

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

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Case Study Name:	Hard choices: Making trade-offs between biodiversity conservation and human well-being		
Author:	McShane, T.O. et al.		
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Region:	Latin America and the Caribbean		
Country:	Peru		
Ecosystem Type:	Tropical rain forest		
Social Characteristics:	Other		
Scale of Study:	National		
Resource Type:	Other		
Type of Initiative:	Research-driven project		
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Keywords:	Trade-offs, Development, Biodiversity conservation, Human well-being
Summary:	<p>Win–win solutions that both conserve biodiversity and promote human well-being are difficult to realize. Trade-offs and the hard choices they entail are the norm. Since 2008, the Advancing Conservation in a Social Context (ACSC) research initiative has been investigating the complex trade-offs that exist between human well-being and biodiversity conservation goals, and between conservation and other economic, political and social agendas across multiple scales. Resolving trade-offs is difficult because social problems – of which conservation is one – can be perceived and understood in a variety of disparate ways, influenced (in part at least) by how people are raised and educated, their life experiences, and the options they have faced. Pre-existing assumptions about the “right” approach to conservation often obscure important differences in both power and understanding, and can limit the success of policy and programmatic interventions. The new conservation debate challenges conservationists to be explicit about losses, costs, and hard choices so they can be openly discussed and honestly negotiated. Not to do so can lead to unrealized expectations, and ultimately to unresolved conflict. This paper explores the background and limitations of win–win approaches to conservation and human well-being, discusses the prospect of approaching conservation challenges in terms of trade-offs and hard choices, and presents a set of guiding principles that can serve to orient strategic analysis and communication regarding trade-offs.</p>