

NORTH ATLANTIC LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVE GRANT 2013 PROGRESS REPORT

Quarter: (circle one)

2013 1st

2013 2nd

2013 3rd

2013 4th

Grant Program, Number and Title: Grant 2012-04 “WHITE MOUNTAINS TO MOOSEHEAD LAKE INITIATIVE—PARCEL LEVEL PLANNING, PROGRESS TRACKING AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE RESILIENT LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

Project Leader:

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Abstract: Please provide a short (1-2 paragraphs) abstract that addresses EACH of the following: the objectives of your project, accomplishments to date, future plans and timelines with an estimate for when the project will be completed.

Objectives:

The project’s overarching objective is to create a science-based (GIS) framework for future conservation in the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake study area. This includes developing a parcel level analysis to prioritize tracts for conservation and other activities (e.g., development of ecological reserves on existing conservation land) based on their significance for climate resilience (among other key values). Our method for achieving the project objective is to:

- (1) Identify the appropriate GIS data sets.
- (2) Incorporate expert local knowledge and stakeholder input.
- (3) Analyze priorities for resilience at the parcel level.
- (4) Create an online portal (DataBasin) and tracking tool (Measures of Progress Site). This includes coordinating with LCC staff to assure that all relevant NALCC science products are utilized and integrated appropriately.
- (5) Hold meetings for stakeholders, private landowners, and others who can play a role in utilizing this information (from Step #4) for the development of projects, forest plans, and other relevant activities.
- (6) Present about this project at conferences and workshops.

Accomplishments to date:

At the time of 1st quarter report, we had already completed steps #1 - #4 and made significant progress on steps #5 and #6. During the second quarter we made additional progress with steps #5 and #6. During this quarter, we've made continued progress on steps #5 and #6, conducted additional work on step #1, and are conducting planning related to the future of the initiative. While some work remains on-going, we have completed our commitments and accomplished our objectives related to this project. Details are as follows:

#1:

- We are currently updating the conserved lands data so we that we can show how lands conserved have benefitted our Greenprint project goals. Data updates include non-motorized and motorized trails, workable forests, high productivity forest soils, intact Eastern Brook Trout and Atlantic Salmon Habitat, highly resilient lands and state Wildlife Action Plan priorities. This process will be completed by the end of December.
- In addition, we have collected and shared important regional data with our partners on the DataBasin site. Data includes the NALCC Designing Sustainable Landscapes results, the Two Countries, One Forest (2C1Forest) Lynx priority landscapes data, and the Northern Forest Centers Investment Zone projects.

#5:

- This quarter we have continued to disseminate information about this project through federal agency partners from the Forest Service and Department of the Interior. We participated in a series of conference calls over the course of the fall using the White Moose area as an organizing theme to better align agencies with on the ground opportunities to engage landowners and focus agency program resources. The calls culminated in a November meeting attended by agencies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture across Maine and New Hampshire including Forest Service leadership, The White Mountains National Forest, the Forest Legacy Program, Rural Development, and the Natural Resources Conservation Services. The US Fish and Wildlife Service - Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, The Trust for Public Land, the Northern Forest Center, Yale FES's Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (SFFI), and the American Forestry Foundation were also in attendance.
- The November meeting identified near-term opportunities to pursue: First, in March, The Trust for Public Land anticipates closing a working forest easement on the Orbeton Stream project (discussed in the September report). The state, the landowner, and The Trust for Public Land have agreed on the terms of the conservation easement, which include specific adaptive management provisions for a buffer corridor along the Orbeton Stream. These special provisions prohibit clear cutting, limit harvesting as a means to maintain stream shading, and restrict the use of mechanized harvesting within the buffer to avoid increased sedimentation. These provisions are designed to protect stream habitat for Atlantic salmon and Eastern Brook trout. Recent stream surveying has confirmed Atlantic salmon are spawning in the Orbeton Stream. This project is important for climate resiliency conservation work based on the GIS analysis. Second, The Trust for Public Land and the Northern Forest Center will continue to work with Yale's SFFI program and the American Forestry Foundation to identify a work plan for increasing forest landowner engagement.
- At the state level, The Trust for Public Land and the Northern Forest Center are working together to bring Maine agency scientists, the Forest Service, and Bureau of Parks and Lands staff into the work. We have held multiple one-on-one meetings to apprise them of the status of the work and introduced agency scientists on the use and content of the DataBasin and Measure of Progress tools. These outreach efforts will continue.
- As we reported in our last progress report, we have negotiated MOUs to procure assistance from local organizations in order to get the word out about these conservation and informational tools. A few of the local groups made good progress during the past quarter. For example, the High Peaks Alliance created and shared maps and promoted the concept

of a two country hiking trail and a climate protection corridor. They are planning a presentation of the mapping site to their board this month. Since September, the HPA staff has been working to create maps that they've been using with regional partners on a recreational trails plan (called the All Trails Plan). They plan to continue using the site and maps generated from the database will be included in the final trail plan. In addition, the Mahoosuc Land Trust is planning public meetings as well as presentation to board members and land trust members in their area in early 2014. We plan to work with each of the organizations to schedule additional presentations in the region in early 2014.

- October Conservation Planning Retreat:
 - In October, we conducted a facilitated retreat to discuss how to best sustain the regional coalition formed through the White Mountains to Moosehead Lake Initiative. The team met in October for a two day facilitated planning exercise to help set the program's course for the next few years. Building on experience to date, we identified three outcomes that we want our work to affect: (1) conserving large forested blocks, (2) enhancing recreational access; and (3) enhancing rural community "health".
 - The White-Moose team is now taking the product of our planning conversation and defining next steps to take with partners. One step is to schedule another Advisory Committee meeting for early 2014. During that meeting we anticipate assembling three working groups focused on each of the outcomes listed above. Our intent is to encourage these three working groups to more concisely articulate outcomes specific to their respective expertise and steps to achieve those outcomes. We will track progress against specific actions and time-lines, and facilitate reporting to the broader partnership on a regular basis.
- Building on a strong legacy of conservation work that has already protected more than 100,000 acres in the White Moose, we are on track to conserve another 49,000 acres by March of 2014. These acquisitions are stitching together a pattern of conservation that connects habitat corridors, keeps intact large blocks of working forest, and protects high-elevation habitats and cold water stream critical to plants and animals adjusting to a changing climate. These successes also are protecting motorized and non-motorized recreation corridors and access to beautiful natural areas. Our investment in this planning exercise is already helping inform how we grow our capacity to protect another 100,000 acres over the next six to ten years.

#6:

- We completed a presentation to NALCC on a conference call of the Science Delivery Committee this fall.

Future Plans beyond grant period:

We will continue working with our local, state, and federal partners to provide education and encourage use of the tools developed for this project. The project is complete at this time.

Were planned goals/objectives achieved last quarter?

Yes, the goals and objectives outlined in the grant have been met, as described in the section above.

Progress Achieved: (For each Goal/Objective, list Planned and Actual Accomplishments)

Identify Appropriate GIS Data Sets

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
 - Conducted online research.
 - Consulted with local, state and NALCC experts.
 - Updated and refined data.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to update and refine data as necessary.

Incorporate Expert Local Knowledge and Stakeholder Input

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
 - Held four stakeholder meetings.
 - Convened “Technical Advisory Team.”
 - Consulted with local, state and NALCC experts.
 - We have coordinated with four Advisory Committee partner organizations to assist us in broader stakeholder engagement to maximize the potential for education and replication.
- **Planned beyond grant period:**
 - One more Advisory Committee meeting in early 2014.
 - Continue coordinating with the Advisory Committee partner organizations.

Analyze Priorities for Resilience at Parcel Level & Create Online Portal and Tracking Tool

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
 - Incorporated GIS data, including NALCC data, into online portal and mapping analysis tool.
 - Provided training to local partners on performing custom parcel analysis based on individual needs
 - Created progress tracking website (“Measures of Progress” site) to show the success of the initiative over time based on key metrics.
 - Collected and shared important regional data with our partners on the DataBasin site.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** None anticipated.

Hold meetings for stakeholders, private landowners, and others to utilize this information and these tools

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
 - Incorporated training into two Advisory Committee meetings.
 - Negotiated MOUs with 4 partner organizations to assist in disseminating information about this project with their networks:
 - Have begun working with landowners to incorporate protective measures into conservation easements that will assist with species’ climate adaptation.
 - Held briefings for staff from USDA, DOI, and DOD to demonstrate how the portal can be used to align federal activities and funding.
 - Held meeting for federal agencies, the Northern Forest Center, SFFI, and the American Forestry Foundation in November 2013.
 - Participated in one-on-one meetings to apprise state agency partners on the use and content of the DataBasin and Measure of Progress tools.
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to track progress of partner organizations

Share information about this project at conferences, workshops, and other gatherings beyond the region

- **Accomplished-** All grant objectives, including:
 - Presented this concept at the Regional Plan Association Large Landscapes conference (June 2012).
 - Presented this concept at Society for Conservation Biology annual conference (July 2012).
 - Presented this concept at ESRI Federal Users Conference (February of 2013).
 - Presented this concept at Northwoods Climate Summit in Bayfield, Wisconsin. (June 2013).
 - Presented this concept at National Land Trust Rally (September 2013).

- Presented on this project at an all-staff webinar for The Trust for Public Land employees located around the country.
- Introduced this project in a variety of small group settings with federal agency partners.
- Presented to NALCC Science Delivery Committee (September 2013).
- **Planned beyond grant period:** Continue to present at workshops and conferences where opportunities arise.

Difficulties Encountered:

While we have good regional and federal support for this initiative, we would like to continue build support with state agencies. We had some success last quarter in developing relationships at the state level and are hopeful that our repeated outreach and education will lead us to a more receptive audience.

In addition, as stated above, we've been able to use a matching funding source (not NALCC funds) to provide small grants to add capacity to four smaller organizations working in the region. Unfortunately, most of these organizations have faced significant staffing issues and turnover in the past few months. The turnover has impacted this project in that capacity to fulfill the regrant MOUs has been limited. While we are confident that the MOUs will be fulfilled, the time for fulfillment may need to be extended due these factors.

Activities Anticipated Beyond Grant Period:

We anticipate that we will continue working with our local organization partners to provide education and encourage use of the tools developed for this project at the local level. We will also work on disseminating information about this project at the state and federal level through the DOI, USDA, and DOD, as described above. In addition, we've long recognized the overlap of our White Mountains to Moosehead Lake region with the upper reaches of the NALCC's Designing Sustainable Landscapes Upper Kennebec River Pilot Area. We attended the Cooperative's Phase I update meeting, and landscape data from the Kennebec study has been incorporated into the White Moose Databasin Portal. Moving ahead into 2014, we anticipate reaching back out to the Kennebec Pilot to find alignment opportunities.

Expected End Date: December 31, 2013.


Costs:

Total life to date expenses (include this quarter): \$193,082

Total Approved Budgeted Funds: \$20,000 from NALCC.

NOTE: We've requested but not yet received the final \$2500 related to this grant and we are re-requesting that \$2500 as we've completed the project.

Are you within the approved budget plan and categories? Yes

Signature: 

Date: 12/11/13