R E V I S E D D R A F T

PROPOSED BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH FAITH-BASED LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES[1]

Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group
Society for Conservation Biology

This revised draft continues the process established by the Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group (RCBWG) of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) to develop guidelines for all members to consider when interacting with faith-based communities on research and practice projects. Drawing upon members' experiences and concerns shared during the 2015 International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) in France, the RCBWG formally launched the Best Practices Project in March 2016 for the purpose of collecting from SCB members world-wide key practices they recommend following when engaging faith-based leaders and communities in conservation projects. A survey of SCB members from May to September 2016, a forum at the 2016 International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC) in Newfoundland/Labrador, and a symposium, workshop, and poster session at the 2017 ICCB in Colombia yielded many suggestions for best practices that constitute the guidelines that follow.

Motivation for Developing Best Practices Guidelines

Conscious of its primary aims to "strengthen the collaboration between faith traditions and conservation" and "promote awareness of the importance of this collaboration within SCB,"[2] the RCBWG was motivated to initiate the Best Practices Project by several realities. One pertains to the significance of the number of people throughout the world who affiliate with religions and may be open to constructive engagement with conservation researchers and practitioners. In a study of 2010 censuses, surveys, and population registries in 230 countries and territories, the Pew Research Center estimated that approximately 84 percent of adults and children are affiliated with a "religion" (a term used broadly to encompass organized world religions and various traditional, indigenous, and folk religions including African traditional, Chinese folk, Native American tribal, and Australian aboriginal).[3] Though neither the extent to which these 5.8 of 6.9 billion people in the world are involved in their faith-

[1]Prepared by RCBWG Board member Jame Schaefer, Ph.D. (Marquette University) with input from Sue Higgins, M.S. (Center for Large Landscape Conservation) and other SCB members on their experiences in the field. We are grateful for their willingness to include e-mail addresses at which they can be reached for more information.

[2]"Religion and Conservation Biology," Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group, Society for Conservation Biology, http://conbio.org/groups/working-groups/religion-and-conservation-biology.

[3]"The Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life, December 18, 2012, http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/: 2.2 billion Christians (32% of the world's population), 1.6 billion Muslims (23%), 1 billion Hindus (15%), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7%) and 14 million Jews (0.2%); an estimated 58 million people (slightly less than 1% of the global population) belong to other religions, including the Baha'i faith, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Tenrikyo, Wicca and Zoroastrianism; and more than 400 million people (6%) that practice various folk and traditional religions including African traditional, Chinese folk, Native American, and Australian aboriginal.

Though the term "religion" is defined generally as an organized way of knowing and orienting members of the community to the subject of worship or ultimate concerns, the Best Practices Project prefers the use of "faith-based" to refer to leaders and communities that include native peoples whose cultural practices manifest ways of seeking meaning and purpose in life in their particular contexts.

based communities nor the depth to which they express their faith in word and action were explored in this demographic study, the vast number who identify with a particular faith may view their relation to other species, abiota, and Earth in ways that are compatible with conservation goals. That some religious communities have been motivated by their faith to protect other species, restore ecological systems, and commit to sustainability objectives attests to their viability as SCB allies in biological conservation.[4] Furthermore, statements by faith leaders who call their followers to act on problems[5] and interfaith efforts at local to international levels of governance[6] suggest the likelihood that they will be open to collaborating with conservationists to achieve shared outcomes. Thus, SCB researchers and practitioners are wise to consider engaging leaders and members of faith-based communities in conservation projects.[7]

Another reality is the requirement that some SCB researchers and practitioners must obtain permission from faith-based communities to conduct particular types of research and to implement conservation practices. In the RCBWG Best Practices Survey conducted in 2016, half of the SCB members reported that they needed permission from a faith-based community

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[4]The Benedictine Women of Holy Wisdom Monastery, the first recipient of the SCB's Assisi Award for Faith-Based Conservation presented at the 2017 ICCB, exemplify religiously motivated conservation.

[5]For example, Patriarch Bartholomew, *Message by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for World Oceans Day*, 8 June 2016, http://sacrametropolisortodoxa.blogspot.com/2016/06/message-by-his-all-holinessecumenical.html; Pope Francis, *Laudato si', On Care for Our Common Home*, 24 May 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papafrancesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html; Rabbi Arthur Waskow, *Vision Shmita 2022: 7 Thoughts & 7 Proposals toward Healing Earth*, The Shalom Center, 2015, https://theshalomcenter.org/content/vision-shmita-2022-7-thoughts-7proposals-toward-healing-earth; Dalai Lama, *Environment: His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Speeches and Messages on the Environment*, Office of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, 2016, http://www.dalailama.com/messages/environment; Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, Istanbul, Turkey, 17–18 August 2015, http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/islamic-declaration-onglobal-climate-change/; Evangelical Environmental Network, "Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation," http://www.creationcare.org/evangelical_declaration_on_the_care_of_creation; and International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, http://www.iipfcc.org/. Many statements by leaders of the world religion are accessible from The Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, http://fore.yale.edu/climate-change/statements-from-worldreligions/.

[6]Among exemplary efforts are Interfaith Power & Light's with chapters throughout the USA, http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/, and the remarkable "Statement of Faith and Spiritual Leaders on the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21 in Paris in December 2015," organized by ACT Alliance, http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/COP21_Statement_englisch2.pdf and accepted by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as indicated in "Religious Leaders Call for Effective Paris Agreement: Joint Statement Handed to Christiana Figueres in Bonn," United Nations Newsroom, 15 October 2015, http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/religious-leaders-call-for-effective-paris-agreement/.

[7]This is the conclusion of a study of recent statements and actions by leaders of the Abrahamic Religions identified and discussed in J. Schaefer, "Motivated for Action and Collaboration: The Abrahamic Religions and Climate Change," *Geosciences* 6.2 (2016): 1-19. For analyses of the potential of some religious communities for collaborating substantively and the reluctance of others, see the following examples: J. Carlisle, and A. Clark, "Green for God: Religion and Environmentalism by Cohort and Time," *Environment and Behavior*, February 2017, DIO0013916517693356; J. Clements, A. McCright, and C. Xiao, "Green Christians? An Empirical Examination of Environmental Concern within the US General Public," *Organization and Environment* 27 (2014): 85-102; B. Taylor, G. Wieren, and B. Zaleha, "Lynn White Jr. and the Greening of Religion Hypothesis," *Conservation Biology* 30 (2016): 1000–1009; and E. Whitney, "Lynn White, Ecotheology, and History," *Environmental Ethics* 15 (Summer 1993): 151-73.

before beginning their research. Another half indicated that members of faith-based communities helped achieve the objectives of conservation projects, some by collecting data that conservationists needed.[8] Respondents to this survey and presenters in SCB congresses shared many effective ways in which they sought permission and help from faith leaders and communities that can be helpful to other researchers and practitioners who are contemplating projects that require permission to proceed.

During a forum at the 2016 IMCC in Newfoundland/Labrador, several SCB members identified a third reality: Some scientists' reluctance to engage faith leaders and communities. Some are reluctant due to negative views of religions as causes of strife and violence in the world, discomfort with religious and spiritual ways of thinking beyond material reality, desire to work only within their fields of expertise, and biases, assumptions, and stereotypes of particular religions.[9] According to participants in the IMCC forum, these deterrents to interacting with faith-based communities are "self-inflicted" and must be overcome if their permission and/or assistance with research and practice projects are necessary for successful outcomes.

A final reality that motivated the Best Practices Project resulted from an extensive search for and examination of guidelines and protocols that other professional societies, non-governmental organizations, and faith-based communities have developed.[10] Among the variety of documents issued are guidelines for scientists working with faith communities to better manage their sacred sites[11] and for scientists who interact with particular faith communities on a variety of environmental protection initiatives.[12] Though these documents

[8] J. Schaefer and S. Higgins, "Best Practices Survey—Promising First Step toward Developing Guidelines," Best Practices Project, Religion and Conservation Biology Working Group, December 2016, p. 6; http://conbio.org/images/content_news_blog/RCB+BestPracticesSummary_12.pdf.

[9] See discussion in J. Schaefer "New Hope for the Oceans: Engaging Faith-Based Communities in Marine Conservation," *Frontiers in Marine Science* 5 (March 2017): 1-4. Interestingly, the characteristics of reluctant scientists parallel some of the ways in which people think about relating religion and science that scholars have discussed in detail. For example, see Ian G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), pp. 77-98; and John F. Haught, *Science & Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), pp. 9-26.

Some of these reasons may be reflected in a survey of scientists who are members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science that was conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in May and June 2009. The survey showed that 51 percent of the scientists believe in some form of deity or higher power and 48 percent have no religious affiliation whereas a survey of the general public by Pew in 2006 showed that 95 percent believe in God or a higher power and 82 percent affiliate with a particular religion. See David Masci, "Scientists and Belief: Religion and Science in the United States," Pew Research Center, 5 November 2009, http://www.pewforum.org/2009/11/05/scientists-and-belief/.

[10] The Center for Large Landscapes Conservation's Sue Higgins initiated a search for conservation organizations and professional societies that have developed and are in the process of developing guidelines aimed at facilitating scientist-faith community interaction and found a variety of statements and guidelines to reference. However, none could comprehensively serve conservation biologists who are working globally on species and habitat protection with diverse faith communities.

[11] Among the most prominent examples is the International Union for Conservation of Nature's *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas*, http://csvpa.org/best-practice-guidelines; see also the succinct Sacred Sites International Foundation's succinct "Guidelines for Visiting Sacred Sites" at http://www.sacred-sites.org/preservation/guidelines-for-visiting-sacred-sites/.

[12] E.g., Government of Yukon's *Guidebook on Scientific Research in the Yukon*, http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/publications/Guidebook_on_Scientific_Research_2013.pdf; Alliance for Religion and Conservation's *Mongolian Buddhists Protecting Nature: A Handbook on Faiths, Environment and Development*, http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=391; Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island

are informative and highly valuable, one set of guidelines for relating to a variety of faith-based communities is needed to serve SCB members worldwide from conception to closure of the project.

Developing Best Practices Guidelines

The Best Practices Project of the RCBWG is geared toward meeting the needs of SCB members throughout the world by drawing upon the experiences some have had in the field. Some members contributed through the Best Practices Survey in 2016 and others during venues at international and regional congresses in 2016 and 2017 by sharing ways in which they have interacted with faith-based leaders and communities that may be helpful. The suggestions they proffered fall into five sequential categories: (1) Planning before initiating contact with a leader or members of a faith-based community; (2) initiating contact with the leader of the community; (3) launching and implementing a research or practice project; (4) closing the project; and, (5) following up after closure. SCB members who participated in the Best Practices Survey for which anonymity was promised were asked to annotate the following guidelines based on their experiences in the field and to include their names and e-mail addresses through which they can be contacted for more information and insight. The annotated document was sent subsequently to the approximately 200 SCB members who designated their interest in the RCBWG for their input and revised accordingly.

To obtain insight on the value and appropriateness of the guidelines from religious leaders, the next step in the process of developing the guidelines is circulating them to religious partners of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and annotating their input accordingly. The guidelines will be submitted subsequently to the Board of the RCBWG for advancing to the SCB's Board of Governors for action its members deem feasible and holding sessions at regional congresses during summer 2018 when SCB members will review the guidelines and asked to volunteer to share their experiences when following them. To culminate this project, a symposium will be proposed for the 2019 ICCB featuring case studies of research and practice projects in which the guidelines have been followed.

When considering these proposed guidelines, please recognize that some may be more helpful than others on particular types of research and practice projects. Some may also be more helpful than others when relating to different types of faith-based communities. Some are common sense and integral to any well-developed and implemented project. Discerning the most helpful guidelines, applying them, and modifying them are left to the insight of the researcher and practitioner.

Proposed Best Practices Guidelines for Interacting with Faith-Based Communities

Pre-Engagement Planning

1) Establish a well-constructed conservation research and/or practice project from commencement to termination that you will explain to the leaders/members of the faith-based community, follow the project plan, and consult with them on essential modifications. Assure clear goals, data to collect, and methodology you will use. Think carefully about how to

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Studies's *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Islander Studies 2012*, https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/research-and-guides/ethics/gerais.pdf; and World Wildlife Fund's *Sacred Earth Faith and Conservation Initiative*, http://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/sacred-earth-faiths-for-conservation.

explain your project in language that the faith leader and members of the community will understand.

Craig Bienz, cbienz@tnc.org: When planning to study cultural and medicinal uses of organisms in northern California, Oregon, and Washington USA, we decided to develop field guides and handbooks that illustrated plants and animals with names in their language(s), scientific names, general locations where the organism might be found, the status of the organism, and management actions to maintain or enhance its abundance or distribution.

Temitope Borokini/tborokini@unr.edu: Explaining research objectives in non-technical terms during my project in Southwestern Nigeria helped communicating it effectively. I found this approach very useful in over ten ethnobotanical research studies in the area that involved administering a questionnaire to native doctors, traditional medicinal practitioners, herb gatherers, and herb sellers among the Yoruba people. I communicated with them in their language and informal settings to help them understand the importance of my study.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org: Before engaging with a faith-based community, we find out if they are engaged in any conservation efforts and what their attitudes, actions, culture, and interpretations of cherished texts pertaining to flora and fauna are. Planning to construct our projects from these starting points has proven helpful.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: The main religious partner of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) project in Indonesia is the national Islamic Council (MUI--*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*). Through our representative, the head of the Centre of Islamic Studies at the national university, we sat down with MUI representatives and discussed the project aims and goals. We started by asking them to issue a Muslim response to biodiversity loss in Indonesia and suggested a meeting with conservationists. They were keen to engage, debate, and search their theology for direction. Six months later they issued a national fatwa asking all Muslims to protect threatened species and habitats as part of their religious duty. From that point we discussed how to raise awareness about the fatwa across Indonesia and planned trainings and dissemination techniques and resources for clerics. At every stage, MUI representatives were involved in planning and project delivery.

Robert Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org: Working with a variety of Christian communities with differing levels of scientific knowledge, A Rocha researchers ground at least part of our communications in Biblical language in an effort to establish a bridge between science and faith. We seek to gain a scientific understanding of the location, habitat and/or species under consideration and to relate this information to Christian terminology or theology. For example, during our work on microplastics in the Mediterranean, we used social media to highlight our scientific research and asked why Christians should care. We settled on the language of loving God and neighbor as touchstones that relate actions to reduce microplastic pollution (see http://www.arocha.org/en/news/why-care-about-microplastics).

2) Anticipate spending considerable time developing a relationship with the faith leader/s and community/ies and build requisite timing into your research or practice plan.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: In the Community-based Tree Kangaroo Conservation Program on the Huon Peninsula of Papua New Guinea (www.treekangaroo.org), we learned to include in our project plans sufficient time for extra discussions, awareness, and trust-building with leaders and members of faith communities who manage the protected area.

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: Budgeting time and resources for making at least two contacts with the primarily Catholic faith community before starting a project was important for our research of sacred sites in central Italy. Anyone can drop by a place once, but the second time signals a real commitment and willingness to cooperate. Also vital is budgeting time and resources for returning feedback to the faith community about what you have found/done in the members' language and in a way they can understand.

Oscar Gonzalez, pajarologo@ufl.edu: Scientists are busy people. When we go into the field, we want to use each minute to collect data. However, we need to plan to spend time with people in the local community, because they decide if we can stay or come back. In the Andean communities of Peru where Pentecostal church leaders are highly influential, we had to reprogram our research activities to attend church meetings where we were able to explain our motives and the importance of our work.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: This practice has been key to the work of The Tributary Fund (now The Taimen Fund) for engaging Buddhist leaders on taimen (large freshwater salmonids) fishery protection in the Eg-Uur River Valley in Mongolia and in the initiatives of the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the Roundtable of the Crown of the Continent for relating to interfaith and tribal leaders in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in the transboundary US/Canadian Rocky Mountain landscape.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We met with faith leaders in central India three times to assure they clearly understood the purpose of our tiger and forest conservation project—to reduce snaring and using poisons to trap animals that resulting in killing non-target species. Only then did we propose a visit to our work environment and introduce them to people who were part of our team. Because we intended to develop a non-financial relationship, we had to be very careful to assure that they did not get a contrary message. We took one year to review the status of our relationship building and releasing it to was not so easy. When meeting a lot of people and making inquiries about us and the project, they were constantly bombarded with rumors and exaggerated talk about our project that impacted our efforts to build a relationship with them.

Anonymous from Best Practices Survey: When working with Buddhist, Christian, and Indigenous communities on a biodiversity study in Cambodia and Myanmar, I realized the need for "long periods of engagement."

3) Identify the leader/s, faith community/ies, and their hierarchical norms so you know to whom you should be speaking and the deference toward individuals that are expected.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: The most effective way in which ARC works with faith leaders and communities throughout the world is by identifying a local partner or representative who can bridge the religion and conservation worlds. They are the ones on the ground and in regular contact and communication with our faith partners, so a relationship and trust can build over time and in many cases is already there based on existing relations. We cannot recommend enough trying to find someone who can harmoniously link the two worlds, as miscommunication between conservationists and religious actors is commonplace. Someone who is of the local culture/ religion and who can approach religious leaders with humility and respect will have the greatest welcome.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: This practice has been especially important in our work with Buddhist leaders in Mongolia on conservation initiatives. Making respectful contacts through a local liaison/interpreter trusted by the leaders has been essential, as has working collaboratively with other engaged NGOs.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We involved trained para-ecologists to interact with the local faith leaders in our tiger-forest project in central India. During these interactions, the para-ecologists shared with them the status of the tiger project.

4) Learn as much as you can about the makeup and interaction of men, women, and children in the community and if there are restrictions on involving them in conservation projects.

Cintia Gillam, cintia.gillam@smu.ca: For my research on factors that affect the well-being of fishers who live in the slums of two coastal communities on Timor-Leste, I observed the significant roles Catholic women play in church activities and evangelical women play when giving testimonials in church services. However, they do not have leadership position in their primarily patriarchal society nor do married women

interact with foreigners, including researchers. I decided to engage women in subtle ways that avoided conflicts with religious leaders and established practices. One way in which researchers can learn about male-female interactions in faith-based communities is by observing their ceremonies and rituals.

5) Prepare to be respectful of the leaders/members of communities as persons who may have a faith perspective that is different from yours.

Craig Bienz, cbienz@tnc.org: It was immediately apparent to me that my values and perspectives were significantly different from the indigenous people I encountered in south-central Oregon when studying the effectiveness of forest and river restoration. I respected them as individuals and built a trustful relationship by joining them in their daily activities.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org: We conduct our research from an interdisciplinary perspective and consider not only the faith of the people, but also their culture, economics, politics, and gender issues so we have a holistic picture of the area and people with whom we will be working. Having this all-encompassing perspective helps immensely toward the success of the project.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We work in remote communities in Papua New Guinea that are Christian (missionized) with strong traditional spiritual beliefs. We do not bring our own faith into the community but participate and join in with the local practices. All meetings and workshops start and end with prayers, and we always build time for their practices into our projects. We also respect different Sabbath days for the Lutheran and Seventh Day Adventist community members.

Temitope Borokini/tborokini@unr.edu: Part of gaining the support of faith leaders among the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria involved establishing mutual respect, especially by the researcher who has a purpose. This meant respecting the people and their leaders for their beliefs and culture and paying libations (if demanded).

Shekhar Kolipaki, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We took a stance that we would not interfere in the work of the people in central India nor question it because we needed their support for tiger-forest conservation. If their work and our work were not compatible, we discontinued ours. Changing them was not our goal.

6) Become familiar with the faith practiced in the community by consulting basic sources[13] and prepare to listen and learn from leaders and members of the faith community about localized expressions of their faith.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We listen carefully to local religious leaders in the communities of Papua New Guinea with which we work. Their views of the environment and their roles as stewards of the forest and sea are especially helpful to know.

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: Local publications, in-depth interviews with local informants (especially important), and observing rituals and ceremonies were helpful when assessing the biological and cultural values of sacred natural sites in central Italy, understanding the management and governance arrangements that have favored (or not) the conservation of those values, and understanding background ecological mechanisms whereby low-intensity management can positively affect biodiversity.

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[13]Basic facts about the world religions and indigenous spiritualities are available from Alliance for Religion and Conservation at http://www.arcworld.org/arc_and_the_faiths.asp and the Forum on Religion and Ecology at http://fore.yale.edu/publications/statements/; both link to statements on ecological issues by leaders of their faith-based communities. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, edited by J. Hart (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017) contains essays by prominent scholars on specific faiths in relation to ecological issues; directions for online access are available from http://olabout.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-06090.html#librarybookstore. Also consider H. Smith's *The World's Religions* (HarperOne, 2009); *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology* edited by W. J. Jenkins, M. E. Tucker, and J. Grim (London: Routledge, 2016); and G. R. McDermott's *World Religions: An Indispensable Introduction*, Nelson's Quick Guides Series (HarperCollins Publishing, 2011).

Cintia Gillam, cintia.gillam@smu.ca: When conducting doctoral research in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (Southeast Asia, north of Australia), I worked primarily with Timorese Catholics who incorporated traditional animist beliefs within their faith. I learned about their Tara Bandu practice that the community sets rules for conserving fisheries, forestry, and other natural sources, and I was able to relate these rules to my project.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.edu: As a lifelong member of the evangelical Christian faith community with which I interacted in my study of charismatic organisms (rattlesnakes), I forced myself to read commentaries by hard-line ultra-conservatives to better understand their perspectives and work better with Christians in southern California on environmental issues.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: In our tiger-forest project, we only used para-ecologists who are all local people well versed with the faith. However, the para-ecologists were trained to clearly know what we were trying to achieve by involving faith leaders in our project in central India.

Robert Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org: Though not often discussed, one of the important faith teachings of Christianity is the intrinsic value of the natural world. We decided in our local Kenyan project to focus some of our efforts in the conservation of and theological education about a small coral that seemingly did very little for humans and was not particularly beautiful. Though it does have conservation value, a significant part of our decision to focus on this species was based on our desire to help Christians in the area of Kenya in which we were working better understand and embrace the theological teachings on intrinsic value instead of any value based its utility or natural capital. Our understanding of Christian teaching and the lack of application and understanding by Christians in Kenya helped us design a project that was useful for conservation as well as for highlighting these religious issues.

7) Be aware that faith leaders/community members may be politically sophisticated, know more about the locale than a conservation researcher, and willing to take risks motivated by their faith.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We look to local religious leaders when navigating some of the community awareness building in the Papua New Guinea villages within which we worked. The leaders play a very important role in their communities, and we recognize the value of heeding their advice.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: In each country within which ARC is active, we reach out first to religious leaders and work with them through dialogue and training on identifying ways in which the theologies of their faith traditions speak about caring for Earth. We then discuss with them ways to communicate these messages in their wider communities, and they make decisions about the ways they prefer–e.g., advocating for conservation in the political arena or media, giving sermons within which they teach faith-based conservation in their communities, and/or integrating teachings in their school curriculum. Although we dialogue with them about ways to approach dissemination of faith-based conservation messages, we largely leave this task for our partners to carry out in ways they feel are most effective.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: During my research on tiger-forest conservation in central India, I understood that no politician or faith learner will do things that go against the interests of the community. Interestingly, most of them are also smart people who find innovative ways to model the needs of local people in their ideas and plans. For these reasons, we tried hard to keep communication simple and consistent and not appear manipulative or trying to use them.

David Ostergren, daveo@goshen.edu: Agrees on importance when working with Native Americans in the western and mid-western USA.

8) Learn as much as you can about the economic and social needs of the community that cannot be separated from conservation biology issues slated for studying.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: Knowing about the needs of the community is absolutely key to the success of our work in Papua New Guinea. Integrating livelihoods, health, and education into our conservation work builds trust and assures that communities know we care about people as well as wildlife.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: ARC learned to be realistic about the financial needs and constraints of faith groups in northern and southern areas of India. In many cases these groups may earn contributions/income in ways that are not aligned with conservation objectives. We have found that we need to understand these issues and find ways to balance conservation and financial needs of the religious authorities for the upkeep of their temples. That can be tricky and political but often a reality in India.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: This guideline has particular importance in locales where religious leaders are trusted community motivators. In the Mongolian watersheds, taimen protection is both an ecological and economic driver.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: Early in our project, we discovered that local people in central India approached faith leaders with their problems. We found that faith leaders were remarkably familiar with the local peoples' problems and also had a way of ranking the urgency of these problems. Knowing the insights of the faith leaders became important when planning our conservation efforts.

David Ostergren, daveo@goshen.edu: Agrees on importance when working with Native Americans in the western and mid-western USA.

9) Recognize the jurisdictions within which the faith community is functioning and the sovereignties that affect them. To fail to fully and respectfully understand the jurisdictions, customs, and social needs may offend the community, impede the project's progress, and diminish results.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: Following this guideline is very important for ARC. In China, for example, we are very sensitive to the political limits and restrictions of religious groups. In Cambodia, Buddhist monks are actively involved in forest protection and need to liaise with government agencies in some cases, or suffer crackdowns on social activism by the authorities, so they have a fine political line to walk. Again, working through local partners who understand these issues is critical to our work and we leave it to our faith partners to steer the way on projects so that we do not lead them into uncomfortable situations.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: Three of the priests involved in our tiger-forest project moved between different temples during the year, so we interacted with them only when they arrived in the Panna district of central India. Other priests are residents who interact only with people in the villages in which they live. We learned to be realistic about and respectful of their various jurisdictions when working with them.

10) Identify a potential liaison person who is respected, trusted by the local faith community to assure a local connection, and can speak the language used in the community, but be prepared for the leader to recommend an alternate liaison.

Stephen Awoyemi, sawoyemi@gmail.com: In the Nigerian Conservation Foundation's project in Cross River State, Nigeria, where we assessed the potential of enlisting Christian groups in conserving wildlife consumed as bush meat, our liaison was a native of the area who understood and spoke the local language which helped considerably. Coincidentally, he was also the son of another faith leader with whom the faith leader of the Christian community with which we were working community was familiar. This relationship immediately fostered trust that advanced the success of our project.

Temitope Borokini, tborokini@unr.edu: This guideline was important when I was collecting Okoubaka aubrevillei samples in Cross River State, Nigeria. Not knowing the language could have been a barrier to collecting these samples.

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: Having one or more local persons as guides was very helpful during our research on sacred natural sites in central Italy where they facilitated our access to the site and/or arranged meetings and interviews with other community members. This key contact needed to be someone well integrated in the faith community—for example, a member of the association or fraternity that tended the site. An introduction by someone from the area who is perceived as an outsider to the life of the site could at times create obstacles to research projects. Key contact persons often became those with whom we developed a spontaneous affinity or with whom we happened to speak first.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: Identifying someone who could speak with Buddhist leaders in their language was key to the efforts of The Taimen Fund to engage them in protecting the taimen fishery in the Eg-Uur River Valley in Mongolia. Interpreters/liaisons included a local Mongolian coordinator, and also, when trust was gained, liaisons from within the monastic body.

Shekhar Kolipaki, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: In our tiger-forest conservation project in central India, para-ecologists (local experts trained to work on conservation projects) served as contact persons and interpreters with the faith communities.

Anonymous from Best Practices Survey: When working with Buddhist, Christian and Indigenous communities on a biodiversity study in Cambodia and Myanmar, I worked as much as possible in local languages and selected research assistants and translators from the local community." I also learned to be "very careful" about who to select because "there will always be biases."

11) Think about gifts that you may want to give to leaders/members for their cooperation.

Temitope Borokini, tborokini@unr.edu: Giving gifts is crucial as a sign of respect for Yoruba faith leaders and communities in southwestern Nigeria when documenting their knowledge of sacred trees and natural sites. If requested, libations are given.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: Appropriate gift giving demonstrated our respect for the Buddhist leaders who collaborated in protecting the taimen fishery in the Eg-Uur River Valley in Mongolia.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We follow a policy that our relationship with faith communities should not involve giving gifts in any form—including money. In place of gifts, we take the spirit intermediaries to rock art sites in central India because the members of the faith community believe that rock art is spirit-related.

Initiating Contact with Faith-Based Community Leader

1) Make an appointment for a personal visit with the faith leader/s and be prepared to explain a well-organized conservation research and/or practice project from commencement to closure. Ask if you can bring with you someone in the locale who can translate or otherwise facilitate your interaction with the leader/community, especially if you are not proficient in the language used by the leader/members of the community, and be prepared for alternate suggestions of a liaison.

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: Being completely honest about the purpose of a project is essential. The truth is bound to surface eventually and can become embarrassing and counterproductive.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We approached the faith leaders to whom we were introduced by a reliable third party and met them on their premises, sometimes during rituals and ceremonies. We always used a translator or a reliable intermediary to assure that our discussions stayed on the core topic and did not fluctuate.

2) Be humble toward and respectful of the leader and his/her faith tradition's view of the human-Earth relationship (e.g., recognize that caring for, protecting, and conserving species, abiota, natural places, and Earth is inherent in some faith traditions). When appropriate, share your knowledge about connections between protecting/caring for Earth and protecting global health and well-being.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: Humility and respect are key to success in our conservation work in Papua New Guinea. The villagers are the landowners and stewards of their land and sea. Their relationship with nature and how they define it is most important. We share our knowledge but do not impose our viewpoints.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: ARC researchers realized the importance of understanding the limitations, priorities, and drivers that would influence working cooperatively with faith groups in tiger reserves in northern and southern India. When we sat down with the religious leader in one reserve to understand his views on the relationship of his tradition to nature, we learned where we needed to adjust our expectations and plans for greening pilgrimage events in the reserve and where he would feel comfortable cooperating. Whereas the temple managers had previously refused to work with the conservation authorities, they began working with us. They put some of their resources towards a waste and sanitation programme on temple grounds and supported the Forest Department's ban on plastics inside the reserve.

Oscar Gonzalez, pajarologo@ufl.edu: Approaching leaders of evangelical Christian communities in Peru with humility is very, very important. Most believe that scientists are against God, so they are mistrusted. Being humble and showing respect for them can change their negative attitude.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.edu: In educational programs and articles oriented toward evangelical Christian faith communities, I emphasize three points that I think have the greatest appeal to evangelicals in California and the Caribbean islands where I interact on reptile and bird conservation: (a) biblical statements regarding environmental stewardship; (b) financial benefits of environmental stewardship; and (c) health benefits of environmental stewardship.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: In my tiger and forest conservation project in central India, we first approached the priests (babbas–intermediaries who make contact with spirits) to know if they are predisposed to protecting forests and wildlife. We subsequently built relationships with the faith leaders who shared our goals. Our next effort to collaborate with them will focus on helping reduce the communities' use of snares and poisons to trap and kill non-target species.

David Ostergren, daveo@goshen.edu: Agrees with importance when working with Native Americans in the western and mid-western areas of the USA.

3) Identify a mutually agreeable regular time to listen, build trust, develop rapport, and update the leaders/members of the faith community; continuous, long-term engagement is critical to a successful outcome of a project.

Craig Bienz, cbienz@tnc.org: Building trust is essential. I had to recognize that time, as I knew it, didn't exist among native people in south-central Oregon with whom I worked on forest and river conservation. Once they begin to discuss something, time becomes irrelevant. They may continue to tell their stories or provide their information well past the time I had allocated for the meeting. While I was always respectful of their time, I would allow them to determine if and when the meeting was officially over.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We establish with the leaders and members of the Papua New Guinea communities the best times for holding workshops and meeting with them.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: Having a regular time to meet with faith leaders is important. Because the spirit intermediaries conduct rituals once or twice a month and for the rest of the

time are plain clothed civilians living normal lives, our para-ecologists met with them twice a month at their homes to give updates on our tiger-forest conservation project.

David Ostergren, daveo@goshen.edu: Taking time to build relationships with Native Americans in the western and mid-western USA has been essential to the outcome of my research projects.

4) If appropriate and comfortable for the researcher, consider approaching the leader as a person of faith in the subject of the community's worship or another faith to which you ascribe.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org: When we have agreement from the leaders to go ahead with the project, we involve them in it as much as possible to foster their vested interest. For example, if the project needs a logo, we ask the group to help design it. Other areas for collaboration could be agreeing on a scriptural passage which relates to the project, choosing other partners with whom to work, and holding workshops to discuss plans.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: This is a personal decision. As a Secular Jew, I usually leave my beliefs aside and focus on the beliefs of the community in which I work in Papua New Guinea. However, since I have been working with the same communities for over twenty years and have built a strong and trusting relationship, I share my own beliefs while being very respectful of theirs. When in the villages during times of worship, we attend their church services.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: Deciding to take this approach is very personal for each researcher to make.

Kit Magellan, magellan@hku.hk: Based on years of traveling and interacting with people of different nationalities, cultures and faiths, I have often found I can engage people more as a non-religious person. People with whom I have worked tend to be more open to explaining aspects of their faith to someone with no obvious preconceptions, and I find it easier to ask questions (and get them answered) when I acknowledge my own "ignorance." Moreover, there is often the expectation, and associated resentment, that a religious person is aiming to impose aspects of their faith on the recipient. The other side of this is perhaps even more important: the need to educate scientists themselves. Two views I frequently encounter when trying to discuss faith based projects with scientists are 1) there is no point trying to work with religious groups as they are all fundamentalists and there is no reasoning with them, and 2) just tell them what to do because they cannot understand a science-based approach. In my case, I have faith in the need to protect nature, which I think comes across when talking with leaders and members of faith communities.

Robert Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org: Approaching a faith leader as a person who shares that faith has been important for many of A Rocha's projects. Speaking as a member of the faith community bridges the conservation work with the community. If no one in the research group can assume this bridging role, partnering with an organization grounded in that faith is an alternative.

5) When planning to work with native/indigenous people, be cognizant of their past, especially of their having been disenfranchised and/or oppressed by outsiders/colonizers.

David Ostergren, daveo@goshen.edu: Disenfranchisement is the norm among Native Americans in the western and mid-western USA whose interactions with scientists I have been studying.

Robert Steinmetz, robtyn@hotmailcom: Building trust with Buddhists and indigenous animists in and around the Thung Yai Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary in Thailand has been difficult and time-consuming for WWF Thailand when researching indigenous knowledge, recovering populations of mammals, and sustainable hunting practices. Historically, the people in this area have been oppressed by outsiders and expect oppression when encountering conservationists. Living among them and working with them helped build a trustful relationship that produced positive research results.

6) Confirm your understanding of the makeup and interaction of men, women, and children in the community and if there are any cultural rules about involving any in the conservation project.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: ARC underscores the importance of being sensitive about gender, especially because religious posts are held by men in many countries. However, there are ways to engage with women and to include them in the conservation work. In Indonesia and Malaysia, for example, we work with female community leaders through all female Islamic prayer groups, but they are also included in several in our wider training programs.

Cintia Gillam, cintia.gillam@smu.ca: When working primarily with Catholic animists on Timor-Leste, I learned the necessity of considering how men, women, and children interact in the community prior to conducting my research on factors that affect the well-being of fishers and people in slum communities. For example, I noticed in two coastal communities that married women often do not interact with foreigners, including researchers, but they play central roles in their patriarchal churches—Catholics contributing to church activities and evangelicals sharing their testimonials. I decided to engage women in subtle ways that avoided conflicts with religious leaders and established practices. One way in which researchers can learn about male-female-children interactions in faith-based communities is by observing their ceremonies and rituals.

7) Agree on mutually-beneficial outcomes in a relationship that is collaborative; avoid aiming for a researcher-faith community relationship that is oriented ultimately toward answering "How much can I get out of this community?" or "How can this community help me network and reach people with my own agenda?"

Anonymous from Best Practices Survey: In my research project, I spent "time and resources to learn about others and share honestly" about myself and my intentions. Researchers "need to learn to accept the answer 'no'.... [A]s researchers, we come into any situation with certain privileges and power, and learning humility will be key not only for conservation success, but for our own understanding of others. This should never be a question of 'how much can I get out of this community?' or "How this community help me network and reach people with my own agenda?' Rather, we should come into the project knowing that learning and understanding is a two-way street, and that conservation stands to learn as much, if not far more, from religions than the other way around."

8) Promise only what you can and will fulfill; be prepared for a negative response or the faith leader or community asking for something else.

Craig Bienz, cbienz@tnc.org: Faith communities with which The Nature Conservancy has worked watch everything the researcher does and says. The researcher's integrity is critical to a successful relationship.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: Our main motto—do not promise anything on which we cannot follow through—has served us well over the twenty plus years we have been working in Papua New Guinea. Of course, there are apt to be some misunderstandings, but keeping this rule is very important in our relationships with the people.

9) Ask the religious leader if he/she will call, lead, and preside over meetings you will have with members of the community to explain your project and update them on progress made.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: When working on wildlife interactions in central India with people who believe in forest spirits, the village chiefs introduced us to "spirit intercessors" who agreed to work with us. We then introduced a para-ecologist who created a relationship with the intercessors and we could slowly back off. The entire affair became a local project, and we external agents became monitors who provided para-ecologists with our inputs.

Anonymous from Best Practices Survey: When studying rainbow trout at Lake Titicaca with members of a Christian community, I learned the need for introducing my project "as the recipient requests and at a speed they control. The benefit to the recipient needs to be maintained foremost in all initiatives and support activities."

10) Avoid contentious issues that are not pertinent to your research (e.g., human-forced climate change that some faith leaders and communities may not accept and mentioning of them may deter a positive beginning).

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: However, small, local communities can be traversed by a number of divisions, which are usually composed through customary mechanisms of conflict-resolution. To avoid crossing any of these contentious borders while in collective contexts when researching sacred sites in central Italy, we avoided raising political questions and do not express overt dissent about statements that did not touch directly on our work at hand. Instead, we tried to steer conversations towards matters about which all those present seemed to find consensus. After having acquired a good degree of confidence with single informants, we discussed and explored contentious matters privately.

Oscar Gonzalez, pajarologo@ufl.edu: When approaching evangelicals in Peru, I avoided mentioning biological evolution and the age of Earth because these are contentious issues.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.ed: When interacting with Evangelical Christians, I am careful to avoid the topics of evolution and anthropogenic global warming. Both are prone to create resistance to the message I am trying to get across when engaged in conservation of reptiles and birds in biodiversity hotspots in California and Caribbean islands.

11) If appropriate for the research project and acceptable to the leader/community, consider using live animals during educational visits.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: Bringing faith leaders to natural areas and exposing them to live (or dead) animals has helped enormously in ARC projects. In Indonesia, the national Islamic Council decided to issue a fatwa to protect threatened species and habitats after discussions with conservationists and a field visit to a WWF site in Sumatra. These influential clerics told us they were very moved by their experience. In Kenya we brought 40 religious leaders from across Sub-Saharan Africa to Nairobi National Park and convened around a pile of crushed ivory. Most were not aware of the severe crisis facing African elephants, and they were moved to see the ivory, representing so many killed elephants. They recited prayers over it. In the follow up to the meeting, they issued formal calls to the faithful to stop participation in the illegal wildlife trade and some took the initiative of conducting trainings for religious leaders in Kenya on wildlife trade issues.

Cintia Gillam, cintia.gillam@smu.ca: Because dogs are often considered "dirty" in Muslim communities and "haram" (forbidden to eat) while they are part of the diets of people in small minority Catholic and Hindu communities in Indonesia, I found it essential to research views of particular animals among people of the faith communities before asking about bringing live animals to explain my conservation project. I love dogs but observed that people were shocked in rural communities on Timor-Leste when they saw me hugging and carrying puppies around the community.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.edu: During educational programs about reptiles and birds in biodiversity hotspots in California and the Bahamas, we discovered the incredible appeal that using live animals has for members of the faith communities who were more likely to listen and understand the significance of the information we were conveying. For example, when showing a live Gila Monster (a gorgeous venomous lizard), people marvel at how the venom has been tapped for a medication that treats diabetes. If the Gila Monster had become extinct, we would never have discovered this life-saving

drug. Touching the animal and feeling its skin leaves a lasting impression of the value of this animal to humanity.

12) Ask about taking photographs and/or recording conversations through the duration of the project, refrain from any that are not approved. If approved, do not take too many pictures of the community leader and members.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: After seeking permission, we record on the dictaphone all conversations pertaining to our tiger-forest conservation project for detailed analysis. Wherever possible, we also video record. Para-ecologists are trained to discretely record and involve someone in the Panna district community of central India to help.

Launching and Implementing the Research/Practice Project

1) Present your project plan to the community in language its members understand and degree of technicality required using visual, audible, and/or other communication aids.

Fabrizio Frascaroli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: We presented to the primarily Catholic communities our plan for assessing the biological and cultural values of sacred natural sites in central Italy in the members' language and ways that facilitate understanding.

2) Consistently follow practices recommended under *Initiating Contact*, demonstrating respect, politeness, and patience throughout.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: Long term community-based conservation work in Papua New Guinea requires patience, respect, and politeness at all times. Work always takes longer than expected, but taking extra time is essential or the work will not get done.

3) Confirm and follow through on the plan discussed with the community leader for a regular time to listen, build trust, and collaborative rapport with the faith community.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We work with the leaders of the faith-based communities in Papua New Guinea to establish the best times for workshops and meetings pertaining to the Tree-Kangaroo Conservation Program. As already indicated, we put time into our project for additional discussions, advancing conservation awareness, and building trust.

4) Maintain cordiality, respect, and acceptance of the faith community's traditions throughout the project.

Fabrizio Fabrizoli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: Showing interest and participating in the heritage of the members of the faith community in central Italy proved important for building trust. A researcher's failure to demonstrate care for the community members and for their centuries-old traditions may convey a condescending and unfriendly attitude that must be avoided.

Robert Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org: The fishermen in the coastal area of Kenya where A Rocha works are primarily Muslim. We have developed good relationships that cross any religious barriers. Knowledge of Islam and Islamic terms has been important in conversations with fishers and sets the tone that their faith is respected. On a recent trip, my daughter and I were invited by a long time Muslim friend to speak at a Madrassa where we knew that we needed to dress appropriately and also could use some Islamic terms that helped with identifying ourselves as "religious" people. We were not pretending to be other than what we were, Christians, but we had an audience and were the first outsiders to speak at this religious school because we had taken the faith of our friend seriously and he trusted us enough to risk his reputation by securing an invitation for us.

5) Accept with gratitude invitations to special events and other opportunities to build mutual trust.

Lisa Dabek, Lisa.Dabek@zoo.org: We always accept invitations to participate in church-related activities. It is a great way to show respect and build trust.

Fabrizio Fabrizoli, fabrizio.frascaroli@ieu.uzh.ch: We engaged in and/or acknowledged certain religious/spiritual practices that helped gain trust with leaders and members of faith-based communities in central Italy. During the latter part of the project, the ritual and spiritual practices became a focus of our research.

Cintia Gillam, cintia.gillam@smu.ca: When conducting research in Vila dos Pescadores (Fishers' Village) in the city of Cubatao, Sao Paulo State, Brazil on factors that affect the well-being of fishers, I was invited by a family of fishers to attend Catholic church services and a street procession honoring Ss. Peter (guardian of fishermen) and Paul. During the 2015 procession, the fishers met to discuss the need for unifying all segments of society to preserve the environment.

Oscar Gonzalez, pajarologo@ufl.edu: Pentecostals in the Andes of Huanuco, Peru value the presence of visitors in their religious services even if they are not there to worship. necessarily endorse whatever is taught there, you are showing them consideration by hearing what they want to say.

6) Be prepared to give thank-you gifts to show appreciation for leaders/members' cooperation and to present them on occasions that are special to the community.

Temitope Borokini, tborokini@unr.edu: Giving gifts is crucial as a sign of respect for Yoruba faith leaders and communities in Southwestern Nigeria when documenting their knowledge of sacred trees and natural sites. If requested, libations are given.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org:" With regards to gift giving, a word of warning; only give gifts if it appropriate culturally and not seen as a bribe or negatively in any way. Also, ensure it is in line with your organisations policy on gift giving.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: Appropriate gift giving has demonstrated respect for faith communities in projects of The Taimen Fund that engage Buddhist leaders in fishery protection in the Eg-Uur River Valley of Mongolia.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: We follow a policy that our relationship with faith communities should not involve giving gifts in any form, including money. In place of gifts, we take the spirit intermediaries to rock art sites in central India because they believe that rock art is spirit related.

7) Beware of, as one researcher underscored, "nasty [local] politics" that may transpire and avoid getting "sucked into such complexities."

Craig Bienz, cbienz@tnc.or: The issues always have two sides, so we listened to the positions of the people in the faith community and their basis for them. We avoided being placed into a position that is outside our expertise and purpose as researchers of the effectiveness of forest and river restoration treatments in south-central Oregon.

Oscar Gonzalez, pajarologo@ufl.edu: In the Peruvian Andes, we learned the need for being clear from the onset of our contacts with the evangelicals that we are not endorsing a specific political party or candidate and that our main objective is research. Unless this was made clear to them, they would have assumed that we are similar to the politicians they encounter.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: During our tiger-forest research in central India, we make sure we do not talk about or take sides on political issues. We only talk about our work.

8) Focus throughout on the project mission and avoid being side-tracked.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.edu: When studying rattlesnakes in California, USA in Christian communities, I found it best to steer clear of political issues--such as anthropogenic global warming. It's

better to focus on common ground. Most believers, whether Christian or members of other faith groups, can become convinced that healthy humans need healthy environments. I try to instill this by emphasizing the (1) economic and (2) health benefits of biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems.

Closing the Project

1) Follow the exit plan; any deviations should be cleared with the religious leader/community.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org: On project closure, ensure that lessons learned are captured within the plan as documentation of what can be done better on future similar projects. Including and making available lessons learned fosters a "learning organization" culture.

Shekhar Kolipaka, kolipaka.s.s@gmail.com: Involving a local para-ecologist from the beginning ensured I had an exit plan in place when working on tiger-forest conservation in central India with people who believe in forest spirits. Ownership was with the local people on this long-term project.

2) Follow through with any "promises" made: Financial? Resources? Support?

Riamsara Kuyakanon Knapp, riamsara@gmail.com: When researching sacred sites in Bhutan with indigenous and Buddhist leaders, we were committed to being accountable for and following through on explicit and implied promises. Inevitably we make some "wrong" steps, but it's also important to acknowledge them, own up to them, and move on.

3) Assure the faith community receives some kind of benefit from the research conducted.

Robert Sluka, bob.sluka@arocha.org: We developed a project to study the marine biodiversity of a Christian conference centre in North Devon, UK (http://www.arocha.org/marine). In our original planning, we not only thought about how to obtain the data in which we were interested and asked to collect. We also thought about what could be given back to the centre that would be useful for the faith communities. We decided to develop a "top ten" list of marine creatures that could be used as a scavenger hunt by the 8000+ visitors to the centre each year. We worked with the centre so the hunt guide was styled and branded in a way that promoted their work as well as ours. This was obviously also useful for marine education in which A Rocha is involved but was not a part of our initial remit. We developed hunt guide collaboratively with the Christians in response to their preferences, though we had other ideas and thoughts about what might be most useful.

Riamsara Kuyakanon Knapp, riamsara@gmail.com: In our conservation work in Bhutan, we also emphasized the importance of activities that are meaningful to the community. We have invested ourselves in terms of time and finance (as possible) in the community and in relationship-building.

4) Provide the community with the final research report, expressing thanks for the role members of the community played in the project's completion.

Anonymous from Best Practices Survey: When studying the role of faith and religion within Christian and indigenous communities, we wanted them to know about and "appreciate the research and outcomes...so the time/effort that they put in turns out to be worthwhile for their own interests and goals."

5) Leave the site in a condition that shows you have not caused any harm to it.

Helena Buras, helena.buras@fauna-flora.org: A policy of "Do no harm" would be appropriate.

Chantal Elkin, chantalelkin@gmail.com: ARC's efforts in Indonesia to catalyze a Muslim response to the biodiversity crisis resulted in the MUI's (national Islamic Council) issuing two new religious edicts in 2014 and 2015 to protect threatened species and to stop the fires burning in the country's forests and peatlands. We are now working with our local partner and WWF to translate these edicts into practical conservation action in Muslim communities at tiger and rhino conservation sites.

Following-up

1) Contact faith leader to assure receipt of your report and to answer questions about it.

Annotation needed:

2) Express your gratitude again for the community's collaboration, and provide your latest contact information.

Temitope Borokini, tborokini@unr.edu: Post research visits helped solidify friendships, mutualism, and trust that might open to access for more research on ethnobotanical knowledge in Southwestern Nigeria.

Sue Higgins, sue@largelandscapes.org: Based on projects with Buddhist leaders on taimen fishery protection in Mongolia and with interfaith and tribal leaders in the US-Canadian Rocky Mountains on climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, I consider pre- and post-engagement truly critical for assuring long-lasting outcomes that benefit both the religious/local community and the advancement of research. The research belongs to these communities whose leaders and members who deserve to know the outcomes of their collaboration.

3) Consider sharing your hopes for the future of the faith community, the wildlife, and ecosystems during a follow-up visit.

William Hayes, whayes@llu.edu: In a follow-up visit, we encouraged the Bahamians on one island to think positively about their wildlife and natural resources and spoke about the benefits of having a national park with protected habitats on their island. Eventually, five national park units were established.

Conclusion

The Proposed Best Practices Guidelines for interacting with faith-based leaders and communities were suggested by SCB members from their experiences in the field and recommended to all members for their consideration when planning and implementing research and practice projects. Because people who profess particular faiths constitute a vast majority of the world's population, their leaders have expressed views that are compatible with conservation biology goals, and the communities to which they belong are motivated to act, they are best approached as promising allies and collaborators of conservation researchers and practitioners. Following the proposed guidelines may facilitate positive encounters, interactions, and outcomes of conservation projects. And, as several researchers have indicated in their anonymous comments within the 2016 survey and/or annotations herein, positive outcomes may also open to more research opportunities.

JS: 12.15.2017