**North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

**Steering Committee Conference Call, February 8, 2013, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon**

**Minutes**

***Action Items***

LCC coastal and marine technical team will assess opportunities to utilize Hurricane Sandy restoration and monitoring to meet the needs of the LCC RFP on wetland restoration resiliency.

Information Management Needs Assessment Team will provide a recommendation on a Information Management system and budget at the April meeting.

Northeast Climate Science Center will provide an update on proposals and themes at the April meeting.

Steering Committee members (particularly states) will encourage their staff to attend the synthesis meeting on March 13 and the synthesis workshop on April 9.

LCC staff and conservation targets team will present additional recommendations on process and targets at the April meeting.

Steering Committee members from DOI bureaus will discuss Hurricane Sandy resiliency funding with the Steering Committee at April meeting.

***Introductions, roll call***

Ken Elowe (USFWS) welcomed partners to the call and conducted a roll call. There were 29 partners on the phone representing 16 steering committee agencies and organizations, just shy of quorum.

Ken asked for any comments or revisions to the minutes from December 12, 2012 and received none. Vote on accepting minutes will be held at April meeting.

***Review progress on action items from November meeting***

Andrew Milliken reviewed the action items and actions taken from the December 12 meeting.

He noted that the coastal and marine technical team decided to hold off on reissuing a wetland restoration RFP in order to assess opportunities to build on Hurricane Sandy restoration and resiliency funds. Ellen Mecray (NOAA) agreed with that approach.

He also noted the transition of the Demonstration Projects team to a broader Science Delivery team. Mary Ratnaswamy (USGS – CSC) though this was a good idea and that it could be very helpful for the Climate Science Center.

***Update on communications, website and data portal development***

Ken Elowe took the opportunity to thank Megan Nagel (USFWS) for all her great work in helping get the North Atlantic LCC up and running and to congratulate her on her new role in USFWS Region 1 (Northwest Region) as their External Affairs Communications Specialist. Several partners on the call added their thanks.

Megan provided a website overview noting that she has created accounts for all Steering Committee members (convention first initial, last name, lcc123). Members can post and share documents and participate in and create new groups.

Website Capabilities:

* Resource library – anyone can post to this site
* Collaborative workspace for groups
* Description of projects
* News and announcements page
* Training opportunities are available through our contractor on an as-needed basis Rose Hessmiller

BJ Richardson (USFWS) provided an update on the Information Management Needs Assessment:

* Report and executive summary complete and posted as of February 2013
* Cloud data storage enabled and in place on website for large data sets
* Evaluating data and GIS storage, mapping and visualization tools being used by other LCCs
* Investigating *LC Map* system that utilizes USGS *ScienceBase*
* *DataBasin* (private company) also being used by Southeast LCCs and others in combination with LC Map to provide a visualization component – this looks to be a powerful combination of GIS data storage, map service and visualization
* Gateway to data portal will be through LCC website
* Will brief the Steering Committee on final decision and funding needs in April.

***Update on Science Project RFPs, contracts and Technical Committee process***

Scot Williamson briefed the Steering Committee on 2012 projects

Four projects under contract:

* Extend Northeast Terrestrial Habitat Classification to Canada (The Nature Conservancy)
* Demonstration Area Projects (all three have signed contracts)
* National Wetland Inventory Update (Virginia Tech) – under final contract review
* Decision Support Tool for Aquatic Habitats – (Downstream Strategies) under final contract review
* Improvements for Aquatic Habitat Classification System - (The Nature Conservancy) under final contract review

Ken Elowe noted that as part of a larger effort to help ensure that the Northeast Conservation Framework matches up to the Southeast Conservation Adaptation Strategy, LCC staff are also working with Atlantic Coast Joint Venture on an effort to stitch together the Northeast and Southeast habitat classification and mapping systems. There are differences in mapping methods but classification systems are very similar. We are hopeful we can make this work to have one classification system that connects Northeast, Southeast and Appalachians.

Northeast Climate Science Center Proposals (NECSC) – Mary Ratnaswamy

* Call for all CSC pre-proposals just closed for all 8 CSCs nationally – received 432 statements of interest nationwide, 68 in the northeast
* 15-member NECSC Review Panel which includes LCC members and staff.
* Fast turnaround – hope to have proposals funded by June 1
* Early May call for pre-proposals for FY14

Ken Elowe expressed his appreciation for Mary, Rick palmer (UMass) and the NECSC reaching out to engage the North Atlantic LCC. Andrew thanked science coordinator Scott Schwenk and USFWS regional scientist Rick Bennett for their significant involvement. A strong relationship between the LCC and Climate Science Center is critical. An update on proposals and themes at the April meeting will help the Steering Committee with decisions on science needs.

***Progress on Synthesis and SWAP Updates and plans for NEAFWA Workshop***

Steve Fuller (LCC) and Dee Blanton (USFWS) reported on progress on synthesis efforts. Steve noted that we are on the verge of getting spatial data for regionally significant Species of Greatest Conservation Need from NatureServe and the states and assessing the data quality and extent. There have been significant delays in getting this information.

Other regional spatial data from RCNs, LCCs and regional partnerships is being compiled, organized and made available by LCC and TNC GIS analysts. We have developed a SWAP synthesis database and website to assist dates in developing consistent SWAP plans.

A parallel RCN team is working on a regional synthesis of non-spatial data and a common lexicon and database framework. A small group has been looking at needs and a common framework including Steve Fuller, Dee Blanton, Dave Jenkins (NJDEP) and Karen Terwilliger (Terwilliger Consulting).

* Common Framework components:
* Common Habitats and common habitat names
* Common Threats from IUCN and TRACS
* How do parts of the planning process relate
* How do we measure performance and success of actions

March 13-15 meeting in Philadelphia is being held to review and agree on this common framework and lexicon. Need to have broad state participation. Ken emphasized the importance of this meeting noting that the Directors want to review progress at their April meeting.

Steve and Ken described a workshop to be hosted by the LCC on Northeast Regional Conservation Tools for SWAP Revision that is being held at the NEAFWA Conference on Tuesday, April 9 from 1-5 p.m., the afternoon before the LCC Steering Committee meeting. The workshop will briefly describe the completed and ongoing RCN and LCC projects and then seek input on how it can best be synthesized and organized for SWAP revisions. They encouraged states and partners to attend and provide feedback on the synthesis effort.

***Conservation Targets Presentation & Discussion***

Ken reviewed progress on conservation targets. Selecting indicators and targets is the goal-setting part of the Northeast Conservation Framework. We need to agree on an approach and timeline and assemble a full team. Initial team members identified include LCC staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, states, UMass, Fish Habitat Partnerships, Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, LCC Steering Committee and Technical Committee interested participants – there is still room for more. Would like to assemble the team and present some initial indicators at the April meeting.

One part of the approach is to develop conservation blueprints using a set of indicators in the same landscapes. Indicators could include representative species-habitat models, rare species locations, ecological integrity, ecological function, and resiliency indicators and approaches. One area where we can pilot an approach of assembling these multiple indicators and developing conservation designs is in the Connecticut River watershed where there is interest and overlap by the Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the Connecticut River Blueway, the Northern Forest Americas Great Outdoors and the Yale Framework.

Conservation Targets in the South Atlantic LCC – Rua Mordecai, Science Coordinator SALCC presented their approach and initial results.

* Purpose: to develop the process for building off existing efforts to set indicators and measurable targets for SALCC natural resource goals
* Broad participation in process by partners
* Consistent with mission: create a shared blueprint for landscape conservation actions that sustain natural and cultural resources
* Moving toward development of indicators (metric) and targets (measurable endpoint)
* Must paint compelling vision for the future
* It needs to represent why we care about the ecosystems of the area

Engaged entire SALCC Web Community of 600 folks to provide input and help weigh our priorities and shape targets through surveys, mass emails, webinars, workgroups, steering committee and revision team.

Decided to develop indicators for 11 broad habitat types. About three indicators per habitat type - can be a species, collection of species, or habitat metric (biotic or abiotic).

Phase I

* Criteria for Indicators
  + Ecological Criteria
  + Social Criteria
* Target Selection
  + Overlay existing plans
  + Is target achievable

Phase II

* Scoring Chosen Indicators (Expert Review)
  + Online review Forms – rank indicators based on practical criteria
* Indicators:
  + Abiotic/Ecosystem Process

Ex) Flow Attenuation

* + Habitat

Ex) area of interior forest

Phase III

* Make Recommendations

Questions: Andrew asked how they go about setting targets for selected indicators? Rua responded that they are only looking at simple targets to start and expert group is key to setting these.

Ken asked whether species indictors are surrogate or representative species? Rua answered that they started before the USFWS surrogate species approach and in some cases surrogate species are being used as indicators. They will use their Revision and Conservation Design Teams to inform and revise the target process.

***Hurricane Sandy Response Updates***

Ken briefed the steering committee on the Hurricane Sandy resiliency funding. Department of the Interior (DOI) has funding ($360 million) for resiliency and mitigation that includes support for restoration and some support for science needed to inform efforts for increasing future resiliency.

* Would like to use the LCC to help leverage funds for more coordinated approach for resiliency planning
* Talked to NY, NJ, CT about coordinating response
* Coming together quickly
* Agency Coordination inside and outside DOI: USGS, NPS, BOEM, NOAA, FWS, FEMA, Coast Guard
* DOI has asked LCC for input since the LCC was designed as a forum to bring folks together to coordinate and meet common needs around science and natural resource needs
* Will keep steering committee in the loop as this process moves forward.

***Agenda and planning for April 10 LCC Steering Committee meeting in Saratoga Springs, New York***

Ken encouraged partners to attend the April 9 NEAFWA workshop on Northeast Regional Conservation Tools

April 10 LCC Steering Committee meeting will be all day at the same hotel as the NEAFWA Conference (Saratoga Hilton) in Saratoga Springs, New York. Meeting will focus on:

* Review of science needs recommendations from Technical Committee along with science delivery, information management and communications needs
* Follow up on Regional Synthesis and April 9 workshop
* Consensus on conservation targets process
* Discussion of role of LCC in Hurricane Sandy resiliency efforts

***Conference Call Adjourned at Noon***

Call Participants

Greg Moore – Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife

Gwen Brewer – Maryland Department of Natural Resources

D. Day – Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Patricia Riexinger – New York State DEC

Kim Royar – Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife

Becky Gwynn – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Ken Elowe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Dee Blanton , U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Pete Murdoch – U.S. Geological Survey

Mary Ratnaswamy – USGS Director, Northeast Climate Science Center

Rick Palmer – UMass Director, Northeast Climate Science Center

Ellen Mecray – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Tai-ming Chang – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Anne Kuhn - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Bernie Marczyk – Ducks Unlimited

George Gay – National Wildlife Federation

Bill Brumback – New England Wildflower Society

Phil Huffman – The Nature Conservancy

Jad Daley – Trust for Public Land

Scot Williamson – Wildlife Management Institute

Zoe Smith – Wildlife Conservation Society

Andrew Milliken – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Megan Nagel - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

BJ Richardson - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Jeff Horan - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Maryland Department of Natural Resources

Scott Schwenk – North Atlantic LCC

Steve Fuller - North Atlantic LCC

Lori Pelech - North Atlantic LCC

Ben Thatcher – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service