

Appendix H. Group Discussion Notes

**Northeast Regional Conservation Framework
NERCF Workshop (Albany II)
June 14-16, 2011; Albany, New York
Group Discussion Notes**

Notes may briefly summarize comments made during presentations and are more thorough for group questions and discussion. These notes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript of comments made in the workshop.

Tuesday, June 14, 2011

1) **Welcome and Orientation**

- a) **Planning committee introductions and welcome** - *Andrew Milliken, Coordinator, North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
 - i) Workshop milestone towards more effective conservation in NE.
 - ii) Recognize list of planning team members.
 - iii) Recognize those who helped with workshop, especially George Matula.
 - iv) Review workshop objectives.
 - v) Background on guiding questions.
 - vi) Welcome to workshop and full engagement.

- b) **Welcome and introductory comments** - *Patricia Riexinger, Director, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*
 - i) Welcome to Albany, New York, or "Albany II."
 - ii) Thanks to planning team and Fish & Wildlife Service federal aid staff in Hadley for bold commitment, creativity, and finding commonalities for priorities and needs with State Wildlife Grant funding and emerging LCC process to merge with RCN process.
 - iii) Thanks to Scott Williamson and WMI for facilitating, coordinating and managing funds for process.
 - iv) Introduction to staff who know downtown Albany.
 - v) What we have here is unique across the country as states coordinate to overcome challenges and find common conservation solutions, which are similar among states. Pool dollars and brainpower and enthusiasm. This regional collaboration is not ubiquitous.
 - vi) Since Albany I, approved 21 projects costing \$1.48 million. Span aquatic, terrestrial, marine environments from comprehensive mapping and classification system to very specific projects such as New England Cottontails.
 - vii) Reflect on successes, progress, and decide how to move forward after 5 years. Look for improvements, new challenges, efficiencies for beleaguered staff in a working meeting. Be engaged. Have an opinion to shape forward movement.
 - viii) Directors take program seriously to decide what is funded and how resources are allocated. Shape a conservation legacy. Encourage you to keep moving.

c) **Introductory comments**

Greg Moore, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife and Chair, Northeast Association of Wildlife Administrators

- (1) Many northeast administrators in attendance. Thank planning committee.
- (2) Thanks to NE Fish & Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee for work since inception of RCN process.
- (3) Critical junction of resource management at regional level. Many come with questions – how well is process working, what projects have been completed, what tools will solve problems, considerable doubt to optimize benefits of program.
- (4) Expectation that working together, can make the program a shining example of applying conservation science to solve problems. Examine approach, new paradigms.

Eric Palmer, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and Chair, Northeast Association of Fisheries Administrators

- (1) Came to Albany I, involved in ICN NEWTS and LCC process. Quote from Einstein that Albany I helped change level of thinking, content of RCN process, encouraged us to work across boundaries, bridge taxonomic boundaries.
- (2) Social, ecological, funding, and staffing challenges. Real value to focus on regional challenges and conservation framework.

d) **Review agenda and logistics** - *Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates*

- i) Described agenda, workshop process, contents of participant reference binder, and use of TurningPoint® polling keypads.

e) **Review pre-workshop assessment findings on Roles in RCN, LCC, and Primary affiliation.**

- i) Pre-workshop assessment roles and affiliations compared similarly to demographics of workshop participants.

2) **Context and Purpose of the Workshop**

a) **State administrative and technical perspective: Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) past and future**

Steve Weber, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

- (1) Reviewed results of Albany I – 41 regional projects, added monitoring program to list of 5 top selected topics, list of 6 projects became six boxes during the meeting, which is now 7 topics.
- (2) NEWTS – Report to directors in April 2006 resulted in discussion on funding significant enough to make progress. Phase II NFWF funding had to be decided that day. Instructed to continue developing concept through the year.
- (3) RCN program emerged due to hard work of team with key elements of WMI deferred overhead used as in-kind match for administrative costs, allowing all states to participate without their own match for federal funds.

- (4) Boilerplate grant for 14 jurisdictions with individual states and DC filing paperwork. NEWDTC developed and implemented complicated and labor intensive process.
- (5) Objectives to address regional issues, equitable funding, and administrative structure approved by NEAFWA on April 24, 2007.

Eric Palmer, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

- (1) Value is projects, bridging states, economies of scale in working together.
- (2) Start of conservation framework for regional projects and LCC approach.

b) Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC) perspective: working together in the Northeast - Ken Elowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Science Applications

- (1) Lots of discussion among directors on RCNs. Not a hard decision to know we needed to do it. Question of how best to put it together.
- (2) Important to look at history and context for future of conservation. Restoration and recovery in 1930s to 1950s with programs to rebuild decimated fish and wildlife populations. Sustained yield through 1960s to maximize use of resources. Environmental movement in 1970s viewing resources as not just commodities but with higher value for all species, harking back to Aldo Leopold. Ecosystem management and biodiversity era of 1990s to 2005 with some flaws – simplistic, floundered on definition of ecosystem. State Wildlife Action Plans in 2005 for needs of species integrating with systems knowledge. All of us part of one of these eras.
- (3) Landscape Conservation Cooperatives concept was direct descendent of RCN and northeast discussions on largest single impediments for future of fish and wildlife. Not a new concept on how to work together in northeast, but an evolution. Came out of RCN with ensuring functional landscape, no one organization or agency can do that alone, complementary expertise, not enough resources to afford duplication of effort.
- (4) Constituents supporting agency expect fish and wildlife for grandchildren's children. All doing conservation in same geographic areas. Combine efforts for national network of planning units. Had meeting in Georgia of all LCC coordinators that are in different states of evolution.
- (5) Simple context to bring it together. Not random but having a fundamental objective – concept is to define, design, deliver a landscape that can sustain natural resources at desired levels nationwide. Role of LCC is cooperative collaborative to lead and facilitate fundamental objective.
- (6) Partners share organizations responsibilities and priorities, combined conservation targets, tool development, and feedback on what works in community practice.

c) National perspective: importance and context of northeast regional efforts - Mark Humpert, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

- (1) Lots of participants were not at Albany I but great to build on each other. Perspective on why it is working here. Not every place is the same as the northeast. Worked in Nebraska in two regional associations (Midwest and

Western). Always looked at northeast as leading. Not only benefits critters but moves conservation forward.

- (2) AFWA national meeting of SWAP coordinators in January to communicate successes in northeast. Counties in California take up space of states in northeast. Scale not as big but more importantly, every region has sense of being overwhelmed.
- (3) Great list from few days in conference room, generating 73 to over 100 priority actions to conserve species. Difference in northeast is can do attitude to make use of great thinking. RCN was brilliant way to make sure thinking manifested itself over 5 years. Special vision in northeast is unique. Testing ground or laboratory to come up with something that might work on national scale.
- (4) Bumps in road for LCCs. Timing is everything – take on grand effort during most difficult challenges with budgets. Things will change, may take longer to pull out of recession but have to be ready.
- (5) Sense of collaboration in way states and FWS work together with partners like The Nature Conservancy, perhaps because it's easier to drive and meet with each other. Western association covers Alaska to Nebraska. Face-to-face meetings are important. Technophobe, but don't see same ability to collaborate electronically. Have to find ways to have meetings like this.
- (6) Proposal in president's budget to grow State Wildlife Grants from \$5 million to \$20 million to develop basic level of capacity. Best model is when states decide they have reached capacity or use RCN project to meet needs in our own states that have regional application. Erosion of funds (33-40%). States will work hard to preserve funds. Can't be successful if don't have SWG; state programs will disappear.

3) **Session 1: Regional Conservation Framework**

Session Hosts: Ken Elowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Karen Bennett, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

Session Objectives:

1. Agreement on goals and need for a regional framework to achieve resource conservation incorporating ecological and human needs;
2. An understanding of how completed, ongoing and proposed RCN/LCC projects fit into a framework;
3. An understanding of how the elements in this framework will inform decision-making by the conservation community; and
4. An understanding on how the remainder of the workshop fits into the framework.

Karen Bennett, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

- (1) Big effort for staff with state agency perspective on workload.
- (2) Context starting with 72 actions to identify quick priorities and conservation partners. Selection among proposals for funding.
- (3) Difficult to stay focused on regional priorities when state situations compete for attention. Regional priorities can provide justification for focus on work plans at

state level within framework of cost-effective conservation. Start forming opinions and get ready to contribute.

Ken Elowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

- (1) Framework components are there to ensure success for this suite of species. Key finding of state wildlife action plans was landscape scale functional habitat.
 - (2) Review session objectives for regional conservation framework discussion.
 - (3) Continued evolution from George Matula's boxes at Albany I. Original RCN objective to synergize efforts to next version of looking at landscape scale issues with LCCs. Hoping outcomes of workshop will not be additional work but helps to do the work you are responsible for (value-added).
 - (4) Context to organize efforts in framework – outcome to achieve. LCC fundamental objective to define, design and deliver landscapes that can sustain natural and cultural resources at desired levels nation-wide. Enough detail to not miss any steps.
 - (5) Look for commonalities among examples of models for conservation framework:
 - (a) Typical biological planning wheel;
 - (b) Strategic habitat conservation with more detailed sub-elements defining actions;
 - (c) Eight (8) elements of state wildlife action plans;
 - (d) Landscape conservation cooperatives models;
 - (e) Population goals in context of conservation framework from business plan approach to gauge where we are relative to where we want to go (are we on target?);
 - (f) North Atlantic LCC framework elements for science needs (conservation targets, species/habitat models, landscape design, habitat change over time, translation tools to convey science to public and landowners, information management, monitoring).
 - (6) Use the best set of elements to create a framework with all necessary components.
 - (a) Northeast conservation framework combined elements from other models (diagram with circles). Not a final solution but proposed to see if it is useful and if components are correct ones
 - (7) Survey findings on *Conservation Strategy Adaptations*
 - (8) Survey findings on *Organizational Barriers*
- 2) **Facilitated Group Discussion on Regional Conservation Framework** (*facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates, using TurningPoint® polling followed by open discussion*)
- a) **Do you agree that a common framework is needed for regional conservation?**
 - i) **Group polling results** (*see appendix TurningPoint results*)
 - ii) **Group comments:**

- (1) Reluctantly said “somewhat” because conservation community is broader than this group. For some NGOs to contribute to regional conservation, must have level of involvement in developing framework to make use of it.
- (2) Common framework is fine, internal process and may have priorities outside of it that may conflict. Differences among states.

b) Does the general set of elements describing a conservation framework make sense to you?

i) Group polling results (*see Appendix G: TurningPoint results*)

ii) Group comments:

- (1) One thing that keeps it from perfect is reality of common elements and natural overlap among categories. Sometimes hard to put something in one box with something very similar in other box. Limitation to how neatly world fits into boxes.
- (2) Packet has blown-up version of simplified framework with activities that might occur under each one. Level of resolution that might be useful (detailed descriptive format).
- (3) Communications and human dimensions with most discussions. In framework we talked about, communicate TO people but see no validation in the process. Continue to move forward with conservation, making general assumptions, educate people about what we are doing so they like it, believe it is correct, but don't see feedback mechanism for engaging people in framework.
- (4) Feeble attempt was in goal-setting on “who decides” outcome and “community involvement” side to take stab at where we should involve public. Rigorous way is not in there yet.
- (5) Labeled in a way not used to, but can live with “discourage...” concern is not explicit enough about who and relationships. May not belong but think it does. Local partners, key landowners, but needs to be more explicit about major conservation partners (federal, state, local, partners).
- (6) Looking at complementary strengths or capacity – who does what? Or what level?
- (7) Under conservation delivery, adoption or may be in overlaps, but need to acknowledge roles that it is not just government. Delivering framework will require contribution of everyone.
- (8) Importance of habitat and landscape that don't exist in titles but buried in different ways. Complexes of species that share habitats or similar needs to deal with both those declining and common species – or multiple species, not just species a, b or c but status of wildlife and their habitats. Will wonder what linkages are.
- (9) LCC fundamental objective to define, design and deliver landscapes – can modify or ruin landscapes, but can't “create” them so be very aware of not putting landscapes or habitat where they should not be or don't belong. Fundamental

objectives a little strong in making it appear we can create landscapes out of nothing or very different.

- (10) Somewhat stronger connection in diagrams between goal setting and evaluation. Evaluation and monitoring should be tied directly to goals for species, habitat. Not as explicit as would like.
- (11) Looking at all different elements, action is easy to define but adoption and delivery are hardest. LCC is a partnership. Partners that sit at table by definition have their own goals and thoughts about what landscape should look like. Public at large but different public is how to manage so goals that don't overlap are coalesced into uniform system. Ruffed grouse or DU have different set of goals. How partners come to consensus.
- (12) In communities or landowners affected, has another dimension entirely.
- (13) May not be explicitly in framework, but underlying feature in process is how decisions get made, process for delivery, for establishing goals. Not sure how it gets translated into components. Process for putting together whole RCN effort needs to be considered in framework.
- (14) Extremely nervous about notion of species or levels that society wants. Dangerous box to open. Out west, bird conservation responded with don't want them at all. Own agency's mission statement doesn't give opportunity to let one go extinct to focus on others. Seems like a cop-out. One aspect gives me unease.
- (15) How decisions get made should be more explicit. Information management to what end – better decision-making (reiterates point 13). Also connecting evaluation to goals. Don't see measurable goals. Unless there are shared goals among partners, will be hard to keep it cohesive.
- (16) How we respond to society values? What role do we play in influencing those values?
- (17) Public isn't aware, but what is missing is level of abundance, people not aware of sheer number of fish that COULD be in the river. What they want related to current state. May think purple loosestrife is a beautiful wetland, but not functional. We need to set the bar for the goal.
- (18) Idea of public getting involved in goal setting can be scary depending on level of knowledge, but we are public agencies and must be relevant to them, give them enough information to inform decisions, guide them to why we were created. Few agencies can let species go through cracks without consequences, responsibility. Integral to framework to let society know enough to be successful. No one solution but can't shy away from it. If not relevant, can't be successful.
- (19) Three areas (goal setting, biological) have species focus, may be flip-flopped to have habitat as focus with species used as way to describe habitats, for marketing purposes. Is there a reason why species were the focus of goal-setting?
- (20) Brings up issue that divides us more than brings us together – ecosystem or species approach. Look at them as same. Keep common species common, those with greatest conservation need. Mandate of agencies to ensure future of fish & wildlife as a metric, but also to help define systems needs to support assemblage of species. IF we don't have target for species, don't know how much habitat, what kind or where. Need conservation target to answer question, then combine into multi-species approach to define healthy ecosystem. Integral to each other.

Ecosystem bent of 1990s floundered as hard to define what kind, how much and where to put habitats on ground. Have red pine communities, but don't know how much to have. Need target to define how much and where.

- (21) Much simpler answer for underlying framework has to do with regulation and laws for government that has to do with species. Upland and some wetland regulations. Pittman Robertson, wildlife conservation, everything directs us to species first to justify habitat protection, but not vice versa.
- (22) General set of elements makes sense. Set up series of actions out of framework, monitor to check progress, ultimately need a feedback loop that leads us to amending framework to make actions more effective in the future.
- (23) Clarify separation between species and habitats. Quick answer is yes. Assumption of framework is that habitat is inherent part of wildlife. Biological assessment mostly about assessing habitats in spatial context. Will talk about habitats in next session. Through RCN process, adopted system of habitat classification and mapped them. No intention to deviate from that.
- (24) Relevance to society at large – not so much about framework, but look around this room and conversations here concerning all of this work. When talking to friends who are not biologists, don't see this as particularly relevant to them, even though they are involved in outdoor recreation. Worry about frameworks from biologists thinking about engaging public. Wondering whether we hit mark. Test is whether money flows through political process to continue the design. As biologist, is a pretty good process but at end of day, if society doesn't value what we are doing, we've missed the mark. Every meeting we work at, just a bunch of biologists talking with biologists again. Need to think broader than that. General experience after 30 years is that we aren't typical of society at large.
- (25) As administrator, worked with habitat for 25 years, but that is not what excites the public. Don't care about red pine stand but want to know the critters are there. We will get to conservation by doing habitat, but that is the HOW not the WHY. As we talk to legislators, guy next door, frame it in species that get people excited. How managers act is internal but need to characterize it to rest of the world to deal with fish and wildlife in public trust.
- (26) Relevancy called into question in agency, asked by secretary to do that specifically around clear-cutting issues. Had similar elements in framework with habitat management based on design and science guiding decisions, have goals reviewed internally and externally (public process), based on that have implementation on the ground (what done, what like to achieve) and monitoring to achieve things you say you want to. Very important to public as feedback into adaptive framework. Public thought it sounded logical and glad they were told. Articulate well. Don't make it too complicated for communication.

c) Based on your experience with conservation planning, decision-making, and delivery, are there any key elements or concepts missing from this framework?

- i) **Group polling results** (*see Appendix G: TurningPoint results*)

ii) **Comments:**

- (1) Concern is going back to first question on what is your job (biologist) flaw in thinking. Talking about habitat with skill sets that aren't limited to biology. Information needed to address questions we are trying to address require work of hydrologists, geologists, social scientists, physical components of habitat to get answers to get where we want to go.
- (2) Could ask how many are scientists as revealing. Difference between number of biologists and scientists says there is a community that is missing and needs to be brought into this process. Bring in individuals with physical component background.
- (3) People care about the critters – great environmental legislation (ESA) and clean water act (CWA) for water drinkable, swimmable, fishable, NEPA, Farm Bill as mandates that American people expect us to respond to in landscape. Broaden audience who can use the data. Pleased to see people here from EPA, NOAA with different community.
- (4) Human dimensions skilled on impacts of changing landscape and effects on infrastructure, economies, healthy, welfare. Obviously people care about that.
- (5) Wouldn't have this discussion 5 years ago with public involvement in outcome (goal setting and community involvement). Rest was biological framework. Trying to outline all components necessary to achieve successful conservation. Need to build public relevancy in.
- (6) As an ecologist (not a biologist), people tend to lump us together and resent that, a lot of argument is moot. Can't be exclusive critters versus habitat or sociology. Must take it all into consideration. Ignore any of it and playing with fire. Can't make dichotomy make sense.
- (7) People to engage: economists familiar with ecosystem services (pay to keep forested watershed intact to offset cost of water treatment), storm water design to infiltrate water. Cataloguing and assessing status in traditional protection. Paradigm shift to bring in other scientists for big picture.
- (8) Functioning landscape, connectivity at multiple scales, above watershed, ecoregional aspects to restore and maintain functional landscape, habitat, clean water. Missing that must be done at multiple scales – storm water to huge landscape conservation and connect those.
- (9) Relevance is huge in The Nature Conservancy. Surveys show average conservation donor is 60-year old white male whereas future looks very different. Interest level in conservation and outdoors plummeting with taxonomy and hunting on decline. Never thought about this as my job. People will love very degraded world 50 years from now if we don't influence public, people, get them involved in outdoors, noticing some detail – or we will be marginalized group of old nature-lovers.
- (10) Think of myself as landscape ecologists, species, landscape and systems all sustaining. Slightly different angles (geophysical, species) but converging in landscapes, healthy system. Not as much of a dichotomy but need to make that clear. Landscapes have to accommodate all uses, including human uses. Critically need to tie in communities and public, which looks to us as experts on what is needed to sustain natural resources. Engage public in broader conversation on

transportation, housing, agriculture. Really exciting to be part of this conversation.

- (11) Missing element – conservation adoption engages communities, but not sure what it means at regional scale. What it means to set regional goals tied into communities. How does that happen?
- (12) Hear two modes of viewing our relationship to what public wants – agencies responding to set population or habitat goals as public input to agencies. Another is as agency scientists, they look to us to tell them what they need to do. Have been hesitating about our approach in doing that. Both perspectives are valid. As agency scientists, need to convince people to do some things which is different than asking them what they want us to do. Can't cram things but must tell them there is a scientific process suggesting what to do. Isn't the same as asking them what to do.
- (13) Other entities in this process. States that are largely privately owned, need private landowners in not only developing process but in every step of the way. They can put up a roadblock in a heartbeat. Element underway in legislative process.
- (14) Not so much that elements are missing, but way they are defined. Information management on data sharing. Include outreach and education so public is clear on what our goals and objectives and data collection and interpretation – add scientific interpretation.
- (15) Be inclusive fully with the public. Talks a little about landowners and NGOs but not all user groups. Agency has learned that any management plan (setting aside marine protected areas), important to include fishers, farmers, building industry to make sure they are part of the process, not just talking TO them so they understand concepts and issues, but also feel a part of the process.
- (16) Naturally feeds a convergence of efforts. Approached as though each angle was totally separate when we are all specialists treating the same patient. Need to have information within our specialty, have public translate to habitat goals, strategic actions with private landowners. Critical change for the better is we can't treat ways we interact as separate. For example, forest community acts as if they are totally different angle. Will get public buy-in but also more effective overall.
- (17) Model guidelines process to make information available to local planning. Key component is other people trying to persuade people who do decide. Don't have enough information from scientists, need interpretive materials to make a case why we are doing this.
- (18) Travel town to town doing conservation planning with local planners and working on ordinances in Maine. Town of 390 people about conservation planning with not much growth pressure, mostly forest land. Regional connectivity initiative. Called colleagues from TNC and Walleygrass(sp?) was hub community for regional connectivity working with urban lands, growth plans, conservation ordinances to implement regional plans. Need backdrop of conservation blueprint for amazing number of opportunities for shared vision.

- (19) As practitioner, piece discussed but not broadly or specifically enough is more flexible, different tools. Have either regulation or permanent conservation. Need something in between. Hope to get to design for new tools.

d) Group comments on conservation framework generally

- i) Components seem acceptable but need descriptive format. Need to fill that out with what you think is essential to conservation success. Where would you engage the public, in which parts? Many things need to happen behind these scenes. Need to flesh that out.

3) Session 2: Habitat Mapping

Session hosts: Eric Palmer, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, and Helen McMillan, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Session Objectives:

- i) Understanding of terrestrial, aquatic and coastal regional habitat classification and mapping projects, how the results/data/tools produced by each of them can be used, and how they fit into the framework;
ii) Identification of priority mapping needs; and
iii) Ideas to improve the utility and access to mapping products.

a) Will present list of a few feature projects

- (1) TNC Terrestrial habitat mapping to connect many classifications in a single system.
(2) NEAFWA Stream classification project.
(3) Coastal Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) project.

b) Survey findings from Biological Assessment

- (1) One of the top ranked results for the Biological Assessment question was related to habitat mapping (spatial status and vulnerability assessments).
(2) Top needs of science assessment on marine bird and bat distributions, as well as species and habitat mapping were related.

c) Group comments

- a) How maps can be used because there is more going on with species presence? There are limitations that should be considered and distributed along with the maps.
b) How are reservoirs treated in aquatic classification system?
(1) Lakes in the dataset are flagged whether they are a reservoir. Have not turned into a full taxonomy. Need to do more work to develop lake classification and continue to treat reservoirs separately due to depth, setting and size.
c) Plans to overlay ownership (state parks, forests, state management areas)?
(1) Yes, conservation lands dataset overlaid on conservation status report but not habitat. Will be in geospatial data analysis. All private easements, conservation lands.
d) When terrestrial map is done, how will partners access data?
(1) Datasets posted on RCN website. Can send it on a file cabinet. Will be downloadable data (huge files).

- e) Accuracy assessment?
 - (1) Asking heritage and forest programs to overlay their known occurrences. Spot checked but not plans or money to do it.

4) Table Discussion on Habitat Mapping (*see Table Session notes*)

- a) What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing habitat mapping?
- b) Who are the key members of the conservation community who can address these priorities and what roles are best suited to RCN and LCCs?
- c) What is value added of regional classification and mapping?
- d) How often do we need to update regional maps, and how can we build a system to make updating more efficient?

5) Facilitated Group Discussion on Habitat Mapping

(Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates.)

- a) What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing habitat mapping?** (*Items are listed below from table discussions. Table priorities for the first session were not ranked as verbatim items. Group polling was conducted on categories created by the facilitators to summarize these items.*)

- i) Data needs: Finish mapping all the systems
- ii) Additional Habitat Maps Needed
- iii) Ensure accuracy of maps: ground truth maps at a minimal level.
- iv) Accessibility / usability
- v) Completing the package for terrestrial, freshwater and marine -- and add lakes
- vi) A product can be used by or target users and partners.
- vii) QA/QC that is adequate (a continuous process)
- viii) Communication of Results
- ix) Tools, Service, Support Programs
- x) Validation or verification of existing (not quite out or peer-reviewed yet) maps
- xi) Providing easy online interface
- xii) Communication, provide products, users guide, tool kit
- xiii) Identify priority focus areas for conservation (habitat) implementing the use of the mapping efforts
- xiv) Fill Gaps Marine/estuarine, Lakes, and Canada (in priority order)
- xv) Accuracy assessment/ demo overlays/scale validation
- xvi) Accuracy Assessment
- xvii) Threats and refugia
- xviii) Land Use / successional state if not already in data
- xix) Need to know the audience/need/purpose
- xx) Accuracy - field checking accuracy – groundtruthing
- xxi) Need to go into Canada, and south and west
- xxii) Need habitat age and structure database
- xxiii) How do invasive species play out in this - iMap, prediction of vulnerability
- xxiv) Can we link to FIA data in ongoing basis for age data

- xxv) Roadmap for what to do with the habitat mapping effort: communication with public, awareness, availability of data, maintenance of data, who should do the work.
- xxvi) Continued model validation is needed for terrestrial maps.
- xxvii) FHAP and bird joint ventures need to be part of the key audience
- xxviii) Academic community is another key audience
- xxix) How the data can/would be used and identify expectations/limitations

b) Group ranking items

(Items are in priority order based on group polling using TurningPoint® tools. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for polling results.)

- i) Communications, tool kit, users guide
- ii) Layers (land use, threats, refugia, invasives)
- iii) Finish mapping all systems (Canada, lakes)
- iv) Usable product (expectations, limits)
- v) Priority focus areas using map output
- vi) Linkages to other databases
- vii) Accuracy (QA/QC)
- viii) Model validation
- ix) Define audiences / users (JV, FHP, academic)

c) Group comments on priority ranking categories and polling process

- i) Time frame – over the next 5 years or immediate priorities, starting with the next call for proposals.
- ii) All priorities among the priorities.
- iii) Collapsing and expanding to make it useable for towns (tool kit for communication)
- iv) Uniform system of collapsing the information so that it is uniform throughout the area, hierarchical from more complex to less precise but uniform data.
- v) Linkages to other databases – important was to get at age structure which is not in data at this point.
- vi) Lidar data that could be critical for mapping early successional habitat information.
- vii) Priorities
 - (1) Add layers
 - (2) Communications
 - (3) Finish mapping, etc.
- viii) Not a lot of separation from 4.2 to 2.8
- ix) A lot are very linked projects, such as can't develop communications tool kits without knowing your audience. How useful is it to think about these in isolation.
- x) Very general topics where a lot of projects could fit. May have different projects in mind. These are lumped - too much lumping.
- xi) Priorities that would have voted for if they had come up in a different category (e.g., data management). Will there be an opportunity to say topics came up in different sessions?
- xii) Will talk about those things (related topics) in the session on the last day. Challenge to have rich, detailed discussion and summarize in process.

- xiii) Could do median rather than average and get quartiles of the data – how many people strongly agreed or disagreed to get better judgment. Will be put in database where analysis can be done.
- xiv) Wide gradient of strongly agree to strongly disagree? Or just yes/no.

d) Group discussion questions

i) Given these priorities, which members of the conservation community are best positioned to implement them?

- (1) Distinction between terrestrial and aquatic maps. Terrestrial based on actual field data points whereas aquatic is a consensus. Need to use field data that has been collected to validate the map. Has to be a sequence. Wouldn't be comfortable rolling it out to users before step of validation.
- (2) Really tough to answer question if we have them in rolled up version (what we voted on). For a lot of them, had discussion for very specific items – which might be handled by RCNs or LCCs. As broad items, could be given to either group.
- (3) Talked specifically about some projects. Other groups reflected serving out of maps to public in various ways. Would be a logical function of the LCCs. Could create a service bureau where these maps are part of a product.

ii) What are the barriers to implementing them?

- (1) Lumping – will be important to pull out, still didn't see one of our three topics. Will be important that all of detail gets in notes. In New Hampshire and New York, took terrestrial classification, mapping, grouping different layers together for use. Vulnerability to climate change. New York had other uses. Will not match or barely. Must do at regional basis with consistency. Some nested layers but middle ones missing. Need to continue the process of representation from all states working together, states and NGOs but expanding a bit to have that happen.
- (2) Systematic simplification is very built into the aquatic. Are you talking about just terrestrial? Yes, haven't done anything in aquatic – serious lumping for climate change. For terrestrial, have done some lumping and splitting. Looking at habitats, have 46-48 in NH. Originally 16 but need something in the middle for users who do land use planning in NH. Heard same thing in NY. Need something more user-friendly for educated public.
- (3) Short-term given budgetary situation – time, money, people.
- (4) General awareness that maps are out there and available for use limiting ability to get groups to assist us with implementing them.
- (5) Opportunity to have directors talk about using them on all tech committees for common language among programs, use among agencies and all websites talk about them. Opportunities to create more implementation than what we have already.
- (6) More of a challenge is how quickly landscapes are changing, so how out of date maps can be in short period of time. Explored ways to update regularly by building on existing programs that have more resources. Work with partners not in this room.

- (7) Some states have embedded in agency mapping protocols and approaches that they use because larger agency demands it (NJ land use/land cover maps). Cross-walks tool developed so it is easy for agency to speak in both languages rather than added work to put it in context of these maps and maps that larger agency demands we use. Simplify process of translating between different mapping approaches and products.
- (8) Temporal scale. Many factors in making decision about resource use change rapidly compared to updating. Same challenge in geographic scale. Most projects to protect or restore habitat or species on scale that can be in context of regional basis. Information that will make project successful on the ground requires detail that may not be available. Job of RCN, LCC or state, such as marine resources as state or federal concern, LCC can facilitate getting more accurate data for restoration and protection, then keep record of what was done.
- (9) Don't have any maps yet. Have large spatial dataset that few people can view. Big job of making maps that satisfy certain needs and set of partners.

iii) What are the opportunities for implementing them?

- (1) Maps could be put on ArcGIS web-based server. May decide which data sets to serve to public or subset to make it available to more people.
- (2) Huge opportunity. Not trying to produce paper maps but an analysis tool. Can look at species distributions, habitat capability as an analysis.
- (3) Web map service, such as wetland with regional classification, what state calls it, how many, size, how it fits in. All information is there, could be connected and provided with nice simple interface.
- (4) NEMO (nonpoint education for municipal officials) through Cooperative Extension programs nationally provides online tools for municipalities that are web-based.
- (5) Opportunity to get out to students who are not limited and can explore incredible questions. Make them aware and see what they do with it.

e) What synergies can we build upon?

- i) Habitat mapping is tool to use at various points along conservation framework. Mapping is not an end product but an analysis tool to move through various points on framework.
- ii) National Fish Habitat Action Plan developing assessment every 5 years with NOAA and Michigan State involved. Opportunity on freshwater. FHP and NOAA to develop relationships on marine side as ongoing funded opportunities to leverage.

f) Comments on breakout process for next sessions

- i) Too much lumping of priorities transferred from tables to group discussion
- ii) How to delump to get through mess and converge.
- iii) How to capture detail in breakouts and process in full group? Table leads agreed to:
 - (1) Identify only one or two top priorities to bring forward and
 - (2) Provide more explanatory detail for those items.

- iv) Read sections of binder for tomorrow. Will cover a lot in sessions. Documents on website include presentations from PIs and information in posters.

6) Poster Session of RCN & LCC Projects was held in the evening (*see list of posters*).

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

1) Welcome and Agenda Review (*Andrew Milliken*)

2) Session 3: Biological Assessments and Goal-setting

Andrew Milliken, North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative and Dave Day, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Session Objectives:

- i. Understanding of completed, ongoing and proposed biological assessment projects, how the results/data/tools produced by each of them can be used, and how they fit into the framework;
- ii. Understanding of and consensus on need for establishing population objectives and other common conservation goals;
- iii. Identification of priority biological assessment needs.

a) Presentation on biological assessments and goal-setting

- i) Setting conservation goals for desired conditions, understanding past, current and future conditions.
 - (1) Take information from goal setting into conservation design then for decision-support and translation tools to conservation adoption with stakeholders and partners.
 - (2) Linking together science associated with conditions to plan and take conservation actions.
- ii) Biological assessment is assessment of conditions, status and trends of species and relations to habitats, landscapes and systems, trying to understand limiting factors.
- iii) Set goals by agreeing on regional objectives.
- iv) Priorities (originally called triage) included identifying things that need immediate response, such as white-nosed syndrome.
- v) Information management critical to organizing and disseminating results.
- vi) Critical to conservation design through species-habitat models and population-based habitat objectives with targets for sustained populations. Responsibility as region to sustain populations and how it breaks down into jurisdictions (states).
- vii) Monitoring research and evaluation of conservation targets.
- viii) RCN projects - Relationship between existing RCN topics and projects are drawn from several categories. Several were done for state wildlife action plans. Regional Fish & Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee added projects for high priority SGCN and their threats.
- ix) LCC projects – projects all have in common examination of major drivers for landscape and climate change with good conservation decisions in light of those changes and uncertainty.

- x) *Monitoring the conservation of fish and wildlife in the Northeast* (presented by Mark Anderson) - was put together by team of experts over 2 years. Identified habitat types with target categories described by 6-7 key dashboard indicators to be measured across the region. Described project as 5 years of work on examining the data. Large 300-page report. Got grant to produce 10 key messages and public version of report. Report will be on the RCN website.
 - (1) Question – What was large square in Pennsylvania on earlier map? Not sure. Will examine later.
 - (2) Report is a great example of projects that need to be synthesized to guide selection of additional work, using it in meaningful ways.
- xi) *NEAFWA Regional Vulnerability Assessment Project* (presented by Hector Galbraith) - Funded by NEAFWA and hope for future funding through North Atlantic LCC. Manual “Scanning the Conservation Horizon” to be published. Northeast incubator for ideas and tools. State vulnerability assessments lack regional context.
- xii) *Selecting representative species for conservation planning in the Northeast Region* (initially in the North Atlantic LCC) – subset of species for detailed conservation planning to best represent larger set of species.
- xiii) Diagram showing population goals in context of conservation framework with feedback loop to determine if habitat exists to sustain population at the desired level.
- xiv) *Assessment of landscape change in the North Atlantic LCC: decision-support tools for conservation* (designing sustainable landscapes) – current and future capability of landscape to support populations being tested in three pilot regions.
- xv) Developing recommendations for sustainable flows in the Great Lakes Basin of New York and Pennsylvania (presented by Dave Day) – hierarchical model scaleable to take into account climate change.

b) Pre-workshop assessment findings on Biological Assessment

- (1) Ratings indicated biological assessment was high priority, especially population assessments across scales, habitat relationships, integration in conservation framework.
- (2) Reviewed comments related to biological assessment – focal species as surrogates, understanding uncertainties, clear objectives, population targets, verifying links takes funding and time.
- ii) List of relevant active RCN topics and LCC science needs.

c) Process for table discussions was revised based on group comments (presented by Dave Case based on process evaluation with workshop planning team.)

- a) Participants will meet with same tables as yesterday during breakouts.
- b) Adaptive format from Day 1
 - (1) Concisely describe no more than two (2) top priorities from each table for group polling.
 - (2) The group will rate up to 18 priorities verbatim and discuss results.
- c) Polling process comments:
 - (1) Many that have same topic, will vote for each one similarly, then see categories that are high priority? Need to be careful about surgical analysis. If goal-setting is

high, we can refine that later. If you feel that goal-setting is important, vote high on that every time and it will roll together. Assess each one individually, then we will go back to look at them.

- (2) Some items may fit better in different part of the framework. May organize differently later.

2) Table Discussion on Biological Assessments and Goal-setting (*see Appendix I: Table Discussion notes*)

a) Table Discussion Questions:

- (1) What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing biological assessments?
- (2) Who are the key members of the conservation community who can address these priorities and what roles are best suited to RCN and LCCs?
- (3) What is value added of regional biological assessments and goal setting to statewide or site-specific management?
- (4) How can we draw from and roll-up state plans to inform regional planning most effectively?

3) Facilitated Group Discussion on Biological Assessments and Goal-setting

(Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates. Items are in order presented for group polling using TurningPoint® tools. The original table number is identified in parentheses behind the item. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for polling results.)

- 1) Deliver the results (synthesis) of the projects (products) in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers at state/local levels and provide commitment of resources to accomplish (people and funds). Start with RCN Conservation Status Report. (T5)
 - a. Shows that averages don't tell us anything about how strong the response is. In top 3 – differences weren't that great for average but this was strong. Emerged as high priority.
 - b. Developing a lot of information in projects. Before we embark on new set of information, let's see what good we can do with information we have so far. Catching our breath.
 - i. What do we need to do next to deliver this?
 - c. Why did some vote "strongly disagree"? Was it different part of framework or something you don't like.
 - d. As technical review team coordinator, one problem was state agency folks saw problems in project itself. So advertising it, getting it in hands needs steps to finalize report and get details refined.
 - e. Some side conversations about risk or fear that some projects and products may be developed, but lacking audience. Don't want to see money in something that doesn't get used. Has to be done in way that is useable so it isn't wasted effort – even if it's a really good product.
 - f. Two issues – make some changes in delivering synthesis of projects. If that issue of providing in meaningful way to on-the-ground managers is huge, expensive

issue. Will do half of this anyway but on-the-ground of making products operational in agency will take a while.

- g. From state agency perspective, as manager of on the ground employees, repairing duck blinds, planting trees, etc, need to know how they fit into this. Don't need glossy 10-page publication. Incumbent on us to better understand this on day-to-day basis to incorporate in their work plans. Not everything everyday but in daily work schedules where it fits. Happens not in workshop but when we go home. As managers, need tools to incorporate into day-to-day work. Not an RFP for product, but change in work behavior.
 - h. Challenge is lot of hard science products but not ways to translate to what we do differently on the ground. Put in conservation framework as "translational tools" to assimilate science products to on-the-ground conservation. Not that useful if just given to staff. Hugely important step.
 - i. That is next session.
 - j. This is way more than state agencies. Has to be NRCS, FWS, every public land manager, refuge manager, every NGO must understand how to use these tools. Whole community not just agency staff.
- 2) Development of habitat focus areas and corridors. (T5) 2
 - 3) Create distribution maps. (T8) 3
 - 4) Upon completion of species distribution maps, conduct Structured Decision Making Workshop for those species in NE with mandated listing decision. Add high priority SGCN (upon completion of regional review by NEFWDTTC) into the SDM process. (T8) 4
 - a. Curious, this relates to population goal setting that was popular in other areas. Is this more result of aversion to a structured workshop or lack of awareness of species with mandated listing? First one. Court finding that mandating timeline for federal listing of a lot of species, some in northeast. New England Cottontails must have decision by 2014. Red knots on list. Would that change perception about setting goals?
 - b. If did an analysis of results today and yesterday, would see an uptick in neutrals. Don't really understand what goal-setting workshop or decision-making is. Voted neutral because don't know or have an answer. I am ill-informed. Would guess others are not as well informed as they might be.
 - c. Did not understand it. Didn't see goal-setting in there or would have gotten a "strongly agree" rating.
 - d. Need to remove "structured decision-making" as we don't need to be told how to make decisions – get away from group think.
 - e. Hope this exercise is getting at what we need to move regional conservation forward within framework. All are important. Nothing that shouldn't be done but need highest priority next step for regional conservation. Not that disagree that needs to be done, but not in next highest priority step for multi-species regional conservation.
 - f. Words are important in question – interpreting answers. So in public opinion polls, remember how much there is in wording, context and assumptions. Complex process.

- 5) Identify focal areas that represent the best examples of ecosystem types that allow us to define ecosystem function and integrity. (T6) 5
- 6) Expand surveys for regionally important species, especially with co-dependence and association with communities; coordinated and collaborative among partners. (T6) 6
- 7) Capacity of species to adapt to habitat change and/or other stressors (T2) 7
- 8) Cross-cutting understanding of aquatic habitat changes associated with climate change to include hydrology and geology (T2) 8
 - a. A lot of responses were neutral – answered neutral because didn't know what it meant.
- 9) Assessment of the completeness/representativeness of current/existing data (i.e., gap analysis for source data used in regional assessments). What we have and don't have. Need to think about the application of the data before the assessments begin/are designed. Density analysis of existing data (heritage programs). Private lands are not well surveyed. SWAPs are a starting point for identifying these needs. Representative species might be another tool. (T1) 9
- 10) More complete vulnerability/threat analysis done for disease). Focusing on critical communities and groups that we don't know a lot about. (T1) 10
- 11) Develop a process to develop regional representative species goals (numbers and distribution) to allow development of landscape-scale habitat design and conservation. (T4) 11
 - a. Have been three fairly similar on surface, this one related to goal-setting that differed in responses. Taking from that comfort with idea to develop process for species, but less with population goals for all species. Lead in question to session on population goals was strong response, that we should be doing that. Need to tease out responses.
- 12) Marine, aquatic, plants data gaps and representative species for marine and aquatic systems. (T4) 12
- 13) Development and evaluating models to identify adequate streamflow to support biological processes and communities such as the ELOHA or CT and MA streamflow monitoring projects, and including other factors such as landscape change and social needs.(T3) 13
- 14) Immediate needs for emerging impacts: assessing biological impacts of SCGN to renewable energy (e.g. wind power, water turbines, biofuels), invasive species (e.g. didymo, Asian Long-horn beetle, woolly adelgid), or disease (e.g. White-nose). (T3) 14
- 15) In the new SWAPs recommend adopting a consistent format/template which will allow for a region wide roll up (including population targets) for establishing goals, perhaps a consistent summary or appendix. (T7) 15
- 16) Try to come to consensus on a pilot process to develop regional population goals which would draw from existing plans to the extent possible. (T7) 16
 - a. Will vary on specific species. Some may be able to do a regional population goal, some don't know if should be for the state. Won't get consensus on how to do this for certain species. Numbers for population goals, concentrate on habitat integrity, not as much on trying to set actual numbers of organisms.
- 17) An SGCN analyses for preparing WAP revisions - SGCN criteria, scope of taxonomic species included, consistency to threats and conservation action nomenclature so that State plans can be rolled up regionally in a consistent manner. (T9) 17

18) A pilot(s) goal setting exercise for either species of suites of species and habitats; incorporating society's expectations. (T9) 18

4) Session 4: From Conservation Design to Delivery

Session Hosts: Steve Fuller, Wildlife Management Institute and Dan Brauning, Pennsylvania Game Commission

Session Objectives:

- a) Understanding of conservation design projects, how the results/data/tools produced by each of them can be used, and how they fit into the framework; and
- b) Identification of priority conservation design, decision-making and delivery needs.

a) Overview presentation on conservation design to delivery

- a) Web-based application that would model local conditions and test scenarios. Lots of details but want to get feedback early from potential users. Will set up workshops to see how it should look before we build it.
- b) Forecast effects of accelerating sea-level rise

b) Group comments

- (1) Focal area work had 2001 MRLC (multiple resolution land cover) data. Those data are not very good for estimating habitat. Over 10 years old and not resolution needed for early succession habitat. Need to test focal areas against occurrences for species known to use those habitats. Use NY atlas to test predictions of focal areas versus species that are supposed to be there.

c) Survey findings on On-the-Ground Conservation

- a) Language about elements in framework changing for months but hope to settle soon.
- b) Reviewed ranking was information to guide local land use decisions. Not a lot of spread but had over 150 respondents so small difference can be meaningful. Open-ended comment responses were from one person, but can be telling.
- c) More spread in ratings of on-the-ground conservation response items. Reviewed comments.

d) Showed list of LCC science needs and questions for Table Discussion.

5) Table Discussion on Conservation Design to Delivery (see Appendix I: Table Session notes)

a) Table Discussion Questions:

- (1) What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing conservation design and delivery?
- (2) Specifically, what are the critical decisions you are making, what regional design tools do you need to help you make them, and what format/scale do they need to be in?
- (3) Who are the key members of the conservation community who can address these priorities and what roles are best suited to RCN and LCCs?

- (4) What is value added of regional conservation design tools? What additional work needs to be done to make existing tools more useful?

6) Facilitated Group Discussion on Conservation Design to Delivery

(Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates. Items are in order presented for group polling using TurningPoint® tools. The original table number is identified in parentheses behind the item. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for polling results.)

- 1) Good analysis on opportunities to influence other agencies to better incentivize conservation on a local level. e.g. a town could be doing good conservation planning, and would therefore be more eligible for further funds. Need financial hook to incentivize. See what is out there for existing grants to determine ability to incentivize. E.g. conservation easements. Inventory existing funds being distributed either at federal or state level; then determine which ones would be most easily modified to incentivize local conservation. (T2)
 - a) Working at municipal level for 10 years, can have all available tools but until you have incentives, will be an uphill climb.
 - b) What should happen at regional level? Incentives will have to trickle down at local level. At regional level, are there ways to manage what funding is based on with good local plans, open space plan. For example, school or highway based funding that is eligible for matching grants.
 - c) Same idea with #17 where we said the same thing. Inventory monies available for incentives so we all have that available to get activities on the ground.
 - d) Catalogue of grants or other incentives available within this region to leverage, to get local governments to adopt practices.
- 2) Where are opportunities to manage for species of economic concern or constituent importance AND SGCN. Tools to help that, as well as communicate that to the public. BMPs for agencies that integrate both types of species. (T2)
 - a) Something may have gotten lost in translation. Looking for opportunities to address economic concern and overlap conservation for SGCNs with those species – spatial data for good practices to manage both suites of species.
- 3) Identification of habitat focus areas with a step up step down (Regional to local) process to implement on the ground habitat conservation, restoration, and management. (T5)
- 4) Expand streamflow predictive model from CT river basin to the Region (Archfield RCN 2007 #6). (T5)
 - a) Although really did strive to make sure fisheries and aquatic community was represented, concerned they may be a minority and bias the results. Not sure there is anything we can do about it but be aware of it. Don't necessarily think this is a low priority.
 - b) As a fisheries biologist, this is a huge priority for fisheries.
 - c) Disagree as a bad idea or didn't rank high relative to other tools?
 - d) Neutral voter because didn't know how other states or places affected by CT model would accept that model.
 - e) Voted agree or strongly as stream flow is especially an issue for those dealing with insults of shale issue as added stressor down the road for many.

- f) Not sure disagrees were due to CT model or stream flow models in general.
- g) Really important research agenda to expand flow modeling to other parts of the region. Trying to understand how this was a communication strategy. Would be a great research priority, but didn't seem like a translation and communication project. Would need significant research to expand model to region.
- h) In dealing with inland fisheries in Maryland, this is biggest issue. Not certain it would apply but could use it now.
- i) Think it needs to be done but under assessment category. Had two higher priorities that needed to be done right away under this category. Not disagreement but where and in what order.
- j) To extent that people may not understand model, it is not attempting to produce result of how much water should be in stream but unaltered flow would have been if you had gauges on the stream and could have measured it, creating a synthetic hydrograph on stream. Foundational element for conservation designs to be developed. Use products of this model to figure out how to manage stream flow in the future.
- k) Action/post-workshop issue:
 - i) Suggest as part of synthesis to engage fisheries and aquatic community to make sure their priorities get addressed.
- 5) An information delivery mechanism should be a requirement of every future RCN product to deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures. (T1)
- 6) Take existing RCN products and fund a communication specialist to repackage and deliver information to pre-defined user groups (i.e., public, resource managers, stakeholders) with associated effectiveness measures. (T1)
 - a) Disagree or strongly disagree as ought to be part of work product and not necessarily need to fund yet another coordinator, would be a drainage of funding.
 - b) To incorporate outreach products but for things that were already completed, value is still there and should be marketed in some way.
 - c) Projects are science products by scientists. Need to leave communications to experts in those areas.
 - d) Programs are funded with SWG dollars. Must be careful with outreach dollars to qualify.
 - e) Don't give enough money to do a project and the communications.
 - f) Skill sets for grant applicants, especially from academia, would be limiting applicants if there is a requirement to do both science and management of a tool and then market.
 - g) Limit of SWG funding means this would be good area for LCCs to take precedence.
- 7) Next generation of habitat connectivity work is to be more explicit about providing something that defines what the ecological purpose (what population/species) of that corridor is and that would force conversations on how that corridor would be used. (T7)
- 8) Working with implementers/users, translate the information into usable tools in order to convince them that it's useful to them and what they are doing (cottontail as a model.) Always have specific implementation examples using the results of these

- projects for both buy-in and delivery. Develop a marketing, training, and capacity building strategy targeted to specific needs. (T7)
- 9) Target science translation (outreach) efforts to areas/species that are of widespread distributed and highest responsibility. (T3)
 - 10) Develop suite of regionally standard Best Management Practices to be implemented to reduce the spread of invasives (incl. aquatics), and share with all groups. (T3)
 - a) As lead invasives biologist for PA, would like to see resources to somewhere else as BMPs for invasives are well underway in other programs. Would be waste of time to duplicate effort again.
 - 11) Develop set of examples or demonstration projects to illustrate how conservation design tool can lead to adaptive management on the ground. The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this. (T6)
 - 12) Provide cookbook or catalog of on-the-ground implementation details that translate conservation design results into practical actions or projects. The regional-scale focal areas are a logical starting point for this. (T6)
 - 13) Overlay and integrate existing datasets to delineate landscapes of regional significance (focal areas and connectivity). (T8)
 - a) Disagree due to a lot have been doing this due to existing datasets but excited about new datasets on representative species with refined data. Existing data has information we instinctively know. Need to move forward with new datasets.
 - 14) Provide information on landscapes of regional significance to conservation partners, big (e.g. NRCS) and small (e.g. local land trusts) to implement specific conservation actions. (T8)
 - 15) A framework for building and aligning conservation capacity to address shared habitat objectives at multiple spatial scales (e.g. tools, standard guidelines for small-scale road crossings like culverts, shared Farm Bill stewardship biologists/technical service providers, trainings for habitat restoration project managers like a coastal conservation corps). (T9)
 - 16) Need to engage society and major stakeholders beyond the typical conservation community in entire framework process to get their buy-in, consent, perspective and get them to be part of the engine for implementation. Consider incorporating this priority into entire conservation framework (in center or overlaying whole). (T9)
 - a) Either strongly disagree or disagree due to word “consent” of society and major stakeholders. Can see buy-in or perspective, getting them to be party implementing actions but careful with “consent.”
 - 17) Develop comprehensive toolbox of financial tools, vehicles, and approaches to local conservation that includes federal, state, local, NGO partners. (T4)
 - 18) Develop conservation designs for multiple representative species, with consideration that actions will happen by private landowners and with consideration of a changing climate and other threats and translated into a format for those who do conservation on the ground can understand and implement. (T4)
- a) Which members of conservation community are best positioned to implement them?**
- i) Missing National Fish Habitat Action Plan and partnerships with freshwater fisheries and Atlantic Coastal as an implementation piece and audience to see how priorities sit for them.

b) What are barriers to implementing them?

- i) For state partners, do you have capacity to step down to local level? Has been priority for NH. Have been doing a lot of stepping down, partnering with cooperative extension as a member of conservation community that we can utilize, do a lot at landowner level.
- ii) To really meet in detail, work with groups, takes a lot of effort and staff. On fisheries side, short to get to watershed and a lot of groups.
- iii) Need but greatest success in Hudson River estuary program to work with local governments, have to do it over and over again to make it happen as officials change. Will have to work with partners as don't have skill sets or training to communicate to local governments as salient and understandable. Not just capacity but also skill sets. Use others trained to communicate to deliver.
- iv) As framework is constructed, appears to be barrier between science and management. Managers may not feel they have input to science or are talked down to. Anecdotal but can apply management to science.
- v) Don't have resources, particularly financial drying up for purchasing conservation easements and fee purposes. Focus of those tool boxes is to increase limited resources we do have with tools to affect resources we have to get this done. Surprised that tool box items weren't more broadly accepted.
- vi) MD DNR engaging more planning and zoning boards in state, bringing together dataset to create GIS product to take. Poised to do good work. At next level with private landowners, will take more boots on ground.
- vii) In ME, moving very far forward in conservation planning and zoning board. Have found limiting factor of knowledgeable project managers to implement conservation in field, environmental permitting, getting questions answers, hold landowners hand through process and keep them on board.
- viii) Effort to get momentum started at local level into implementation is 2-5 years to get ordinance level changes completed. WE are staff of 2 and could easily have 3-4 positions, one in each region to meet with planning boards to deliver at level we need. Capacity is not there. Some good examples with NH estuaries partnership great program with tens to thousands dollars for small grants, oversight for completion of small stream projects to open space plans. Even small pot of money delivered to towns is incentive to get planning process moving forward would be invaluable.
- ix) Comments about tools – How can we still be talking about tools with so many there? Need landscape tools cooperative to know what all the tools are. Developed GIS server technology but how to share that information. LCC way to do that. Way more tools developed in pockets but no one knows about them. Not sure how to address it.
- x) Difference between box for translation. To get them to use tools is a lot of work. Example of cottontail project to deliver tools to towns with repeat visits. NO quick way. Takes bodies on ground.
- xi) Only tools we develop that people use are ones they developed with us. States telling us this is a tool. Would be great if it did this, they use it. Everything else is useless.
- xii) Complaining about our capacity as barrier, but local towns have low capacity also which may be a severe barrier as well.

c) Opportunities to implement?

- i) How many agencies or organizations expecting an increase in budget, would be interesting to see poll. Some is collaboration, opportunities to work with partners who can complement work we do, engage them more fully.
- ii) Several priorities that reference delineating conservation focus areas. Underscore that we identified 5 kinds of focus areas forthcoming through LCCs or RCNs. Real task is how to integrate those, layer them up in one set of priorities so as not to confuse conservation community.
- iii) Over the next year, the diadromous species restoration research network at University of Maine planning workshop addressing difficulties and disconnects between science and management for restoration. Whatever transpires, the RCN may want to stay in the loop.

5) Session 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Session Hosts: Dee Blanton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Dan Rosenblatt, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Session Objectives:

- i) Understanding of monitoring, evaluation and research projects and the results/data/tools produced by each of them can be used, and how they fit into the framework;
 - ii) Identification of priority monitoring, evaluation and research needs; and
 - iii) Input on how to improve the effectiveness of monitoring.
- a) **Presentation of monitoring, evaluation and research projects.**
 - b) **Reviewed survey findings on Monitoring and Evaluation** (presented by Dee Blanton).
 - c) **Group comments:**
 - i) What is different about TRACS? Fundamental difference is that NatureServe is voluntary. TRACS is mandated for U.S. Department of Interior. Trying to integrate.
 - ii) Monitoring is not just critters but acres of habitat, contacts with decision-makers, results of contacts. Need to track success of conservation actions, some of which we have been talking about like talking with local decision-makers, land trusts, landowners. Don't lose track of that important element of what we do.
 - iii) Monitoring is good as full circle. How to bring it back to original starting point. Results of FIA data in breeding bird surveys where age didn't matter? Matters a lot but fragmentation and roads were more highly correlated. Management of habitat.
 - iv) National effort should change our work or use work that Tracy and others did? Will it supersede it or is it similar?
 - (1) Effectiveness and status are different. Effectiveness is project-by-project – are you doing the right things well? Versus status which is impact.
 - (2) Effectiveness would be similar between two projects. Status is separate issues. Got states and NGOs to identify process and came up with same results chains.

Didn't want to start off saying this is what we will use. Not that many ways to go about effectiveness measures.

6) Table Discussion on Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (*see Appendix I: Table Session notes*)

- a. What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing monitoring evaluation and research?
- b. Who are the key members of the conservation community who can address these priorities and what roles are best suited to RCN and LCCs?
- c. What is value added of regional monitoring evaluation and research?
- d. Do existing monitoring programs provide what we need to make decisions? If not, what changes need to be made or what additional monitoring is needed?

Thursday, June 16, 2011

7) Welcome and Agenda Review (*Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates*)

8) Facilitated Group Discussion on Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

(Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates. Items are in order presented for group polling using TurningPoint® tools. The original table number is identified in parentheses behind the item. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for polling results.)

1. Implement the NE Monitoring and Performance Framework and National effectiveness measures (prioritize staff and funds to implement). (T5)
2. Monitoring protocol for wetland and terrestrial habitat quality and degradation and investigate whether trends can be detected using remote sensing techniques for enhancing SGCNs. (T5)
3. Need to design and implement a monitoring system to inform management at multiple scales as well as provide status/trends information. (T6)
4. Ensure that relationship(s) between representative (i.e., indicator, umbrella) species and "target" species are established (i.e., assumptions or key thresholds are tested). (T6)
 - a. Relationships between umbrella or indicator species and making sure relationships are clear with target or representative species.
5. Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work. (PA example - 10 fish species taken off state list) Need to package our project information as success stories that ordinary people/Congressional can read and understand. (T8)
 - a. Did not write down but should have said, "by October."
 - b. Confusing monitoring species with monitoring programs.
 - c. Difference between effectiveness and status.
 - d. Need to develop systems for monitoring status in order to develop reports.
 - e. Report to constituents at the regional level but will have state-specific information.
 - f. Need to create regular standardized means of reporting State Wildlife Grant outcomes for Congress to ensure continued support for programs.
 - g. Must also include information on program efficiencies to show that the limited resources we currently have are being used effectively.

6. Long term monitoring and performance evaluation to feed into the conservation framework. Fund the implementation of the NE Regional Monitoring and Performance Reporting Framework. (T8)
7. Design metrics to assess effectiveness of technical assistance. (T4)
8. Link species numbers to habitat acreage (or integrity); may use or start with representative species. (T4)
 - a. Didn't understand it.
 - b. Agree with sentiment that for some species like grassland birds, there is a clear link between productivity, success and acreage. If a hundred acre field is good for grassland birds, shouldn't need to demonstrate that every time. For species that are area dependent, need to make a strong case that by measuring acreage, close as possible to guaranteeing high productivity because can't count every bird, turtle and fish.
 - c. Similar to #10 (develop surrogate) but that one was intended to be more encompassing than acreage. Find times where you can consistent measure A to get B so you don't have to measure it every time.
 - d. Same issue intended for #12 (decision matrix).
 - e. Not one of top two, but talked about at another table that need umbrella species, population goals, but must be related as population-based habitat goals in addition to individual species measures.
 - f. One reason working on assignment with FWS is to look at overlaps with US EPA work. Challenge to think about ways we can figure out if we do A then B will happen, such as water quality, habitat and species. Not always species or habitat but also water quality that EPA is already measuring could be useful.
 - g. Ranked in bottom 3 but tied to so many others. As we see connectedness, may not be in bottom 3 as it is part of others. Need to sum up all ratings.
 - h. Disagreed because numbers fluctuate with some species and habitats a lot but doesn't mean it doesn't have integrity. Agree with finding surrogates but when strictly have numbers as targets, get yourself in trouble.
9. Develop a shared regional database to be able to combine and analyze data on a regional perspective, but make flexible to allow for individual needs or species groups or guilds to be included. Examples include: Monitoring of native pollinators (could also link to economic impacts), or freshwater mussel species, could also include current RCN invertebrate monitoring (RCN 11), like DiscoverLife website. (T3)
10. Conduct an analysis of expected outcomes of specific management actions and identify an accepted surrogate outcome in place of monitoring every action to be more cost effective and reduce endless monitoring expenditure. Could develop standard low level spot check monitoring program...i.e. removal of a dam that restores 2 miles of habitat will result in an increase of 1 mile of accessible spawning habitat for Atlantic salmon and 30 adult Atlantic salmon, and an increase to the adult population in the river of 15%. (T3)
11. Establish Uniform Monitoring Practices that can be applied across large geographic areas for multi-jurisdictional resources (e.g., habitats for species that occur across geopolitical boundaries). These need to be relevant and applicable to inform current management decision-making. Need a consistent framework for states to implement monitoring so that we can roll up data. [Vote #5 and table 9 will buy you a drink]. (T9)

- a. Establishing monitoring practices has already been done. So change to “implement” so it is not redundant in way it is written.
 - b. Keep in mind that we are monitoring for different reasons. Reporting framework is monitoring overall success of project in broadest terms, need target species, representative species and habitats. Don’t have standard practices for all.
 - c. Two parts to that -- status measures and effectiveness measures. Status looks at large geographic landscape with two species groups, so might be closer.
12. Develop a decision matrix to determine when to monitor and when it is not useful. Apply to response of certain actions at a specific site. (T9)
- a. Might be too structured. So many variables that may not be applicable across region.
13. Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs and develop state/tribal/ngo surveys to complement the federal surveys to provide regional status. (T1)
- a. Model in west with BLM bringing together partners to develop framework where federal, state and others contribute to monitoring, feeding into framework that can be applied for a lot of different species. Can be applied and framework for doing that.
 - b. Opportunity to engage FWS refuge monitoring on and off refuges, when appropriate. Focus on a lot of same resources over next couple of years.
 - c. Chesapeake Bay partnership program with science, analysis reporting. Water quality oriented but somewhat successful in attention to living resources. Calls to state partners and others to get balance of representation. Contact Mike Slattery, Chesapeake Coordinator for FWS.
14. Identify surrogates (e.g., habitats, species groups) to monitor challenging priority species. (T1)
15. Monitoring response of target spp or habitat changes that occur as a result of NRCS (Farm Bill) funded projects. (T2)
- a. Important but not for RCN.
 - b. Duplication of effort. Already ongoing.
16. Inventory of monitoring efforts - all organizations, including citizen science. (T2)
17. Specific performance criteria and reporting must be a required part of all RCN projects -- best if they are standardized. (T7)
18. Ensure accurate monitoring of representative species to support biological assessment and conservation design. (T7)

a. Group process comments

- i. Large proportion of “neutral” votes – does that mean don’t know, don’t care? Need to resolve what that means.
 1. Used neutral typically when didn’t understand exactly what was being described, so rather than disagree with something I didn’t know about, voted “neutral.”
 2. Did not give specific guidance. One option would be not to vote if you aren’t knowledgeable. Those who don’t vote may be more self-aware of their knowledge. Assuming right people in room. Will get collective view, plus or minus. At Albany I, used same technique but level of sophistication wasn’t there about regional

things. More nuances, more detailed in this process. If knowledgeable person in room may prevail, so using that at tables then using group process to get a sense. Some may not be explained well or people who should be voting are not in the room. Using all techniques to identify priorities.

3. Could have “didn’t understand” category or don’t have enough information to make an opinion.
 - ii. Moving these things forward. Would be helpful to have discussion of issues first, then vote. Each table could have described them first, which would take time.
 - iii. Lots of commonalities. Don’t have 18 proposals, but could be 7-8 if boiled down. Some that didn’t get ranked would probably be ranked higher. To take list as voted does a disservice to some that could be repackaged with a lot of support.

9) Session 6: Information Management

Session Hosts: Dave Jenkins, New Jersey Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife, Steve Fuller, Wildlife Management Institute and BJ Richardson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Session Objectives:

- i) Understanding of information management projects, how the results/data/tools produced by each of them can be used, and how information management supports the entire framework;
 - ii) Identification of priority information management needs;
 - iii) Input on goals for a regional information management system, including who would need access to the data, what data they would need and how they would want it delivered.
- a) **Presentations on Information Management projects.**
 - i) Overview of Information Management (presented by Steve Fuller).
 - ii) Review of TRACS (presented by Chris Burkett).
 - iii) MoveBank.org animal tracking and Smithsonian Wild camera trap websites (presented by Roland Kays, New York State Museum, Albany, NY)
 - iv) NatureServe website, Kestrel data observation and Biotics 5 storage system (presented by Dave Jenkins).
 - v) Need shared standardized database for State Wildlife Action Plans (presented by Dave Jenkins).
 - vi) Information needs assessment (presented by BJ Richardson).
 - b) **Survey findings on Data and Tools** (presented by Steve Fuller).
 - i) Data sharing agreements ranked highest - have information out there but scattered and difficult to access.
 - ii) Data needs assessment

10) Table Discussion on Information Management (*see Appendix I: Table Session notes*)

- a. Table Discussion Questions
 - i. What are the highest priority additional projects or needs for advancing information management?
 - ii. Who are the members of the conservation community to best address these priorities and what roles are best suited to RCN and LCCs?
 - iii. What is value added of regional information management?
 - iv. What are the target audiences for information and how should the data be delivered?

11) Facilitated Group Discussion on Information Management

(Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates. Items are in order presented for group polling using TurningPoint® tools. The original table number is identified in parentheses behind the item. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for polling results.)

- 1) Provide workshops to improve collaboration between state natural heritage programs and state fish and wildlife agencies to achieve appropriate data access for regional conservation applications. (T1) 1
- 2) Provide appropriate counseling services to overcome dysfunctional data sharing relationships. (Free seven step process to those that vote "5" for this one!) (T1) 2
- 3) SWAP database development that also links to TRACS - needs funding to populate SWAP database. (T2) 3
- 4) Easy access to information for policy makers in Congress - outreach and advocacy for that audience, e.g. Value of basic monitoring data is not always known until there is a problem - translation of value of basic science for lay audience. (T2) 4
 - a) Make sure we aren't lobbying.
 - b) Not lack of information but someone needs to lobby. A senator will not read 20-page glossy report.
- 5) Integrate regional habitat classification into MoveBank database. (T3) 5
 - a) Did neutral mean this was possible, not a good idea or waiting to see how the beta test turned out? Saw a 10 minute presentation so not committed yet.
 - b) Low score showed that we aren't just reacting to it, but thinking about what we really need.
 - c) Explain about group's thinking. Some was using MoveBank as a good example but talking about need to add habitat data to further inform project. IF want to move regionally and position ourselves to get regional classification schemes into those things when they are coming online, will have regional perspective and common terminology. Want to be proactive.
 - d) Voted neutral because if we do things right on habitat database, easy for MoveBank to just use that – or any other habitat classification.
 - e) True but promoting use of classification system so don't see risk in being proactive to use it.
- 6) Create regional geospatial database that can be shared and used among all partners (states, ACOE, USGS, USDA, FWS, NGOs...) to integrate existing databases (states, NatureServe...) to identify activities on the ground. Include terrestrial, aquatics, and marine species linked with habitat. Goal of action and set of target species for action

- should also be included. Not meant to be fully inclusive of all data, but is targeted to habitat management. (T3) 6
- 7) Tie in data on species monitoring to quickly assess regional status of species = outcome. (T4) 7
 - 8) Establish a module in TRACS to better capture SWAP success from partners = conservation outcomes. (T4) 8
 - 9) Support development of SWAP database to promote consistency in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions and improve accessibility. (T4) 9
 - 10) Leadership commit funding and staff to evaluate, analyze, and interpret existing and future datasets. (T5) 10
 - 11) Institutionalize long term datasets on a Regional cooperative basis (security, access, data sharing, maintenance, transferable data technology). (T5) 11
 - 12) Require data analysis for funded projects. (T5) 12
 - a) Lot of projects that we will fund that don't require data analysis, so doesn't fit. If it's a project that should have analysis, will be in the contract anyway. Some providing tool won't have it.
 - 13) Ensure that all spatial databases are designed to interface with all other existing or proposed spatial databases. (T6) 13
 - a) Put in same category as ending world hunger. A nice utopia to strive for but not realistic. Too many existing databases that will never change; too many people invested in their own databases to make them all compatible.
 - b) Do we want to reach ideal or move forward as a group as we fund projects that will result in spatial databases that they are in a consistent standard. Is that a possibility?
 - c) Realize that each database is different. Had a previous one about mega database that is everything for everyone. Won't happen but do have several good databases, want to make sure they are cross-linked – habitat management to occurrences and TRACS. To degree possible, the IT architecture is compatible in the future.
 - d) Going forward, good idea to try to make databases compatible. Worthy, possible goal but way around that is concept of web services – make it available online to pull into their applications without having to make their internal database compatible.
 - 14) Develop a managed lands database to document various management activities on private and public lands. This will include appropriate privacy and securities measures. (T6) 14
 - 15) Conduct a information needs assessment based on the Northeast Conservation Framework information needs and data flow (as illustrated by framework diagram with data flow) focused on regional scale needs, building off what exists already; includes a metadata analysis that catalogs and organizes what is available and is realistic based on agency capacity (assessment guided by steering committee) (T7) 15
 - 16) Regional habitat management database that includes spatial and tabular data on habitats being managed on both public and private lands, type of management, target species; consider pilot on one type of habitat. (T7) 16
 - 17) Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information management needs assessment that was identified as a top priority LCC science need. Engage all the conservation community in this process, with the goal of making better decisions. (T8) 17
 - 18) Create data sharing agreements between all members of NE conservation community - state, federal, ngo - AND get their data. (T8) 18

- a) Obviously good to share data but reason it doesn't happen has to do with people not in this room. Need to get those people in here so they can talk to each other. I feel like a go-between between attorneys. Don't want to do that. Want them here to solve this by talking to each other.
- 19) Support an urgent needs assessment process to advance regional conservation data management and analysis. We need to include folks from other regional conservation efforts (e.g., NFHAP, NOAA, Gulf of Maine Council, Canada) to bring in additional datasets and data needs. (T9) 19
- 20) Develop a way for states, LCCs and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial condition analysis products coming out of the RCN process. (T9) 20
 - a) Aquatic GIS analysis has been available since project ended in 2008 at link for RCN website. Can download. Assuming terrestrial will be there soon.
 - b) Mostly done. Need to talk about whether it needs to be served in different way.
 - c) Data for terrestrial stuff – got 3 different emails on it. Need to contact wildlife diversity or action plan coordinator.
 - d) Habitat database will be available but the condition analysis is not done (report is done, website is not).
 - e) Large spatial datasets are accessible for those who manage them but others who just want a map need an accessible pdf.

12) Session 7: Highest Priority Next Steps

Session Hosts: Karen Bennett, Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife, Andrew Milliken, North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, Ken Elowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Science Applications

- a) Describe next steps after workshop** (*presented by Karen Bennett & Andrew Milliken*)
 - i) LCC missing some key components on cultural resources, but will move forward.
 - ii) How involved do you want to be in reviewing (most indicated interest).
 - iii) NERCF Workshop website will remain active.
- b) Agreement on the Conservation Framework** (*presented by Ken Elowe*)
 - i) Reminder of relevance to society that a state referendum would put 1.2% of state sales tax in conservation. Indicates relevance to society.
 - ii) Two components: vision of RCN process to create a landscape. Vision of LCC to define, design and deliver landscapes that sustain cultural resources. High aspirations. Framework goes a long way towards getting there.
 - iii) Review conservation framework. Not much disagreement about conceptual steps. Lots of discussion about what gets inserted in each step. What do we need to do next?
 - iv) Where do public involvement and societal needs come into this picture? Don't think this group or the LCC steering committee will do public involvement but each organization will.
 - v) Need to decide where you want public input for effectiveness – either gaining support for what you want to do or input into what you are doing.

vi) Group comments

- (1) Missing something about adapting and learning. Ability to turn it into knowledge.
 - (a) Came up in discussions about purpose of monitoring to look at trends and effectiveness (feedback loop).
 - (b) Have all versions in notebook. Common elements with different pictures showing same types of frameworks.
 - (c) Major components and questions to ask to know if you are making progress. Under monitoring, ask how to use information to adapt. Take framework and put some essential components into each of these slots. Can revise the tool to see if it's useful. Fulfilling all the steps we need. Can make it more clear or useful.
- (2) Would be helpful to have a way to provide feedback on tools, maps and how they could be improved to make sure things are working and being used consistently.
 - (a) For the framework or efforts that come out of this? The tools that have been produced but could also comment directly on this process.
- (3) All is really about getting to better decisions but haven't developed a *decision-making process* as a region. **[Action]**
 - (a) These are the steps but not when you go from this to this or what you need. One version is business model with species population at top. Was designed to get at information needed to answer question and what you do as a result.
 - (b) Look at the whole package as things that might help you. All versions of frameworks that have proved helpful to some agency. Use them as tools to help make decisions. Need feedback on what you find most useful.
- (4) Couple things in common about all frameworks – sections on conservation planning and adaptive management. No definition of who is the entity that plans and manages that planning process and who is the entity that manages adaptive management, which isn't just a series of steps that happen, but a process. Get feedback on work and adapt. Who checks data against work to change plan. Not really anyone in that box.
- (5) Not sure if something that's missing or a next step, but wondering whose responsibility it is to make information comprehensible for communities to lead conservation design conversations.
 - (a) Both questions related to who. Is it necessary to define in framework?
 - (b) Question is about how – the translation tools for a specific audience. When talking about information management, nothing rose to top oriented to distilling information, making it understandable to communities to help in their own discussions.
- (6) Great point on gaps. Can't do everything at once. Designed to help find gaps for conservation end point.
 - (a) Aspects of everything are uncomfortable – goal setting, priority setting, evaluation of research. If it isn't someone's job, it won't happen.

- (b) Responsibility is so variable across landscapes that tough to generalize but have to be clear about assignments.
- (c) Make sure tools hit right audiences and are useable by shifting cast of characters. Key piece is adapting science in different ways to be useable to people on the ground.
- (7) Can *send back a version* with “who” put throughout. [**Action**]
 - (a) Useful to find complementary roles to not duplicate efforts as conservation community.
 - (b) Theme of who decides but haven’t talked about conflict resolution. Talked about focus areas assuming we can clearly identify areas. Have to design tools to help make that decision.
- vii) Huge step to have framework that all priorities fit into.

13) Highest Priority Needs for Future Projects (*Facilitated by Dave Case, DJ Case & Associates*)

a. Recommendations on highest priority needs for future projects

- i. Based on review and discussion by the Workshop Planning Team, items with group ratings above 3.85 were forwarded for consideration by group polling in the final session on Highest Priorities (32 items total). Using TurningPoint® polling, the participants identified an initial list of immediate priorities to focus on over the next two years.

ii. Results of group polling (Top 10 results only)

*(Items are in **priority** order (from highest to lowest) based on group polling using TurningPoint® tools. The original number of each item in the list presented for polling is identified in the number behind the item. See Appendix E: Group Ranking of Table Discussion Priorities for complete polling results.)*

1. Immediate need for reporting on success of SWG grant-funded work (19)
2. Deliver the results (synthesis) of projects in a meaningful way to on-the-ground managers (6)
3. Communications, toolkit, user guide (1)
4. Support and engage in the forthcoming regional information needs assessment (26)
5. Develop a way for states, LCCs, and other partners to immediately access the habitat mapping and geospatial analysis tools coming out of the RCN process (25)
6. Long-term monitoring and performance evaluation (21)
7. Identify and leverage existing federal monitoring programs (22)
8. Support development of SWAP database to promote consistency in next generation of SWAPs, allow easy State rollup, guide revisions, and improve accessibility (27)
9. Working with implementers/users, translate information into useable tools (11)

10. Create distribution maps for regional responsibility/high concern species- overlay on NE habitat maps (9)

b. Comments

- i. Figure out how to use products before starting something new.
- ii. Will be more useful for RCNs than LCCs. Will need to go further in the ranking.
- iii. Nothing from design and delivery was in it.
- iv. First set could be combined, allowing to go down further.
- v. Not in highest priority list:
 1. Compete and integrate focus areas from existing projects.
 2. Monitoring could be higher, rather than leveraging federal programs.
 3. More on representative species.
 4. Group looking at this will need to go back to original voting to use some tools other than averages. Weren't voting among everything that was out there, just the top. Must be careful not to skew skewed results further.
 5. Team will pull out and synthesize these results. Ranking is one more input to planning team synthesis. May lump some together and see more science-oriented priorities. Challenge will be huge amount of input with 9 tables times 6 sessions. Group discussions from first day were 30 pages. Feedback on attempt to synthesize this will be really important. Fact that 3-4 groups sent an item in makes it a priority.
- vi. Concerned that if we don't spend time on regional and statewide focus areas, will have too diffused an effort to forward idea of regional conservation as effectively as we could. Surprised it didn't show up higher.
 1. Important aquatic and terrestrial species habitat mapping that will get at habitat and species distribution capability which is a way to get to focus areas that reflects our mission of sustained F&W populations. Efforts by TNC and states must complement each other, so we can converge them. Those that are interested in that aspect can start an active dialogue about what each project brings and how it can be done. Need a broader set of partners in that discussion.
 - a. Will put this *invitation on the website* as critical next step.

[Action]
- vii. Don't really understand what "finish mapping all systems" means in this context. Specifically finish lakes for aquatics. Before delivering results need to make sure they are the tools we think they are. The aquatics map is a good start but really needs to take another step in adding real data and defining classification system before we roll it out. Look at what we have before we put big effort into communicating.
 1. Finish up loose ends with mapping in coastal marine, aquatic lakes, etc. because didn't have all data.
 2. Stream flow aquatics research didn't score high because wildlife may have voted neutral, not being familiar. Didn't make the list on right or

- left for final vote. Issue related to representation for fisheries as not being on the map.
3. Chris gave effective presentation that scared us all. Take that factor out and others can score higher.
 4. Aquatic projects conversation – did try to make sure every state had an aquatics/fisheries representative but acknowledge a bias and will follow up with aquatics for a parallel process.
 5. Notice going through that there were a lot of things that fit within each other, duplication things with wording. Some low ranking items may overlap with higher rated items. Just were worded differently.
- c. Very rigorous process designed by planning team who worked for months to get ready for the workshop. Tremendous amount of thought. If we position ourselves to make better decisions, leaders already figured out some of that. Results in qualitative notes and TurningPoint® gives some answers. Be careful about scoring but gives some insights. Challenge is gathering substantive input from 80 people. Better insights but not a decision-making tool. Made big leap in raising awareness of tools and considerations then position to be more effective in future planning.

14) Concluding Remarks

Ken Elowe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Science Applications

- a. Thanks to Andrew Milliken and planning team who put an incredible amount of work and thinking into putting this together. Thanks to Gwen and Dave for being so receptive and changing things on the fly and up to the minute. Every time I use TurningPoint®, see it using a little better and more effective.
- b. Polling changed some of my thoughts about what we tried to achieve. Tried to ask from you a lot of information, guidance and it was not done yet. Still aspirations, possibilities and will be requesting a lot more from you.
- c. Hope you realize how much you have taken conservation forward on what to do, how to get there and paths forward. Thanks for contributing to that end point.

Patricia Riexinger, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

- a. Thanks for sharing Albany and museum. Was a lovely venue.
- b. Good opportunity for creative approach at region level on what was working and how to move forward. What tech team came up with made a lot of sense. Taking it to the next level now. Was not hugely different, but sensible evolution.
- c. Over last couple of days, have taken a lot of information, perspectives and energy. Under Andrew and Dave's pressure, squeezed all of this into a diamond in the rough with the potential that now our federal partners and tech team can cut and polish to come up with gem.
- d. In next 5 years can have Albany III to see that this was beautiful, full of love and will endure.
- e. Have identified good path. Need to look at process to deliver on priorities. Tech teams not biologists but paper pushers, reviewers. Need to think about how to deliver this in such a way that don't use up precious staff resources in endless paperwork and bureaucracy. Deliver better and revisit situations put in place early on.

- f. Many things on the list that we think are important for conservation are not unique to at risk species. Habitat mapping system can be used across the board. Why are we putting burden on meager 4% of state wildlife grants to carry this.
- g. Some is eligible for PR and WB funds. Pressure NEWA guys to find additional funds to stitch together our broad conservation responsibilities. Approaches we need are the same. Be creative in supplementing other projects.
- h. Need to re-examine how we fund, rethink processes that support all good things.

15) Adjourn

- a. Participants used TurningPoint® to evaluate workshop format, process, and achievement of desired outcomes, and then they filled out a hand-written Workshop Evaluation Form with open-ended comments. (*see Appendix G for results*)