

Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop Pre-Workshop Assessment Report



Prepared for the
Northeast Regional Framework Workshop
Planning Team

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Executive Summary

A web-based, pre-workshop assessment was administered to selected natural resource professionals to assist planning and implementation of the upcoming Northeast Regional Conservation Framework workshop scheduled for June 14-16, 2011, in Albany, New York.

There were 126 completed assessments and 102 partially completed assessments.

Key results follow for each question:

Monitoring & Evaluation

- “Monitoring programs that link monitoring to outcomes and decision making at multiple scales” was highest priority among *monitoring and evaluation* activities rated by respondents.

A qualitative summary of these open-ended comments was developed:

Purpose (why)

- Need clear picture of current situation on the ground
- Inform decision-making at multiple scales
- Monitoring should be required by funders

Techniques (how)

- Develop infrastructure for monitoring first before protocols
- Systematic, unified, consistent, meaningful approach
- Clear objectives to measure change and monitor targets
- Adapt existing successful data management protocols (e.g., Teaming with Wildlife)

Barriers/challenges

- Difficult to measure some outcomes, but quantification should be the goal (don't get bogged down)
- Difficult to collect baseline data for unanticipated outcomes
- Standard measures may not work for specific species/community/ecosystem metrics

Biological Assessment

- “Spatial status and vulnerability assessments for priority populations and habitats” was highest priority among *biological assessment* activities evaluated by respondents.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Identify focal species as surrogates for other priority species
- More understanding of uncertainties may not be critical in adaptive management context

Techniques (how)

- Definition and objectives must be clear for focal species and vulnerability assessments (common language exists on threats)
- Identify measurable population targets from field observations

Barriers/challenges

- State plans don't always have a common language
- Cannot rely on focal species to represent full suite of priority species
- Verifying causal links takes money and years

Conservation Strategy Adaptations

- Among *conservation strategy adaptations* that respondents rated, two activities tied for highest priority: “develop information to guide local land use decisions” and “design conservation for maximum multi-species benefit and resolve conflicts among species.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Protect the best, manage the rest

Techniques (how)

- Incorporate real engagement of private lands managers
- Cater towards specific needs of highest priority species
- Managing habitat will be easier than managing species and will provide for species
- Compile data from unconserved lands for comparison (tracking land that is managed is medium priority)
- Too much money and emphasis on marketing analyses which are not helpful
- Give high priority to spatial forecasting in coastal and some riverine areas

Barriers/challenges

- Plans that rely only on conserved public lands will fail
- Maximum benefit measured by number of species will skew projects to common species and habitats
- Interspecies conflict resolution may be hard to define and analyze
- Unclear about spatial and nonspatial decision support tools (e.g., GIS layers to view habitats and species distributions)

On-The-Ground Conservation

- “Explicit strategies to recruit specific landowners/programs to adopt prescribed practices” ranked as highest priority activity for *on-the-ground conservation*.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Focus on implementation not how to do conservation

Techniques (how)

- Have a good perspective on BMP effectiveness (use and add to manuals)
- Market products to influence choices

Barriers/challenges

- Resources to conduct many efforts

Manage and Integrate Data and Tools

- The highest priority activity in the category, *manage and integrate data and tools*, was “data sharing agreements among partners.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Data management will be a logical spin-off to effective conservation delivery programs
- Better data management by all organizations to be easily transferred to and interpreted by others
- Innovative ways of delivering what exists, not new mechanisms for sharing data or tools

Techniques (how)

- Database management should happen at the LCC level
- Central data sources need to be flexible
- Adopt and modify existing data management protocols (e.g., TRACS)
- Cover basic data needs: collection, storage, standardization, analysis, dissemination, reuse

Barriers/challenges

- Standard methods are insensitive to organizational objectives, site conditions and field use
- One system that fits all taxa and needs is impossible
- Top down design will cause too many to abandon rather than participate as a partner
- Have everything to make this happen except a driving reason
- Vague topics and effectiveness of actions are difficult to evaluate
- Most biologists think they have data management skills, but they really don't

Barriers to the Success of the RCN and LCC Efforts

- The *greatest barrier to the success of RCN and LCC efforts* was “insufficient staff preparation in regional processes or administering joint projects due to time.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

Note: Several organizational issues were raised throughout the assessment and are summarized only once under this question.

Purpose (why)

- Centralized versus localized decision-making (i.e., decisions driven by States, not forced by outside partners)
- Science-based focus on habitats, ecosystems and ecosystem processes not single, focal or multi-species
- Prioritize projects that provide specific information for future decision making

Techniques (how)

- Engage implementers and other integral stakeholders in the process by increasing communication
- Develop actions that have shared objectives and work with other sectors (e.g., local planners, biomass industry)
- Design projects for regional impacts

Barriers/challenges

- Joint ventures and similar cooperatives have enjoyed success at all resource management scales so data sharing, lack of science and poor communication may not be real barriers for LCCs
- Pragmatic barriers such as political priorities, fewer long-term technical staff (not temporary employees), lack of time and resources for coordination by states and other partners
- Poor communications among FWS programs and other agencies
- Lack of products and tangible successes to date that can be implemented have hampered enthusiasm
- Limited distribution of products (availability of project reports and summaries on study objectives and deliverables)
- Jargon in the assessment was difficult to understand (may communicate to planners or supervisors not field staff) or options were poorly defined and not self evident

RCN Projects in 2007

- The most *helpful RCN projects in 2007* were the “creation of regional habitat cover maps” followed closely by “conservation status of key habitats and SGCN” (species of greatest conservation need).

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Some products were poor but could be helpful if done well (e.g., biomass and invasives)
- Already have some products for specific geographic regions (e.g., habitat maps, USGS StreamStats)

Gaps/needs

- Maps based on outdated land cover, not finished or not available for some states or habitats (e.g., coastal marine)
- Multiagency group to coordinate with biomass industry
- Streamflow would be useful if flow were regulated and could be managed for habitat
- Comprehensive database of passage barriers (location and extent)

RCN Projects in 2008

- The *2008 RCN projects* that respondents felt were the most helpful in their geographic areas were “regional indicators and measures, monitoring protocols,” and “regional focal areas for SGCN: site capacity, network resilience and connectivity.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Guidelines will be helpful if staff positions focus on working with local planners
- Estimating target fish communities failed to meet objectives and passed on secondary data essentially repeating existing research

Gaps/needs

- The aquatic landscape has been fundamentally altered from what might be considered a template or reference condition, limiting utility of target fish communities, instead of describing and restoring missing pieces
- Exotics and invasives will affect communities regardless of management actions

RCN Projects in 2009

- The most *helpful RCN project in 2009* was “geospatial condition analysis of northeast habitats based on the northeast SGCN habitat maps.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- New England cottontail work needed but support to data not helpful
- Better to establish criteria to identify species at risk
- Invertebrate database would have been good to know about given specialized invertebrate collection for the last 5 years

Gaps/needs

- Ongoing process
- Pending true application

RCN Projects in 2010

- The *2010 RCN project* that respondents felt the most helpful was “lab and field testing treatments for White Nose Syndrome (WNS).”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

Utility

- Instream flow data useful if flow can be regulated or there is potential for water development projects that will affect flow
- Hope WNS (bat white nose syndrome) and frog monitoring are useful but haven’t seen reports
- Have more bird focal areas than can be affected
- Anticipate that projects will be hopeful, but have only just begun approved projects

Gaps/needs

- Project areas have not included some states
- Improvements to WNS (bat white nose syndrome) work

LCC Projects in 2010

- The *most helpful LCC project in 2010* was “designing sustainable landscapes for wildlife: forecasting changes in terrestrial landscapes, habitats, and populations

in the North Atlantic LCC and developing decision support tools for conservation.”

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Piping plover knowledge needed for numerous reasons

Gaps/needs

- Keep trucks and dogs off beach for piping plovers
- Actions that control sea level rise

Role in the RCN

- When asked “What has been your role with the RCN program,” the most frequent responses were:
 - State agency review team (24%)
 - Technical review team (21%)
 - Applicant for RCN project (14%)

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

Roles

- Given how much money my state has contributed to this program and how little we’ve received in tangible benefits, have advised agency to withdraw from this regional effort and use funding to implement more tangible projects that can be used to better defend the SWG program in Congressional budget fights
- Participated on technical review team, supplied datasets and commented on direction
- Joint Ventures provided input on relative value of proposed project to the regions

Gaps/needs

- Little to no outreach to Field Stations regarding recommendations for RCN projects
- Relatively new to program

Role in the LCC

- The most frequent answers to, “What has been your role in the LCC program,” were:
 - Technical committee (17%)
 - Steering committee (12%)
 - Participant in a project (9%)

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Roles

- Steering process as an administrator
- Technical committee and steering committee representatives are cross-purpose
- Involved in development from early stages of the program

- Not directly involved in North Atlantic LCC but with LCC program at regional and national level or in other LCCs
- Input to framework development

Gaps/needs

- Not much opportunity to be involved

Primary Affiliation

- Respondents' primary affiliations were:
 - State agency (51%)
 - Federal agency (36%)
 - NGO (10%)

There were no open-ended comments.

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Background

The Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop, or “Albany II Workshop” is a five-year follow-up to the *State Wildlife Action Plans Meeting* held in Albany, New York, March 28-30, 2006 (“Albany I”). The Albany I meeting ultimately was the catalyst for establishing the Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) program.

The Albany II Workshop is scheduled for June 14-16 2011 in Albany, New York. The Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) Directors, Administrators and Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee, in association with the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) in the Northeast Region have planned this joint workshop to:

- Review, synthesize, evaluate, and present RCN and initial LCC projects completed or underway;
- Increase understanding and engagement by state and other conservation partners in RCN and LCC projects and goals in the Northeast;
- Review progress made toward original goals for the RCN program;
- Discuss challenges, needs, and opportunities for the RCN program and LCCs in the Northeast;
- Explore and discuss opportunities for collaborations between RCNs and LCCs in the Northeast to address common needs; and
- Develop initial consensus on a common conservation framework, vision, and highest program priorities.

DJ Case & Associates (DJ Case), a communications firm specializing in natural resource conservation issues, was retained to assist with workshop facilitation and logistics planning. DJ Case, through collaborative consultation with the Workshop Planning Team (Table 1), developed and deployed a pre-workshop assessment. The assessment sought broad input on the past performance and future direction of NEAFWA’s regional efforts. This report details the findings of that assessment.

Table 1. Workshop Planning Team

Member	Affiliation
Andrew Milliken	North Atlantic LCC Coordinator / USFWS, Planning Committee Chair
Karen Bennett	DE Division of Fish and Wildlife / Wildlife Diversity Tech Committee
Dee Blanton	USFWS
Dan Brauning	PA Game Commission / Wildlife Diversity Tech Committee
David Day	PA Fish & Boat Commission / Wildlife Diversity Tech Committee
Steve Fuller	North Atlantic LCC / Wildlife Management Institute
Becky Gwynn	VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries
John Kanter	NH Fish and Game / Wildlife Diversity Tech Committee
Eric Palmer	VT Fish and Wildlife
George Matula	ME Dept Inland Fisheries & Wildlife / Wildlife Diversity Tech Committee
Helen McMillan	North Atlantic LCC / USFWS / NOAA
Sarah Hughes	DJ Case & Associates
Gwen White	DJ Case & Associates

Methods

A sub team was identified from among the Workshop Planning Team to help develop and implement the pre-workshop assessment. The information gathered from this assessment will be used to guide the direction of the Albany II workshop and future planning for regional conservation.

Assessment questions were designed to identify the highest priority conservation needs best addressed at a regional, landscape-level across the northeast. These questions were reviewed by the sub team and DJ Case. The near-final questions were programmed into Snap Survey software to develop a web form for the online assessment (Appendix A). This link was sent to the Planning Team members with a request for feedback, after which final edits were made by DJ Case.

An invitation was developed (Appendix B) asking conservation professionals in the northeast region to respond to the online assessment; the assessment link was embedded in the invitation.

The invitation to the assessment was sent out to by members of the Planning Team via email. Recipients were asked to forward the invitation to other administrators, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife diversity staff, RCN project managers and grant recipients, LCC staff, federal agency participants, NGOs, and state agencies including:

- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- New Hampshire
- New Jersey
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Virginia
- Washington DC
- West Virginia

While it is unknown how many people received the assessment invitation, it is estimated that several hundred received the invitation to participate in the pre-workshop assessment.

Responses were imported from Snap Survey into the IBM SPSS 19 for analysis. In addition to computing and reporting basic frequencies, mean scores were also calculated where appropriate to rank responses from highest to lowest for ease of data interpretation. Responses to open-ended questions are reported verbatim and summarized in a set of bullet statements for each question (thematic analysis). Missing values are not reported in the narrative. See Appendix C for detailed frequencies, including missing values. Rounding sometimes results in totals not equaling 100%, e.g., totals of 99% and 101%.

Results

The pre-workshop assessment link was sent to several hundred people with 126 assessments completed and 102 partially completed.

Three tables of analyses are presented for each question (Q), Q1 through Q11:

1. Basic frequencies;

2. Measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), with mean scores ranked from highest to lowest and word anchors assigned to rounded mean scores, and standard deviation (SD) as a measure of dispersion; and
3. Open-ended comments with brief thematic analysis of these optional remarks.

Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

Respondents were asked what priority should be given to each of selected monitoring and evaluation activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast (Table 2).

Table 2. What priority do you think should be given to each of the following monitoring and evaluation activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?"

What priority?	Utmost Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Don't Know	Total
Q1a. Monitoring protocols, including timing and management of data.	17%	44%	33%	5%	1%	151
Q1b. Standard language and metrics to measure performance of all conservation tasks.	14%	39%	39%	7%	2%	153
Q1c. Adaptive management data flow, including reporting processes, statistics, and feedback loops.	10%	45%	36%	5%	4%	153
Q1d. Setting thresholds for parameters, including biological responses and performance metrics.	8%	37%	40%	10%	5%	150
Q1e. Leveraging of resources to acquire cost effective data and remote-sensed proxies.	15%	38%	38%	5%	5%	152
Q1f. Data management capacity and support, including training and materials.	10%	29%	46%	12%	2%	153
Q1g. Data management tools to simplify data entry and integrate databases.	14%	34%	40%	11%	1%	153
Q1h. Monitoring programs that link monitoring to outcomes and decision making at multiple scales.	44%	35%	18%	3%	1%	153

A majority (79%) of respondents listed “monitoring programs that link monitoring to outcomes and decision making at multiples scales” as either “utmost priority” (44%) or “high priority (35%).

Mean score analysis was applied to determine the priority ranking of the monitoring and evaluation activities (Table 3). “Monitoring programs that link monitoring to outcomes and decision making at multiple scales” was indeed the highest rated activity, though respondents also evaluated five additional activities as warranting “high priority.”

Table 3. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following monitoring and evaluation activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Utmost priority, 1.50 to 2.49 = High priority, 2.50 to 3.49 = Medium priority, 3.50 to 4.00 = Low priority (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

What priority?	Valid N	Mean	Word Anchor	SD	Median	Mode
Q1h. Monitoring programs that link monitoring to outcomes and decision making at multiple scales.	151	1.79	High	.83	2	1
Q1a. Monitoring protocols, including timing and management of data.	149	2.26	High	.79	2	2
Q1e. Leveraging of resources to acquire cost effective data and remote-sensed proxies.	145	2.34	High	.81	2	2
Q1c. Adaptive management data flow, including reporting processes, statistics, and feedback loops.	147	2.38	High	.74	2	2
Q1b. Standard language and metrics to measure performance of all conservation tasks.	150	2.39	High	.81	2	3
Q1g. Data management tools to simplify data entry and integrate databases.	152	2.48	High	.88	3	3
Q1d. Setting thresholds for parameters, including biological responses and performance metrics.	142	2.55	Medium	.80	3	3
Q1f. Data management capacity and support, including training and materials.	150	2.61	Medium	.83	3	3

Some respondents provided open-ended comments regarding the priority they assigned to each of the selected monitoring and evaluation activities (Table 4).

Table 4. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following monitoring and evaluation activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

Before we can truly focus on adaptive management and determining performance, we need a clear picture of what the current situation is on the ground, a unified approach on how to gather the data that could be used to measure change and monitor targets, and a user-friendly common database to store that information.
Data management is clearly important, but the LCC may not want to focus on developing new data management procedures, but rather, borrow and adapt successful data management protocols that are already operational
Emphasis should be on decisions - monitoring is only information that informs decision process
H might be a very difficult one as certain monitoring programs may only affect decision-making at one scale, rather than multiple ones, and that may be appropriate.
H bothers me. If monitoring is linked to outcomes you have to know what the outcomes will be in advance. you may not collect baseline data you need for unanticipated outcomes.
I don't think that standard language and metrics are possible because each species/community/ecosystem may require specifics.
I don't understand what you mean by item D. This is too vague to even consider since it has so many different contexts depending on situation being described.
I think that monitoring conservation projects should be required by funders and the parameters should be consistent and meaningful to decision makers.
monitoring without clear objectives would be useless. Utmost priority should be identifying the objectives that justify monitoring and evaluation.
Most of this is pretty jargony - tough to understand what is really being proposed
My reasons for indicating high priority rather than utmost priority on b and h above are due to an inability to develop one size fits all metrics for many things in the environmental conservation fields as well as difficulty in measuring outcomes for certain things in these fields. However, just because it is difficult doesn't mean it should not be given a best attempt. Quantification should always be a goal.

One issue that always surfaces for me is the lack of a stable technical staff (wildlife/biological technicians). Currently these positions are seasonal or entry level positions for biologists who then move on. As with any business, a stable technical staff is critical for maintaining standards and information flow. Few wildlife agencies place an emphasis on maintaining a highly trained technical staff.
Performance Measures have already been developed by Teaming With Wildlife
Promote monitoring and evaluation activities (as well as conservation planning initiatives and data gathering/management exercises) that adopt a scalable (nested) approach, to facilitate dovetailing within and among ecosystems and landscapes.
Seems like our state (NY) already has a good handle on this. I don't see an overwhelming need for this.
so i assume that this means what priority for the NALCC to manage? if others can do this i would suggest that would be optimal which affects how i rank these above
Standardization is ideal in theory and resource intensive in practice to achieve - should not ignore, but if its the highest priority, there is a "bogged down" liability that will be realized.
We need to develop the infrastructure and systematic approach to performance evaluation and monitoring before developing protocols etc. for specific programs.
While I appreciate the importance of this initiative, several of the suggested priorities seem to repetive and lack clarity. In that mind set, I find it difficult to separate any of the suggested priorities, hence, they all have the same priority which makes it difficult to compare this initiative to others.

A qualitative summary of these open-ended comments was developed:

Purpose (why)

- Need clear picture of current situation on the ground
- Inform decision-making at multiple scales
- Monitoring should be required by funders

Techniques (how)

- Develop infrastructure for monitoring first before protocols
- Systematic, unified, consistent, meaningful approach
- Clear objectives to measure change and monitor targets
- Adapt existing successful data management protocols (e.g., Teaming with Wildlife)

Barriers/challenges

- Difficult to measure some outcomes, but quantification should be the goal (don't get bogged down)
- Difficult to collect baseline data for unanticipated outcomes
- Standard measures may not work for specific species/community/ecosystem metrics

Biological Assessment Activities

Respondents were asked what priority should be given to each of selected biological assessment activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast. Examination of frequency distributions suggested that “spatial status and vulnerability assessments for priority populations and habitats” was highest priority, with 23% characterizing this as “utmost priority,” and an additional 50%, “high priority” (Table 5). Mean score analysis confirmed this priority (Table 6). Nearly as important as “spatial status and vulnerability assessments” was “population objectives and other conservation targets linked across scales with transparent and explicit assumptions.” Indeed, only one biological assessment activity—“statistical analyses of uncertainties in spatial data for planning and monitoring”—was assigned “medium priority” by respondents; all other activities were rated “high priority.”

Table 5. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following biological assessment activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?”

What priority?	Utmost Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Don't Know	Total
Q2a. Common language to develop concurrence on and define threats and limiting factors.	9%	39%	41%	8%	3%	146
Q2b. Research to verify causal links between perceived threats, wildlife and actions.	17%	45%	28%	8%	2%	144
Q2c. Concurrence on focal species/populations to represent the full suite of priority species.	16%	42%	31%	9%	1%	146
Q2d. Integration of biological assessments into an adaptive management framework.	20%	44%	29%	4%	4%	147
Q2e. Spatial status and vulnerability assessments for priority populations and habitats.	23%	50%	20%	5%	3%	147
Q2f. Population objectives and other conservation targets linked across scales with transparent and explicit assumptions.	21%	49%	22%	4%	4%	146
Q2g. Statistical analyses of uncertainties in spatial data for planning and monitoring.	4%	21%	50%	18%	6%	147

Table 6. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following biological assessment activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Utmost priority, 1.50 to 2.49 = High priority, 2.50 to 3.49 = Medium priority, 3.50 to 4.00 = Low priority (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

What priority	Valid N	Mean	Word Anchor	SD	Median	Mode
Q2e. Spatial status and vulnerability assessments for priority populations and habitats.	143	2.06	High	.80	2	2
Q2f. Population objectives and other conservation targets linked across scales with transparent and explicit assumptions.	140	2.10	High	.78	2	2
Q2d. Integration of biological assessments into an adaptive management framework.	141	2.18	High	.80	2	2
Q2b. Research to verify causal links between perceived threats, wildlife and actions.	141	2.28	High	.84	2	2
Q2c. Concurrence on focal species/populations to represent the full suite of priority species.	144	2.33	High	.86	2	2
Q2a. Common language to develop concurrence on and define threats and limiting factors.	141	2.49	High	.77	3	3
Q2g. Statistical analyses of uncertainties in spatial data for planning and monitoring.	138	2.88	Medium	.76	3	3

Respondents were given opportunity to remark about biological assessment activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast (Table 7).

Table 7. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following biological assessment activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

a. Common languages on threats have been developed by others b. I don't deny that this is important but may not be the best use of our limited time and budget. Verifying causal links could cost a lot of money and take years to accomplish. It might be better accomplished by others with some guidance from the LCC. f. Population objectives require that you have detailed information on the species. It is not likely that we have this type of information for many species outside of some game and some endangered species. g. I'm not sure that having a better understanding about how unsure we are about our uncertainties adds very much if we are using adaptive management.
As noted earlier in my assessment, concurrence and integration are certainly goals but may not always be achieved. Just because they may not be achieved does not mean work should cease on smaller scales.
c. Cannot rely on focal species to represent FULL suite of priority species. The NE is full of unique species that cannot be represented by surrogates (golden winged warbler, NE cottontail, Oystercatchers, etc.) This concept would be a high priority if the wording were rephrased to identify focal species that can be used as surrogates for other priority species. f. population objectives/targets need to be identified in relation to the data that can be obtained to assess them: If productivity for a species/guild cannot be readily obtained from field observations, surrogates for fledging/hatching/etc. that can be measured need to be identified and used as the objective.
Could you word (f) any less clear???? No one thinks or talks this way. These statements are not worded to effectively communicate among workers in the field. They're worded to impress one's supervisors or fellow planners. Most people are just going to roll their eyes at these and say WTF.
Focal species are needed, but we must have a clearly defined definition of purpose, use, and outcome for what these focal species represent. Are they for monitoring, measuring progress (recovery or decline), based on habitat suites to represent similar species? Are they the only species that management can act on? Lots of issues if definitions aren't clear. Same for vulnerability assessments-definitions are useful. Are these dealing with vulnerability to climate change only? What about other threats? that then guides how the assessments are done.
Focal species, by definition, cannot fully represent "a full suite of priority species" as habitat is not general. That is not to say that focal species cannot be used, but we should ensure that we understand what is "given up" with other "non-focal" species when we do. This is not trivial.
Important need to resolve questions regarding the usefulness of using species and communities to define objectives given that climate change is likely to induce substantial changes regardless of conservation actions. State wildlife action plans don't always have common language. TNC Ecoregional plans do, but are defined in terms of species/communities that are vulnerable to my previous point.
Lots of jargon here. Not sure what is meant by them
Perhaps the LCC should focus on habitats, ecosystems, and ecosystem processes, rather than single species or focal species.
Population objectives are extremely important but only work for species that can be reliably monitored. Therefore, only received med priority.
Questions above relate to "species" but the focus needs to be on habitat types.
The LCC is too species focused. We should be looking more at ecosystems and processes.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Identify focal species as surrogates for other priority species
- More understanding of uncertainties may not be critical in adaptive management context

Techniques (how)

- Definition and objectives must be clear for focal species and vulnerability assessments (common language exists on threats)
- Identify measurable population targets from field observations

Barriers/challenges

- State plans don't always have a common language
- Cannot rely on focal species to represent full suite of priority species
- Verifying causal links takes money and years

Conservation Strategy Adaptations

Respondents were asked what priority should be given to each of selected conservation strategy adaptations to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast. Frequency analysis suggested that the highest priority was to “Develop information to guide local land use decisions” (Table 8). Mean score analysis confirmed this; however, tied for highest priority was “Design conservation for maximum multi-species benefit and resolve conflicts among species” (Table 9). Four other conservation strategy adaptations were rated “high priority” by respondents.

Table 8. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following conservation strategy adaptations to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?”

What priority?	Utmost Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Don't Know	Total
Q3a. Use of forecasting tools to project changes to determine where to implement actions.	15%	37%	36%	8%	3%	143
Q3b. Analyze the feasibility of actions with respect to human dimensions (e.g., economics, demographics).	18%	43%	30%	6%	3%	141
Q3c. Design conservation for maximum multi-species benefit and resolve conflicts among species.	28%	36%	27%	6%	3%	143
Q3d. Translate all spatially explicit plans into relevant units of land control.	7%	29%	39%	14%	11%	139
Q3e. Develop spatial and non-spatial decision support tools to guide actions.	15%	37%	34%	10%	4%	142
Q3f. Develop information to guide local land use decisions.	29%	35%	29%	6%	1%	140
Q3g. Define a strategy for distributing tools and soliciting feedback from stakeholders.	16%	33%	38%	12%	1%	141
Q3h. Compile new data regularly on conserved and managed lands.	9%	40%	39%	9%	3%	141

Table 9. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the selected conservation strategy adaptations to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Utmost priority, 1.50 to 2.49 = High priority, 2.50 to 3.49 = Medium priority, 3.50 to 4.00 = Low priority (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

What priority?	Valid N	Mean	Word Anchor	SD	Median	Mode
Q3f. Develop information to guide local land use decisions.	139	2.12	High	.91	2	2
Q3c. Design conservation for maximum multi-species benefit and resolve conflicts among species.	139	2.12	High	.90	2	2
Q3b. Analyze the feasibility of actions with respect to human dimensions (e.g., economics, demographics).	137	2.25	High	.84	2	2
Q3a. Use of forecasting tools to project changes to determine where to implement actions.	138	2.38	High	.86	2	2
Q3e. Develop spatial and non-spatial decision support tools to guide actions.	137	2.39	High	.88	2	2
Q3g. Define a strategy for distributing tools and soliciting feedback from stakeholders.	140	2.47	High	.90	3	3
Q3h. Compile new data regularly on conserved and managed lands.	137	2.50	Medium	.80	2	2
Q3d. Translate all spatially explicit plans into relevant units of land control.	124	2.66	Medium	.84	3	3

Respondents were invited to offer comments about conservation strategy adaptations to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast (Table 10).

Table 10. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following conservation strategy adaptations to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

"Land control" should be broadly defined. In terrestrial systems, it often refers only to lands where managers have decision making authority. This results in an omission of private lands from landscape level efforts because there are too many stakeholders. However, I submit that unless conservation strategies can incorporate real engagement of private landowners and lands then many of the conservation goals cannot be realized. Plans that rely solely on publicly held parcels will likely fail.
Again, we must think and act beyond species. Ecosystems and processes should be the focus.
Again, why focus on multi-species; would it be more appropriate to focus on ecosystem processes, habitats and communities?
b. I wouldn't call it feasibility. If we develop actions that have shared objectives with other sectors then they will be more likely to be successful and I'd rank that high. c. If by multi-species you mean systems then I give it a high priority h. I think that this is already being done for conserved lands but not for managed lands. So low for conserved and high for managed
c. maximum benefit as measured by # species will skew projects towards favoring the most common species and habitats. Many rare (and most vulnerable) species depend on unique habitats that are frequently not shared with many other species. More suburban backyard corridors may maintain high numbers of song birds (though arguably as sinks) and common mammals, but will do little to enhance the prospects of wetland dependent species or anything else that is not dependent on forest/field edges. This approach would encourage similar actions across the landscape instead of catering towards the specific needs of the highest priority species.
feasibility analyses relative to planned actions in the NE--given population density now and looking forward--will likely be a key component to success. protect the best manage the rest. gain control of that which is semi-natural and functional, and then work into more developed areas/habitats as time goes on. inter species conflict resolution may be a very hard thing to define and analyze, if landscape conservation is the goal. i still and will likely always subscribe to the thought that if you build it they will come. we can manage habitat much easier than species, but i know the non-"ologists" will be looking for success in terms of critters. bane of a conservation career, eh?
Item C is important, but I would hope that the LCC would focus on habitats and ecosystem processes, rather than on single or multiple species
Not clear what is meant by d.

Not sure what is meant in h. If biological data, then it seems like compiling data from unconserved lands would be needed for comparison. If meaning tracking the land that is managed, then it seems like a medium priority.
Too much money and emphasis being spent on "marketing analyses" which are not helpful.
Unclear about spatial and non-spatial decision support tools. Is this a clearly defined adaptive management framework? Data such as GIS layers to view habitat distributions or species range? f. Develop information to guide local land use decisions. This to me is the purpose of these landscape level efforts-but what is defined as "information"-are these biological objectives, a common understanding of needs...
with respect to a. I would give a High priority to spatial forecasting in coastal areas and some riverine habitats

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Protect the best, manage the rest

Techniques (how)

- Incorporate real engagement of private lands managers
- Cater towards specific needs of highest priority species
- Managing habitat will be easier than managing species and will provide for species
- Compile data from unconserved lands for comparison (tracking land that is managed is medium priority)
- Too much money and emphasis on marketing analyses which are not helpful
- Give high priority to spatial forecasting in coastal and some riverine areas

Barriers/challenges

- Plans that rely only on conserved public lands will fail
- Maximum benefit measured by number of species will skew projects to common species and habitats
- Interspecies conflict resolution may be hard to define and analyze
- Unclear about spatial and nonspatial decision support tools (e.g., GIS layers to view habitats and species distributions)

On-The-Ground Conservation

Respondents were asked what priority should be given to each of selected on the ground conservation activities to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast. Frequency analysis suggested that respondents ascribed highest priority to "Explicit strategies to recruit specific landowners/programs to adopt prescribed practices" (Table 11). Mean score analysis confirmed this rating, but in fact, all activities presented to respondents for evaluation were rated "high priority" (Table 12).

Table 11. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following activities to deliver on the ground conservation?”

What priority?	Utmost Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Don't Know	Total
Q4a. Explicit strategies to recruit specific landowners/programs to adopt prescribed practices.	23%	54%	18%	6%	1%	142
Q4b. Technical assistance to land managers.	24%	45%	24%	6%	1%	142
Q4c. Assessment of barriers or limitations for landowner and program implementation.	20%	38%	34%	7%	1%	141
Q4d. Creation of efficiencies of scale in delivering habitat conservation.	15%	41%	26%	6%	13%	140
Q4e. Strategic communications to engage local collaborative conservation partnerships.	27%	37%	25%	9%	3%	141
Q4f. Best Management Practices development.	21%	37%	32%	10%	1%	141
Q4g. Land management database development to track implemented projects.	15%	37%	32%	14%	2%	142

Table 12. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following activities to deliver on the ground conservation?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Utmost priority, 1.50 to 2.49 = High priority, 2.50 to 3.49 = Medium priority, 3.50 to 4.00 = Low priority (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

What priority?	Valid N	Mean	Word Anchor	SD	Median	Mode
Q4a. Explicit strategies to recruit specific landowners/programs to adopt prescribed practices.	141	2.06	High	.79	2	2
Q4b. Technical assistance to land managers.	141	2.13	High	.85	2	2
Q4e. Strategic communications to engage local collaborative conservation partnerships.	137	2.15	High	.93	2	2
Q4d. Creation of efficiencies of scale in delivering habitat conservation.	122	2.25	High	.82	2	2
Q4c. Assessment of barriers or limitations for landowner and program implementation.	140	2.29	High	.87	2	2
Q4f. Best Management Practices development.	140	2.31	High	.91	2	2
Q4g. Land management database development to track implemented projects.	139	2.45	High	.93	2	2

Respondents were given opportunity to comment on activities to deliver on the ground regional conservation in the Northeast (Table 13).

Table 13. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following activities to deliver on the ground conservation?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

Again - not really sure what any of this means. For instance - what are "local collaborative conservation partnerships"??
Although improvements can usually be found, I believe that we have a good perspective on BMP's.
Although we could use additional information, we have a generally good understanding of BMP effectiveness, so this would not be a high priority.
Data base mgt should happen at the individual LCC level. Thought LCC were to be "science" focused.
f. there are lots of BMP manuals out there already. Use what is available, and add what is lacking.
having trouble wading through the jargon for d and e.
I find it odd that there is no question related to resources made available to conduct the many efforts mentioned above.
I'm not sure what most of these topics mean. I'm more supportive of programs that implement "on the ground" conservation than projects that describe how to do "on the ground" conservation.

if your product is conservation, you need to create marketing to get people to choose your product over the other options out there...
See previous comment. So glad to see this included. It is critical to success. I think we have done a very good job of developing BMPs in the past, so I am unsure of how important further development is relative to the other activities.
These measures read more clearly than the two preceeding measures.
Uncertain what is meant by option D.....

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Focus on implementation not how to do conservation

Techniques (how)

- Have a good perspective on BMP effectiveness (use and add to manuals)
- Market products to influence choices

Barriers/challenges

- Resources to conduct many efforts

Manage and Integrate Data and Tools

Respondents were asked what priority should be given to selected activities to manage and integrate data and tools to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast.

Frequency analysis suggested that “data sharing agreements among partners” was rated highest priority by respondents (Table 14). Mean score analysis confirmed this rating, with four additional activities characterized as “high priority” by respondents (Table 15).

Table 14. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following activities to manage and integrate data and tools?”

What priority?	Utmost Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Don't Know	Total
a. Comprehensive assessment of data needs and reporting protocols.	12%	42%	33%	11%	2%	137
b. Comprehensive database design and development.	13%	36%	32%	14%	5%	135
c. Data sharing agreements among partners.	14%	44%	33%	7%	1%	138
d. Training workshops, online support, and manuals about information management tools.	6%	27%	56%	11%	1%	138
e. Desktop tools and other support interfaces to disseminate information.	9%	31%	47%	12%	1%	137
f. Simplified and standardized data entry/collection.	19%	34%	34%	11%	2%	138
g. Data management and analysis capabilities support.	14%	33%	41%	8%	4%	138

Table 15. “What priority should be given to each of the selected activities to manage and integrate data and tools?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Utmost priority, 1.50 to 2.49 = High priority, 2.50 to 3.49 = Medium priority, 3.50 to 4.00 = Low priority (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

What priority?	Valid N	Mean	Word Anchor	SD	Median	Mode
Q5c. Data sharing agreements among partners.	136	2.33	High	.82	2	2
Q5f. Simplified and standardized data entry/collection.	135	2.38	High	.92	2	2
Q5a. Comprehensive assessment of data needs and reporting protocols.	134	2.43	High	.85	2	2
Q5g. Data management and analysis capabilities support.	133	2.44	High	.85	3	3
Q5b. Comprehensive database design and development.	128	2.49	High	.91	2	2
Q5e. Desktop tools and other support interfaces to disseminate information.	136	2.63	Medium	.81	3	3
Q5d. Training workshops, online support, and manuals about information management tools.	137	2.72	Medium	.73	3	3

Respondents were given opportunity to volunteer comments about activities to manage and integrate data and tools to achieve regional conservation in the Northeast (Table 16).

Table 16. “What priority do you think should be given to each of the following activities to manage and integrate data and tools?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

"standardized" data collection etc. works for the central office data gnome not for the field person doing the work and who actually uses the data. Often the "standard methods" are insensitive to the data collection of the specific site. Central data sources need to be flexible and able to deal with what is given them. Not force a one size fits all top down design on everyone. You end up with too many that will walk away rather than participate as a partner.
How will the effectiveness of these actions be evaluated? These topics are so vague that they are impossible to evaluate.
Many examples of these efforts ultimately leading to dead ends. Not to say they are not important, but we have everything we need to make this happen except a driving reason. Do we really need a new mechanism for sharing data or tools more than we need innovative ways of delivering what we do have in impactful ways? I think not. Data management will be a logical spin off to effective conservation delivery programs.
Not certain what is meant by g.
Not sure what you mean by item B - do you really mean to be all things to all people? There's no way to develop a single database management system that will work for all taxa and needs!
Standardization of data entry/collection should be a low priority because the types of data collected vary with the goals and objectives of each organization. A one size fits all approach does not work. What is needed is better data management by all organizations so that information can be easily transferred to and interpreted by other organizations. Most biologists think they have data management skills, but they really don't.
The LCC should seek existing data management protocols and adopt/modify them. Do not develop new data management procedures.
These measures seem to be quite similar to the first set of measures but with more clarity. All of the data initiatives cover a few basic data needs. Collection. Storage. Standardization. Analysis. Dissemination. Reuse.
TRACS database already in the works. Would be redundant to develop new databases.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Purpose (why)

- Data management will be a logical spin-off to effective conservation delivery programs
- Better data management by all organizations to be easily transferred to and interpreted by others
- Innovative ways of delivering what exists, not new mechanisms for sharing data or tools

Techniques (how)

- Database management should happen at the LCC level
- Central data sources need to be flexible
- Adopt and modify existing data management protocols (e.g., TRACS)
- Cover basic data needs: collection, storage, standardization, analysis, dissemination, reuse

Barriers/challenges

- Standard methods are insensitive to organizational objectives, site conditions and field use
- One system that fits all taxa and needs is impossible
- Top down design will cause too many to abandon rather than participate as a partner
- Have everything to make this happen except a driving reason
- Vague topics and effectiveness of actions are difficult to evaluate
- Most biologists think they have data management skills, but they really don't

Barriers to the Success of the RCN and LCC Efforts

Respondents were asked how much of a barrier each of selected organizational issues represented to the success of RCN and LCC efforts in the Northeast. Frequency analysis indicated several issues were characterized as formidable barriers by notable percentages of respondents, including “disconnect between planners and implementers,” “poor communication within and/or among partner organizations,” and “insufficient staff preparation in regional processes or administering joint projects due to time” (Table 17).

Table 17. “How much of a barrier is each of the following organizational issues to the success of RCN and LCC efforts?”

How much of a barrier?	High Barrier	Medium Barrier	Low Barrier	No Barrier	Don't Know	Total
Q6a. Poor communication within and/or among partner organizations.	36%	37%	18%	1%	7%	137
Q6b. Disconnect between planners and implementers.	38%	37%	16%	1%	8%	134
Q6c. Disconnect between science developed and science needed for management decisions.	30%	43%	20%	1%	7%	135
Q6d. Incompatible approaches or missions within agencies.	10%	45%	31%	4%	9%	137
Q6e. Intervention from political or other interests in determining program priorities.	31%	32%	20%	8%	9%	133
Q6f. Inconsistent or inequitable funding allocations across geography or taxa.	32%	38%	18%	2%	10%	136
Q6g. Reluctance to regionalize or centralize due to conflicts with autonomous decision-making.	22%	39%	22%	3%	14%	132
Q6h. Reluctance to regionalize or centralize due to perceived data-sharing risks.	10%	27%	36%	12%	14%	135
Q6i. Discrepancies in technological proficiency or resistance to learning.	7%	35%	40%	10%	7%	134
Q6j. Insufficient staff preparation in regional processes or administering joint projects due to time.	38%	36%	13%	1%	13%	135

Mean score analysis confirmed these three to be the top-ranking barriers, with “insufficient staff preparation...” the highest (Table 18); these, however, only qualified as “medium” barriers, with none characterized by respondents as “high” barriers.” Five additional barriers were rated “medium” by respondents, and two, “low.”

Table 18. “How much of a barrier are each of the selected activities to the organizational issues to the success of RCN and LCC efforts?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = High barrier, 1.50 to 2.49 = Medium barrier, 2.50 to 3.49 = Low barrier, 3.50 to 4.00 = No barrier (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How much of a barrier?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
j. Insufficient staff preparation in regional processes or administering joint projects due to time.	117	1.73	Medium	.74	2	1
b. Disconnect between planners and implementers.	123	1.77	Medium	.76	2	1
a. Poor communication within and/or among partner organizations.	127	1.82	Medium	.77	2	2
f. Inconsistent or inequitable funding allocations across geography or taxa.	123	1.89	Medium	.81	2	2
c. Disconnect between science developed and science needed for management decisions.	126	1.91	Medium	.75	2	2
e. Intervention from political or other interests in determining program priorities.	121	2.05	Medium	.95	2	2
g. Reluctance to regionalize or centralize due to conflicts with autonomous decision-making.	113	2.07	Medium	.81	2	2
d. Incompatible approaches or missions within agencies.	124	2.31	Medium	.73	2	2
i. Discrepancies in technological proficiency or resistance to learning.	124	2.57	Low	.80	3	3
h. Reluctance to regionalize or centralize due to perceived data-sharing risks.	116	2.58	Low	.88	3	3

Respondents were invited to comment on barriers to the success of RCN and LCC efforts in the Northeast (Table 19).

Table 19. How much of a barrier is each of the following organizational issues to the success of RCN and LCC efforts?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

g is a poor questions. It assumed that centralized decision making is the right way to go and that local decision making is wrong. I hate push surveys. Ditto on H. This must have been put together by a regionally oriented group interested in validating their need for overriding control of management decisions.
G.& H are leading questions,they assume centralization is the best approach. More effort should be made to engage implementors in the process, increase communication
I cannot think of examples where data sharing, lack of science, or poor communication have been real barriers to regional coordination. Joint ventures and similar cooperatives have enjoyed success from all resource management scales. The biggest issue is the absence of other integral stakeholders not with those already involved.
i. It's not usually a matter of proficiency or resistance, it's more likely to be that data is more or less available from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.
In d., I am including "among" agencies.
Item J should be expected to move off the charts as state continue to face severe fiscal challenges and fewer staff are asked to do more and partners have scare dollars.
Lack of State resources and mechanisms (j) is part of what led to the RCN process in the first place.
Not enough experience with program to evaluate these.
Once again, what do you mean by J? It would really help if there was more clarity in some of your questions.
Parties outside State driving in-state decisions.
Poor communication among FWS programs is a serious problem.
Staffing levels in State F&W Agencies make it difficult to assign staff time in support of regional RCN efforts and to partnerships with LCCs -High Barrier
The time and resources required to operate and coordinate a cooperative consensus-based conservation partnership that operates over large scales and multiple jurisdictions cannot be overestimated. There are important efficiencies in centralization, and pragmatic organizational barriers towards achieving this.
To date, the RCN program hasn't produced many products that could be immediately implemented into management efforts. Lack of products that help the entire region and result in tangible successes has hampered my enthusiasm for this entire effort. I can think of better ways to spend our SWG money.
While all of these barriers are present in some degree, political priorities are, and always will present a great challenge. Additionally, these barriers will persist in some manner but are manageable.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

(Note: several organizational issues were raised by respondents throughout the assessment and are collectively summarized only once under this question.)

Purpose (why)

- Centralized versus localized decision-making (i.e., decisions driven by States, not forced by outside partners)
- Science-based focus on habitats, ecosystems and ecosystem processes not single, focal or multi-species

- Prioritize projects that provide specific information for future decision making

Techniques (how)

- Engage implementers and other integral stakeholders in the process by increasing communication
- Develop actions that have shared objectives and work with other sectors (e.g., local planners, biomass industry)
- Design projects for regional impacts

Barriers/challenges

- Joint ventures and similar cooperatives have enjoyed success at all resource management scales so data sharing, lack of science and poor communication may not be real barriers for LCCs
- Pragmatic barriers such as political priorities, fewer long-term technical staff (not temporary employees), lack of time and resources for coordination by states and other partners
- Poor communications among FWS programs and other agencies
- Lack of products and tangible successes to date that can be implemented have hampered enthusiasm
- Limited distribution of products (availability of project reports and summaries on study objectives and deliverables)
- Jargon in the assessment was difficult to understand (may communicate to planners or supervisors not field staff) or options were poorly defined and not self evident

RCN Projects in 2007

Respondents were asked how helpful selected 2007 RCN projects are/will be in achieving regional conservation objectives in their geographic areas (Table 20).

Table 20. “For the following RCN projects in 2007, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.”

How helpful?	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know	Total
Q7a. Avian indicators and measures for monitoring in the Northeast.	9%	27%	29%	5%	30%	135
Q7b. Regional Initiative for Biomass Energy Development.	1%	11%	32%	21%	34%	134
Q7c. Identifying relationships between invasive species and SGCN.	10%	29%	32%	8%	21%	134
Q7d. Creation of Regional Habitat Cover Maps.	23%	37%	22%	7%	11%	134
Q7e. Conservation Status of Key Habitats and SGCN.	14%	46%	24%	2%	14%	133
Q7f. Northeast Regional Stream Connectivity Assessment Project.	13%	35%	24%	3%	26%	135
Q7g. Bird Action Plans for Shrubland-Dependent SGCN.	7%	16%	37%	9%	31%	135
Q7h. Estimating streamflow at ungaged locations in the Connecticut River Basin.	3%	13%	18%	33%	33%	135

Based on frequency analyses, three projects appeared most helpful: “Creation of Regional Habitat Cover Maps,” “Conservation status of Key Habitats and SGCN,” and “Northeast Regional Stream Connectivity Assessment Project.” Mean score analysis confirmed these three as the most helpful projects, with “Creation of Regional Habitat Cover Maps” rated first as “very helpful” (Table 21). Two additional projects were rated “very helpful,” and three, “somewhat helpful.”

Table 21. “For the following RCN projects in 2007, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Extremely helpful, 1.50 to 2.49 = Very helpful, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat helpful, 3.50 to 4.00 = Not helpful (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How helpful?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
d. Creation of Regional Habitat Cover Maps.	119	2.14	Very	.90	2	2
e. Conservation Status of Key Habitats and SGCN.	114	2.15	Very	.71	2	2
f. Northeast Regional Stream Connectivity Assessment Project.	100	2.23	Very	.78	2	2
a. Avian indicators and measures for monitoring in the Northeast.	95	2.43	Very	.81	2	3
c. Identifying relationships between invasive species and SGCN.	106	2.49	Very	.84	3	3
g. Bird Action Plans for Shrubland-Dependent SGCN.	93	2.69	Somewhat	.83	3	3
b. Regional Initiative for Biomass Energy Development.	88	3.10	Somewhat	.76	3	3
h. Estimating streamflow at ungaged locations in the Connecticut River Basin.	90	3.22	Somewhat	.91	4	4

Respondents were invited to comment on 2007 RCN projects (Table 22).

Table 22. “For each of the following RCN projects in 2007, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

"Not helpful" answers provided because resulting products were poor (biomass and invasive spp) or we already have a product for our geographic region that has proven to be very useful (habitat maps). Biomass and invasive projects could have been useful if done well. Habitat maps will be more useful applied to region.
Are any of these reports available? They could be useful but hard to say as I have not seen any products from them.
d. seems like it would be helpful, but I haven't seen an outcome of this yet?
Each project is no doubt useful in its own right but few, if any, were designed (completed?) with regional impact. I would think more "users" would find them unhelpful than helpful, but for some they may be integral.
How is "H" a regional project?
Information on many of the project was not widely distributed. If I had not participated in several of these efforts I would not have been aware of them. It will be impossible to get by in from people if the value of the project product is not displayed and marketed to the users (direct resource manager). Otherwise they are just a way to pass money to consultants, with not resulting positive impacts.
It would be helpful to make coastal marine habitat maps IMO
Previous regional cover maps not very helpful for program implementation.
Regional habitat cover maps are based on outdated land cover and immediate need to be updated, at least to NLCD 2006

Regional habitat cover maps have not been finished for the states. We have other landcover tools we will use until we determine the NE maps are better. Other projects (h) don't involve my state at all. For (b) has a multi-agency group been formed to cooperate with the biomass industry?
streamflow estimates in the context of management activities really only useful to the extent that flow can be regulated. if somebody can turn the valve to manage flow and thus habitat, then the data will be useful. otherwise... I believe most of the CT river basin is fully covered under the USGS' StreamStats application. From an aquatics perspective, a comprehensive database of passage barriers in the area of interest would be one of the most powerful management tools for recovering impaired populations. knowing the location and extent of barriers would allow the development of land-scape level plans to restore connectivity in a targeted area.
These could be very helpful, but simply do not know the outcome of the proejects or have had an opportunity to use the products.
This information was not well distributed or marketed
Too much of a focus on species. Need to focus on ecological processes that form habitats that all species require

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Some products were poor but could be helpful if done well (e.g., biomass and invasives)
- Already have some products for specific geographic regions (e.g., habitat maps, USGS StreamStats)

Gaps/needs

- Maps based on outdated land cover, not finished or not available for some states or habitats (e.g., coastal marine)
- Multiagency group to coordinate with biomass industry
- Streamflow would be useful if flow were regulated and could be managed for habitat
- Comprehensive database of passage barriers (location and extent)

RCN Projects in 2008

Respondents were asked how helpful selected 2008 RCN projects are/will be in achieving regional conservation objectives in their geographic areas. A large percentage of respondents felt all of the projects listed were either very or somewhat helpful, with the most helpful being, "Regional indicators and measures, monitoring protocols" (Table 23).

Table 23. "For the following RCN projects in 2008, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area."

How helpful?	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know	Total
Q8a. Estimating Target Fish Communities in Northeastern Streams.	7%	26%	29%	9%	29%	133
Q8b. Model Guidelines for Local Planning Boards re: SGCN and Habitat Conservation.	6%	25%	32%	8%	29%	133
Q8c. Regional Focal Areas for SGCN: Site Adaptive Capacity, Network Resilience and Connectivity.	11%	27%	30%	3%	30%	132
Q8d. Regional Indicators and Measures, Monitoring Protocols.	9%	38%	29%	3%	21%	133

Mean score analysis confirmed this (Table 24). Also characterized by respondents as “very helpful” was “Regional Focal Areas for SGCN.” Two projects were described as “somewhat helpful.”

Table 24. “For the following RCN projects in 2008, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Extremely helpful, 1.50 to 2.49 = Very helpful, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat helpful, 3.50 to 4.00 = Not helpful. (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How helpful?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
d. Regional Indicators and Measures, Monitoring Protocols.	105	2.33	Very	.73	2	2
c. Regional Focal Areas for SGCN: Site Adaptive Capacity, Network Resilience and Connectivity.	93	2.35	Very	.79	2	3
a. Estimating Target Fish Communities in Northeastern Streams.	94	2.57	Somewhat	.84	3	3
b. Model Guidelines for Local Planning Boards re: SGCN and Habitat Conservation.	94	2.60	Somewhat	.81	3	3

Respondents were invited to comment on the 2008 RCN projects (Table 25).

Table 25. “For the following RCN projects in 2008, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area” Open-ended comments, verbatim

a. Project has failed to meet objectives and passed on secondary data essentially repeating existing research. abject failure. Repeat many of the project exist, but no one knows about them or their implications. A summary of each project "products" would have been very helpful
Again too much jargon
Decisions should be driven by States, not forced from outside.
for b. - guidelines are helpful but will not be effective unless there are staff positions focused on working with local planners to use the guidelines.
i've never been a fan of target fish communities because the aquatic landscape has been fundamentally altered from what might be considered a template or reference condition. many river reaches may no longer support some of the species that formally lived there because of 400 years of euroamerican development. there are many opportunities for restoring stocks to areas above barriers, so instead of trying to identify a community, it may be more strategic to describe the missing pieces and manage to restore them. the other members of the community--including a host of exotic and invasives--will be there regardless of management actions.
Products could be helpful, but don't know for sure.
The project 'estimating target fish communities in northeastern streams' would have been extremely helpful but appears to have fallen short of the expected outcome.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Guidelines will be helpful if staff positions focus on working with local planners
- Estimating target fish communities failed to meet objectives and passed on secondary data essentially repeating existing research

Gaps/needs

- The aquatic landscape has been fundamentally altered from what might be considered a template or reference condition, limiting utility of target fish communities, instead of describing and restoring missing pieces
- Exotics and invasives will affect communities regardless of management actions

RCN Projects in 2009

Respondents were asked how helpful selected 2009 RCN projects were/will be in achieving regional conservation objectives in their geographic areas. Frequency analysis suggested that “Assessing impacts of climate change on SGCN and habitats” was the most helpful 2009 project (Table 26).

Table 26. “For the following RCN projects in 2009, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.”

How helpful?	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know	Total
Q9a. Assessing Impacts of Climate Change on SGCN and Habitats.	22%	28%	32%	5%	14%	133
Q9b. Geospatial Condition Analysis of Northeast Habitats Based on the Northeast SGCN Habitat Maps.	18%	27%	24%	4%	27%	133
Q9c. Online Database for SGCN Invertebrates.	4%	22%	36%	11%	27%	132
Q9d. Non-invasive Monitoring Tools for New England Cottontail Populations.	8%	19%	17%	26%	30%	132

However, mean score analysis indicated that, on average, “Geospatial condition analysis of Northeast Habitats based on the Northeast SGCN Habitat Maps” was slightly more helpful than “Assessing impacts of climate change,” with both projects characterized by respondents as “very helpful” (Table 27). The two remaining projects were described as “somewhat helpful.”

Table 27. “For the following RCN projects in 2009, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Extremely helpful, 1.50 to 2.49 = Very helpful, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat helpful, 3.50 to 4.00 = Not helpful (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How helpful?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
b. Geospatial Condition Analysis of Northeast Habitats Based on the Northeast SGCN Habitat Maps.	97	2.19	Very	.87	2	2
a. Assessing Impacts of Climate Change on SGCN and Habitats.	114	2.22	Very	.89	2	3
c. Online Database for SGCN Invertebrates.	96	2.74	Somewhat	.77	3	3
d. Non-invasive Monitoring Tools for New England Cottontail Populations.	93	2.86	Somewhat	1.05	3	4

Respondents were invited to comment on 2009 RCN projects (Table 28).

Table 28. “For the following RCN projects in 2009, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area?” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

NE cottontails?? Better to establish criteria to identify species at risk
NEC work needed but support to date not helpful.
Never heard of any of these. The invertebrate database would have been good to know about size we have been doing specialized invertebrate collecting for the last 5 years.
ongoing process??
still pending true application

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- New England cottontail work needed but support to data not helpful
- Better to establish criteria to identify species at risk
- Invertebrate database would have been good to know about given specialized invertebrate collection for the last 5 years

Gaps/needs

- Ongoing process
- Pending true application

RCN Projects in 2010

Respondents were asked how helpful selected 2010 RCN projects are/will be in achieving regional conservation objectives in their geographic areas. Frequency analysis indicated that respondents described “Lab and Field Testing of Treatments for White Nose Syndrome (WSN)” as most helpful (Table 29).

Table 29. “For the following RCN projects in 2010, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.”

How helpful?	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know	Total
Q10a. Lab and Field Testing of Treatments for White Nose Syndrome (WSN).	22%	30%	14%	8%	27%	132
Q10b. Instream Flow for Great Lakes Basin of NY and PA.	2%	13%	15%	39%	30%	132
Q10c. Identification of Tidal Marsh Bird Focal Areas Bird Conservation Region 30.	10%	21%	21%	15%	32%	131
Q10d. Regional Analysis of Frog Monitoring.	8%	27%	28%	8%	30%	132

Indeed, mean score analysis revealed that WSN was the only 2010 RCN program described by respondents as “very helpful,” though the remaining programs qualified as “somewhat helpful” (Table 30).

Table 30. “For each of the following RCN projects in 2010, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Extremely helpful, 1.50 to 2.49 = Very helpful, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat helpful, 3.50 to 4.00 = Not helpful (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How helpful?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
a. Lab and Field Testing of Treatments for White Nose Syndrome (WNS).	97	2.11	Very	.97	2	2
d. Regional Analysis of Frog Monitoring.	93	2.53	Somewhat	.84	3	3
c. Identification of Tidal Marsh Bird Focal Areas Bird Conservation Region 30.	89	2.62	Somewhat	.99	3	2
b. Instream Flow for Great Lakes Basin of NY and PA.	92	3.32	Somewhat	.89	4	4

Respondents were invited to comment on 2010 RCN projects (Table 31).

Table 31. “For the following RCN projects in 2010, please rate how helpful each is or will be for achieving regional conservation objectives in your geographic area.” Open-ended comments, verbatim.

instream flow data are only useful if flow can be regulated, or there is the potential for water development projects that will affect flow.
Study objective mostly unclear from this title information no info on deliverables to judge value
The instream flow project doesn't involve my state - so not helpful. I'll give the WNS and frog monitoring projects the benefit of the doubt until I see the reports - I hope they are useful. I already have more bird focal areas than I can affect - at least this project includes my state.
These projects were approved by the Directors in the fall of 2010, so have just begun. Anticipate that they will be very helpful.
WNS work is a total mess.

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

Utility

- Instream flow data useful if flow can be regulated or there is potential for water development projects that will affect flow
- Hope WNS (bat white nose syndrome) and frog monitoring are useful but haven't seen reports
- Have more bird focal areas than can be affected
- Anticipate that projects will be hopeful, but have only just begun approved projects

Gaps/needs

- Project areas have not included some states
- Improvements to WNS (bat white nose syndrome) work

LCC Projects in 2010

Respondents were asked how helpful selected 2010 North Atlantic LCC projects were in achieving regional conservation objectives. Frequency analyses revealed that majorities or pluralities of respondents indicated that all projects presented for evaluation were either “very helpful” or “extremely helpful” (Table 32).

Table 32. “For the following North Atlantic LCC projects in 2010, how helpful is or will be each for achieving regional conservation objectives?”

How helpful?	Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful	Don't Know	Total
Q11a. Regional species & habitat vulnerability assessments (build on 2009 RCN project).	16%	42%	24%	1%	17%	131
Q11b. Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife: forecasting changes in terrestrial landscapes, habitats, and populations in the North Atlantic LCC and developing decision support tools for conservation.	22%	36%	21%	1%	20%	131
Q11c. Forecasting changes in aquatic systems and resilience of aquatic populations in the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative: Decision-support tools for conservation.	17%	42%	19%	1%	22%	132
Q11d. Forecast effects of sea level rise on habitat of piping plovers & identify responsive conservation strategies.	10%	27%	30%	12%	20%	132
Q11e. Conservation science synthesis (including support for this workshop).	9%	34%	26%	2%	29%	131

Mean score analysis identified four projects that respondents characterized as “very helpful,” with the highest ranking of these being, “Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife...” (Table 33). Only one of the five projects evaluated by respondents was described as “somewhat helpful.”

Table 33. “For the following North Atlantic LCC projects in 2010, how helpful is or will be each for achieving regional conservation objectives?” Means and word anchors in rank order where 1.00 to 1.49 = Extremely helpful, 1.50 to 2.49 = Very helpful, 2.50 to 3.49 = Somewhat helpful, 3.50 to 4.00 = Not helpful (“Don’t know” eliminated for purposes of this analysis).

How helpful?	Valid N	Mean	Word anchor	SD	Median	Mode
b. Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife: forecasting changes in terrestrial landscapes, habitats, and populations in the North Atlantic LCC and developing decision support tools for conservation.	105	2.01	Very	.77	2	2
c. Forecasting changes in aquatic systems and resilience of aquatic populations in the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative: Decision-support tools for conservation.	103	2.05	Very	.71	2	2
a. Regional species & habitat vulnerability assessments (build on 2009 RCN project).	109	2.12	Very	.72	2	2
e. Conservation science synthesis (including support for this workshop).	93	2.28	Very	.71	2	2
d. Forecast effects of sea level rise on habitat of piping plovers & identify responsive conservation strategies.	105	2.56	Somewhat	.90	3	3

Respondents were invited to offer open-ended comments on 2010 North Atlantic LCC projects (Table 34).

Table 34. “For the following North Atlantic LCC projects in 2010, how helpful is or will be each for achieving regional conservation objectives?” Open ended comments, verbatim.

Help PIPL by keeping trucks and dogs off the beach ! What are you going to do about sea level rise?
I haven't heard of any of these efforts and don't know what they are meant to achieve.
insufficient information on project and deliverables for an informed response
Projects that attempt to provide information specific to future decision making should be prioritized.
These could be very helpful, but can't state without knowing the outcome of the projects.
Why Piping Plover this knowledge need for numerous reasons

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Utility

- Piping plover knowledge needed for numerous reasons

Gaps/needs

- Keep trucks and dogs off beach for piping plovers
- Actions that control sea level rise

Role in the RCN

Respondents were asked to describe their involvement in the RCN program. Respondents most frequently cited participation in “State agency review team (24%),” followed by involvement in “Technical Review Team (21%). The lowest participation cited was “Funded Project Steering Committee” with only 7% participation (Table 35).

Table 35. What has been your role in the RCN program?” (check all that apply)”

Your role?	No	Yes	Total
Q12_3 State Agency Review Team	76%	24%	128
Q12_5 Technical Review Team	79%	21%	128
Q12_1 Applicant for RCN project	86%	14%	128
Q12_2 Administrative Role	88%	13%	128
Q12_4 Funded Project Steering Committee	93%	7%	128

Respondents were invited to comment on their participation in the RCN program (Table 36).

Table 36. “What has been your role in the RCN program?” Open ended comments, verbatim.

Federal Employee
Given how much money my state has contributed to this program and how little we've received in tangible benefits, I've advised my agency to withdraw from this regional effort and use our funding to implement more tangible projects that we can use to better defend the SWG program in Congressional budget fights.
I did not consider this a very useful survey because many of the options were poorly defined and not self evident.

I participated on several project. Not sure what the title was, probably technical review team- supplied datasets and commented on direction.
I'm not sure of the value of all these models and analyses. We should concentrate on implementation of known techniques and getting info on what we don't know. Don't see much value to "marketing strategies"
My role is technical support staff to a state wildlife agency
Not certain how to answer this question. Joint Ventures have provided input on relative value of proposed project to the regions.
relatively new to rcn program...
There is little to no outreach to Field Stations regarding recommendaions for RCN projects

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments was developed:

Roles

- Given how much money my state has contributed to this program and how little we've received in tangible benefits, have advised agency to withdraw from this regional effort and use funding to implement more tangible projects that can be used to better defend the SWG program in Congressional budget fights
- Participated on technical review team, supplied datasets and commented on direction
- Joint Ventures provided input on relative value of proposed project to the regions

Gaps/needs

- Little to no outreach to Field Stations regarding recommendations for RCN projects
- Relatively new to program

Role in the LCC

Respondents were asked to describe their role in the LCC program. Most frequently cited involvement was "Technical committee" (17%), followed by "Steering Committee" (12%) (Table 37).

Table 37. "What has been your role in the LCC program? (check all that apply)"

Your role?	No	Yes	Total
Q13_1 Steering Committee	88%	12%	129
Q13_2 Technical Committee	83%	17%	129
Q13_3 Participant In Project	91%	9%	129

Respondents were invited to comment on their roles in the LCC program (Table 38).

Table 38. “What has been your role in the LCC program?” Open ended comments, verbatim.

As a Administrator I would have to have been involved in the steering process of the LCC. Our state has our representative as the TC rep and the Steering Committee rep. which I believe is cross purpose.
as alternate/back-up
Federal Agency Representative
Have been in close contact with my agency's steering and technical committee representatives
I have been involved with the development of the LCC from the earliest days and I represent my agency in the North Atlantic and Appalachian LCCs.
My role is technical support staff to state wildlife agency.
not directly involved in north atlantic lcc, but involved with lcc 'program' at national and regional levels.
Not in the North Atlantic LCC but others
provided input to framework development
SHC Technical Advisory Team member
There has not been much opportunity to be involved

A qualitative summary of open-ended comments follows:

Roles

- Steering process as an administrator
- Technical committee and steering committee representatives are cross-purpose
- Involved in development from early stages of the program
- Not directly involved in North Atlantic LCC but with LCC program at regional and national level or in other LCCs
- Input to framework development

Gaps/needs

- Not much opportunity to be involved

Primary Affiliation

Respondents were asked to indicate their primary affiliation (Table 39).

Table 39. “What has been your primary affiliation?”

Primary affiliation?	Federal agency	State agency	Tribe	Non-governmental organization	University	Total
Q14 Your primary affiliation?	36%	51%	0%	10%	3%	130

Most were affiliated with a “State agency” (51%), though many (36%) were associated with “Federal agency.”

There were no open-ended comments.