



## Safeguarding the Vital Biodiversity of the Gran Chaco Includes Changes in the Team Working Culture

### A Continued Shift to Adaptive Management and Strategies for Better Conservation Outcomes

This article is Part 2 in a series: [Read Part 1 here!](#)

The team leading the conservation of the Argentine Gran Chaco took a brave first step [earlier this year](#) to evaluate their approach and to shift toward a more adaptive work culture. Ensuring the team is able to maximize their impact is essential not only for the diverse plant and animal species that inhabit the Gran Chaco but also for the broader Latin American region, which plays a crucial role in maintaining global environmental balance. As part of the evaluation process, the team identified challenges in key areas including effective prioritization and clear ownership and decision-making, and sought to retool their strategies for conserving the highly ecologically diverse — and highly threatened — forests of the Gran Chaco.

Latin America is the world's most biodiverse region, home to 40% of the world's species and more than a quarter of its forests. The Gran Chaco ecosystem spans 200 million acres (about 81 million hectares)—an incredible landscape of massive importance.

**TEAM:** The Gran Chaco Iconic Place

**PROJECT:** Gran Chaco Regenerative Foodscapes

**THE AGILITY LAB OFFERING:** Adaptive Teams

Diego Parra, The Agility Lab Regional Lead for the Latin American Region (LAR), explains:

“Here lie the Amazon and Mayan rainforests, their transitional ecosystems, kilometers of rivers, countless species, and an endless list of other natural riches that make it a focus of attention that we must care for with the maximum expression of delicacy, intelligence and systemic vision that humans can achieve,” Parra says. “At the heart of this region is the Argentinian Gran Chaco, a region that faces overwhelming risks and constant changes that impose additional challenges to the conservation teams working in the territory.”

As shared in [Part 1 of this two-part series](#), the Gran Chaco has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world, with vast swaths cleared for agriculture and livestock. The dire situation and enormous ecological potential have been noted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the organization has named the Gran Chaco one of Latin America’s Iconic Places and a notable Global Foodscape. (Learn more about how TNC defines [Iconic Places](#) and [Global Foodscapes](#).)

To better conserve this expansive and complex territory, the Gran Chaco team decided to engage with The Agility Lab to increase the impact of their regenerative foodscapes work.




*A deforested area abuts a forested area in the Gran Chaco.*

After committing to adopting an Adaptive Teams approach in 2024, the team has been working with The Agility Lab to improve collaboration, build the capability to self-direct and move work forward in a coordinated manner, and strengthen the ability to learn-by-doing, test strategies, and adjust plans accordingly.



## A Strategic Team Structure Built to Improve Communication and Outcomes

One of the first things The Agility Lab did was conduct a Team Health Survey. Lower survey scores in categories such as effective prioritization, clear ownership, and decision-making indicated that team members were potentially having difficulty understanding how to balance overall priorities or that there were challenges communicating key information across the team. Though such issues represent complex undertakings, by adjusting their communication and strategy tools, the team has since made significant improvements.



**ADAPTIVE TEAMS**

A guided implementation approach that helps teams learn by doing, incorporate new information to adapt their approach, and build team trust and respect.

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The process included a series of workshops to revise and update the team’s Theory of Change (ToC) and Intermediate Results (IRs). Program Manager Marco Aizen says developing the ToC enabled the team to summarize their work into six interconnected strategies. He says the team is currently conducting a planning review process to add detail to each strategy and establish their “best bets” for future work.

“The team can now use the ToC and IRs as a tool to assess what aspects of their work can be framed under those strategies, facilitating the evaluation of priorities,” Aizen says. “Furthermore, we are creating a team structure for each strategy, with people responsible for each IR, which we believe will contribute to this process of systematization, clear ownership, and prioritization.”


The Agility Lab Facilitator Guillermo Tafurt adds, “This is a significant shift for the team and their ability to drive impact-building synergies and active collaboration centered in long-term strategies that go well beyond specific projects. By working and planning with clear strategies, the team is now able to leverage multiple resources, projects, and team capabilities in service of the desired impact and change.”

## **A Living Document to Structure Work with Room to Reflect, Learn, and Adjust**

The ToC includes six interconnected strategies to reduce and prevent deforestation and land degradation. Two examples of these strategies are:

- Incentivizing forest-based regenerative economies, such as regenerative ranching and timber
- Generating a synergy between science, culture, and business based on landscape resilience and biodiversity conservation

Aizen says the revision of the ToC and IRs represents a notable advance that has provided clarity around the team's work, providing a methodology that also enabled the team to develop their first Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan. "This [process] has structured our work, helping us and external teams to better understand how all our various initiatives are contributing to the same objective," Aizen says.



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— MARCO AIZEN, PROGRAM MANAGER

Rather than having the ToC as a fixed document, Aizen says the ToC represents a solid foundation that better enables the team to reflect, learn, and adjust. He says that through the implementation of projects under the six strategies, the team has reflected and confirmed that they are ready to advance from a pilot to a scalable strategy unlocking true systemic change.

## **An Adaptive Team with Increased Flexibility, Responsiveness, and Well-Being**

During the last few months, Aizen says the team has made thoughtful adjustments to increase flexibility and responsiveness, ensuring the agility to pivot in response to changing circumstances. In addition to the ToC, the team has implemented regular check-in sessions, monthly monitoring meetings, and quarterly planning workshops—critical feedback loops to help the team navigate uncertainty.

"This has significantly contributed to our internal organization and effective communication, resulting in more interconnected teams, and more informed decision-making processes," Aizen says.



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— DIEGO PARRA, THE AGILITY LAB REGIONAL LEAD FOR THE LATIN AMERICAN REGION (LAR)

Tafurt adds that there has been a transition to a stronger, more cohesive, and aligned team that is capable of fluidly adapting to an ever-changing environment.

“The Adaptive Team approach has a powerful effect in strengthening relationships among team members based on the trust and connection that result from the constant rhythm of interactions,” Tafurt says. “In every session, time is devoted to ‘connect as humans’ beyond work, resulting in better well-being for everybody.”

Parra says that after nine months of searching, reflecting, learning, and—of course—adapting, he can affirm that the Gran Chaco Iconic Place Adaptive Team has made remarkable evolutions.

“The disposition that this team has acquired for conversation, the way in which they take feedback and turn it into an opportunity, the attitude in the face of the adversities that they continue to face on a daily basis, form a vivid example of a group of people that make up a living system,” Parra says. “Such a system self-organizes according to the reality that the context presents, and this adaptability is what will surely, we hope, help the Gran Chaco to transform into the landscape that we have all dreamed of.”

## Let's collaborate.

Take two minutes to let us know about your project and we'll be in touch to explore how we might work together.

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