution to, and delivery of, *in situ* species conservation activities. Furthermore, through supporting information, the Standards aim to provide guidance and support on how to meet these Standards.

The Field Conservation Standards are intended for EAZA Member activities involving the planning, management (incl. evaluation), financing or implementation of field conservation activities; and should be considered alongside other EAZA Standards, Guidelines and Strategy ([www.eaza.net/about-us/eazadocuments/](http://www.eaza.net/about-us/eazadocuments/)), especially the Conservation Education Standards and the EAZA Population Management Manual, which describe *ex situ* conservation Standards, to guide the development and delivery of integrated holistic strategies for positive conservation impact.

EAZA acknowledges the diversity of zoos and aquaria within its Membership and recognises that the scale and form of field conservation involvement in each EAZA Member should be proportional to the size of its operations. Tools and methods referenced in this document may not seem to be to scale and/or daunting for some.

However – the main expectation is that conscious efforts should be made to ensure field conservation actions delivered are of high quality and have positive impact, no matter the scale. **When so required, the Conservation Committee is fully dedicated to support EAZA Members on their journey towards meeting these Standards.**

### Field conservation activities

Field conservation activities relevant to these Standards are the *in situ* activities as defined in the [EAZA Guidelines on the definition of a direct contribution to conservation \(2015\)](#). This usually applies to conducting or supporting activities that will have direct positive outcomes or facilitate such outcomes for species populations in the wild. It is recognised however that there is a transition between *in situ* and *ex situ* activities, and that zoos and aquariums in particular have opportunity to conduct activities that unite both of these under the [One Plan Approach](#) to conservation.

These Field Conservation Standards are designed to be able to flexibly accommodate such holistic approaches. However, given that existence of the Conservation Education Standards and EAZA Population Management Manual (*ex situ* conservation), the primary conservation activities, as defined in the EAZA guidelines mentioned above, that these Field Conservation Standards are most relevant to are (*relevant conservation category reference in brackets*):

- (1a) Field work aimed at maintaining, restoring or creating habitats with the intent to create or sustain conservation benefits for threatened species and/or habitats including research, community-based programs, management of areas for wildlife and securing of additional space for wildlife.
- (2a) Species- or population management in the field such as conservation translocations, observations, surveys, protection, etc.;
- (2gi) Veterinary care for wildlife disease issues and animal health issues for animals not found in the institution's collection if it directly impacts the conservation of species in the wild.
- (3a) Research that takes place outside of the institution and is specifically intended to contribute to the conservation of species or ecosystems in situ
- (4b) Conservation education programmes that take place outside of the institution and target an audience whose activities or presence directly impact the species or habitat of concern.
- (5) Advocacy work that brings about legislative change to benefit conservation and/or the development of ideas that help define a position and assist in the development of thinking that ultimately benefits conservation.
- (6a) Grants made to other conservation organisations or persons to support field work that meets the definitions above.
- (6b) Providing of any goods, equipment, or supplies (including educational supplies) donated to field conservation projects as defined above. This includes the provision of technical, academic, or other expertise and/or human resource capacity from EAZA Member staff.

# EAZA Field Conservation Standards

*Please read these Field Conservation Standards together with the Guidelines for interpretation in the next section, which provide important support and guidance on their implementation.*

Recognising that applying the One Plan Approach\* to species conservation to further the conservation of species in their natural habitat are part of the main objectives of the Association, Members of EAZA:

1. Must have a transparent and documented plan for the delivery of field conservation activities that contribute to the conservation of species in their native habitats.
2. Must have processes in place to ensure effective, evidence-based, selection of field conservation activities supported or undertaken, to maximise the conservation benefits of contributed resources.
3. Must produce or must be working towards having measurable targets to deliver field conservation actions and allocate appropriate resources (including staff and financial) to achieve these targets.
4. Must have in place appropriate monitoring and evaluation to be able to track project progress, evaluate success and apply adaptive management.
5. Must ensure that field conservation activities follow relevant guidelines that are endorsed by wildlife management or other appropriate agencies and authorities.
6. Must communicate to internal and external audiences the contributions to, and the results of field conservation activity.
7. Must document/record field conservation contributions (financial support and/or staff time support) in the EAZA Conservation Database every year by 1 May for the preceding year.

Additionally, EAZA Members should actively strive to:

8. Inform the relevant zoo and aquarium association(s) (if existing) when leading field conservation activities outside of their own region.
9. Develop and foster partnerships, and increase capacity, to effectively develop and deliver field conservation plans which are promoting long term, sustainable conservation solutions.
10. Follow recognised standards of project management and implementation for the delivery of conservation action by themselves or by partners.
11. Support local conservation initiatives as part of their field conservation activities.
12. Endeavour to share lessons learnt from field conservation activities to benefit the wider conservation community.

\* The One Plan approach to species conservation is the development of management strategies and conservation actions by all responsible parties for all populations of a species, whether inside or outside their natural range.

# Guidance for interpreting EAZA Field Conservation Standards



*This Guidance for interpreting the EAZA Field Conservation Standards are based on the 12 points in the EAZA Field Conservation Standards above. In addition to the guidance included in each of the section below the Conservation Committee also promotes to availability of the EAZA Conservation Campaign, the EAZA Conservation Forum, the open meeting during the EAZA Annual Conference, the EAZA Conservation Database and the EAZA Academy courses as available resources for EAZA Members. The Conservation Committee will continue to develop further guidance and update the sections as it becomes available. Members can always contact the Conservation Committee for support or making a connection to pointing in the right direction.*

## **Standard 1: Field Conservation Plans**

This is the organisational strategy for achieving conservation impact in the field. It does not have to be expansive; it can be a few pages and proportionate for your organisation size and structure. The plan should outline transparent and tangible methods (what is your way to contribute to field conservation) and commitment for achieving positive conservation impact over the longer term. Member zoos and aquariums are encouraged to make real commitment to field conservation by defining contributions as part of their core budget.

The plan generally covers a period of 3-5 years, but this will depend on your organisation. The plan for field conservation might, and should ideally, be contained within a wider integrated long term conservation plan that also covers conservation education and *ex situ* conservation; it should reflect the, vision, mission, values and culture of your organisation's approach to field conservation. A field conservation plan should be achievable and realistic, yet ambitious and ideally include the following elements:

- Review of your current contributions to field conservation; have these resulted in success according to expectations? Knowing this - what would be your vision for future direction.
- Logically identified priority area(s) where you will aim to have conservation impact. This may relate to species in your collection, specific themes (threats, geographic areas, etc.) or staff expertise or other factors.
- Clarity on how proposed actions within the plan will lead to positive conservation impact. What results do your activities or support aim to achieve?
- Set measurable targets (see also Standard 3) to allow you to track progress against your plan, identify improvements needed along the way and also eventually demonstrate a successfully implemented plan.

- Identifies, and involves as appropriate, the partners, stakeholders and key staff that will be involved to realise the plan, and the different roles that they will play.
- A commitment of, or strategy to get the resources to achieve the plan (this could be financial, or a commitment of staff or other resources)

The plan should be simple and easily communicated within and outside of your institution, as this can only help you with realising your plan. The plan should be a living document that is recognised across the organisation - a good plan is continually used to guide decision making.

A number of zoo, aquarium and other conservation organisation strategies can be found online and may provide guidance. It is also worth reading the WAZA conservation strategy: [www.waza.org/priorities/conservation/conservation-strategies/](http://www.waza.org/priorities/conservation/conservation-strategies/).

Example (parts of) Conservation Strategies are available on the EAZA Member Area.

## **Standard 2: Project Design and Selection**

EAZA Members should ensure the precious resources they commit to field conservation are well invested; and should conduct appropriate due diligence to ensure they invest in appropriate projects and partners to achieve conservation goals. Member zoos and aquariums are encouraged to make real commitment to field conservation by defining contributions as part of their core budget.

The guidance for Standard 9 can help Members select 'tried and tested' partners and projects, otherwise EAZA Members should conduct their own background checks (online research into the success of past projects for example) as appropriate. The website of Conservation Evidence ([www.conservationevidence.com](http://www.conservationevidence.com)) amongst others can provide further information on assessing the effectiveness of conservation actions.

EAZA and Save the Rhino International have also recorded a useful webinar on 'Finding a Partner for Conservation' - <https://youtu.be/gz64ltzNFdl>

## **Standard 3: Measurable targets**

EAZA Members can support field conservation in different ways and at different scales, including financial support ('grants'), leading and/or developing their own projects, or providing financial or technical support towards specific project components. For each type of involvement, targets can be set for the institution to reach.

It is acknowledged that during exploration phases of developing or getting involved in conservation work, these targets may be less concrete.

Example targets are available on the EAZA Member Area.

## **Standard 4: Monitoring, evaluating and adaptive management**

Adaptive management is a core principle of best practice project management and made more successful by effective monitoring and evaluation of projects. This will be

proportionate to the size and type of project or activity, and EAZA Member-role with the project, and should provide methods to ensure projects or activities stay on track and to demonstrate success at the end of the project.

There are several methods and tools available to evaluate conservation efforts, and resources such as PRISM (<https://conservationstandards.org/library-item/prism-toolkit-for-evaluating-outcomes-and-impacts/>) can provide guidance on these. For EAZA Members providing small financial contributions to a project then appropriate monitoring and evaluation outputs may be an annual or mid-year report that outlines project progress; for larger projects with significant financial or technical input from EAZA Members more detailed monitoring and evaluation processes are likely more appropriate.

Adaptive Management is the effective use of the information generated from these evaluations. Rather than producing reports that sit on a shelf it should be used to determine what is working and what is not and used to inform management decision about changes that may be required within projects or activities. Reflection post-project should also help inform future project plans and the selection and design of new projects that are likely to succeed.

### **Standard 5: Following Conservation Guidelines and Authority support**

Progressive zoos and aquariums should not be operating in a conservation vacuum and always make sure their activities are guided by local and/or international integrated approaches towards species conservation that is endorsed by the appropriate organisations and authorities.

EAZA adopted the following IUCN Guidelines specifically:

- [IUCN Species Survival Commission Guidelines on the Use of Ex situ Management for Species Conservation \(2014\)](#)
- [IUCN Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations \(2013\)](#)
- [IUCN Guidelines for the Management of Confiscated, Live Organisms \(2019\)](#)

A list of the most relevant IUCN guidelines to consider for field conservation practitioners can be found here:

[https://www.iucn.org/resources#resource\\_types-resource\\_type\\_publication](https://www.iucn.org/resources#resource_types-resource_type_publication)

The IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group ([CPSG](#)) provides further guidance on conservation planning and the application of the One Plan Approach to Conservation.

### **Standard 6: Conservation Communication**

As a community, EAZA contributes a huge amount of financial resources and expertise to conservation. Promoting our joint conservation activities raises the Association's as well as the individual Member's profile as conservation organisations, benefits branding, reputation and can influence public opinion and legislation, and can help

generate further support for conservation activity. EAZA Members should commit resources to promote their conservation activity through their own media (such as websites and social media channels) and to their visitors and share success stories through wider EAZA communication channels so that we can celebrate and promote our achievements. Please contact [info@eaza.net](mailto:info@eaza.net) to provide your contributions for Zooquaria, EAZA Facebook, Conservation Database Snapshots and other publications.

### **Standard 7: EAZA Conservation Database**

The EAZA Conservation Database ([www.eazaconservation.org](http://www.eazaconservation.org)) is an online database for collecting information from all Full, Temporary and Associate EAZA Members (zoo or aquarium) about their yearly contributions to conservation.

A realistic oversight of our Members' direct contributions to conservation is needed to be able to represent and inform all Members, address priorities, have transparent communication, direct lobby work and increase our positive conservation input and impact.

Each Full, Temporary and Associate Members (zoo or aquarium) EAZA Member is expected to have a dedicated Conservation Contact who receives an account with editing access. Each EAZA Member is expected to enter their contributions to conservation of the preceding year, before 1 May of the following year.

For EAZA Member staff and EAZA TAGs, who can also receive access, this valuable source of information allows them to browse for inspiration for new projects to support, explore what activities other Members are undertaking, and/or find opportunities for joint conservation efforts. The information provided by EAZA Members in the EAZA Conservation Database is also used for important promotional and lobbying activities for our community, like the EAZA Conservation Map on the public website of EAZA.

Support is available at the EAZA Executive Office through [info@eazaconservation.org](mailto:info@eazaconservation.org).

### **Standard 8: Informing other zoo and aquarium associations**

When working within the geographic scope of another regional zoo and aquarium association or body, then it is best practice to inform, and if appropriate involve, them in planned activities. This helps promote collaboration between different regional zoo and aquarium associations, and allows exploration of the potential local knowledge, expertise or capacity that can be applied to a specific project or used to generally promote conservation capacity locally.

*Contact information for National and Regional Zoo and Aquaria Associations is available on the EAZA Member Area and/or through the EAZA Executive Office.*

## **Standard 9: Partnerships and Capacity Building**

In most cases an in-country partner will deliver and manage conservation on the ground; and finding the right partner, and helping increase their capacity to deliver effective conservation, is an important project development step.

There are many different conferences and networks to engage in to develop these partnerships (for example the EAZA Conservation Forum) and EAZA TAGs and other members of the EAZA community can provide guidance on potential partners for particular regions or species. The EAZA Conservation Database can also help identify existing projects in which you could become involved in.

When it comes to building the capacity of your staff to plan, manage and deliver field conservation then good starting points to identify training opportunities for core skills can be found on the websites of the [EAZA Academy](#), [IUCN SSC Conservation Planning Specialist Group](#) and [Conservation Measures Partnership](#).

## **Standard 10: Project Management Best Practice**

There are a number of resources that the conservation community recognise as accepted best practice for the design and implementation of conservation action.

EAZA Members with major roles in projects should be very familiar with such guidelines, otherwise a basic understanding is beneficial. These guidelines outline key project principles such as engagement with key stakeholders, the need for well-designed monitoring and evaluation, and promotion of a learning environment. The Conservation Measures Partnership Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (<https://conservationstandards.org/about/>) is commonly used within the conservation community, but other similar guidelines do exist.

## **Standard 11: Supporting Local Conservation**

EAZA Members should engage in local conservation as well as supporting projects in other biodiversity hotspots. EAZA Members can often take leading roles on local conservation initiatives, and provide broader, more integrated, input into projects engaging in activities such as conservation breeding, community engagement or citizen science. Local projects often also provide greater opportunity to directly involve and engage a diversity of staff and visitors and promote and engage in wider local conservation networks and initiatives.

## **Standard 12: Share lessons learnt**

Sharing such learning with the community can also provide wider conservation benefit, and can be achieved through the publication of research, presentations at conferences such as the EAZA Conservation Forum, sharing project reports or by sharing information through platforms such as [www.conservationevidence.com](http://www.conservationevidence.com).

*Links updated May 2023*