

Memorandum // Draft

To: North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative Steering Committee

From: Ad-Hoc Demonstration Project Working Group (Participants – Daley, Galbraith, Gay, Huffman, and O’Leary)

Date: 11/1/11

Re: Guidance on Supporting Demonstration Projects

Background

In order to address widespread resource threats and uncertainties amplified by a rapidly changing climate, the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC) pursues a set of common components and goals in the North Atlantic region. One goal is set forth in the NALCC’s Vision, Mission and Goals statement as follows:

Demonstration Projects: Support implementation actions designed to test, validate and improve scientific information and tools developed by the LCC to enhance the ability of our lands and waters to sustain fish, plant, cultural resources and unique ecosystems.

At two separate meetings, most recently Manchester, NH, the NALCC steering committee confirmed by voice vote that it desired to support “on the ground” application of NALCC funded science via demonstration projects. It was agreed that demonstration projects provide important examples of how NALCC supported science is making a difference in our region.

In June of this year, the NALCC and the Northeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (NEAFWA) sponsored the Northeast Regional Conservation Framework Workshop in Albany, NY (Albany II). Attendees indicated overwhelming support for projects that apply emerging science to “on the ground” natural resource conservation.

NALCC staff directed the ad-hoc committee to develop a “catalyst” memo to launch a conversation at the NALCC’s November, 2011 meeting that moves the NALCC’s interest in supporting demonstration projects forward.

Question

The ad-hoc committee focused its efforts by addressing the following inquiry: “how will the steering committee determine what demonstration projects to support and at what point in the NALCC budget cycle should such a determination be made”?

Demonstration Project Paradigm

The ad-hoc committee believes that the demonstration projects can contribute to the NALCC Conservation Framework at the junction of science and implementation. NALCC funded science products, such as the “Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife; Decision Support Tools for

Conservation”, will be most impactful when actually applied through on the ground landscape conservation initiatives operating at different scales. Demonstration projects can and should include funding to public and private organizations using NALCC science tools to develop assessments, conservation plans, and strategies that are specific to high value conservation focus areas and habitat objectives within those areas. Further, some funding support should be provided to these organizations for capacity to coordinate multi-partner use of these tools and collaborative conservation decision-making.

Demonstration Project Examples

Staying Connected Initiative – This is a multi-state, multi-partner, public-private effort that targets wildlife corridor conservation across the U.S. portion of the Northern Appalachian Eco-Region from New York to Maine. Key habitat “linkages” within the ecoregion are the focus of heightened attention from partners on conservation science, land protection, technical assistance to communities and landowners on land management and planning, and mitigating the effect of transportation corridors. The initiative is supported, in large part, by a nationally competitive grant made by USFWS in 2009 to the Staying Connected partnership through the State Wildlife Grant Competitive Program. NEAFWA leadership has noted a desire (informal) to provide supplemental funding. The NALCC and NEAFWA funded “Designing Sustainable Landscapes for Wildlife” research is can be used to update and improve identification of key habitats and corridors for protection within each linkage zone. Such identification can focus project partner outreach, technical assistance, and advocacy on priority NALCC landscapes.

Demonstration Project Opportunity (ongoing) – funding the Staying Connected Initiative to apply NALCC funded science to conservation planning within identified linkage areas; fund capacity for Staying Connected partner organizations to coordinate conservation design and implementation with all public and private partners; and fund capacity to engage public and private landowners in coordinated conservation actions within identified linkages.

Regional Habitat Vulnerability Assessments – Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation is leading an effort, with support from NALCC and NEAFWA, to develop a regional vulnerability assessment involving representative habitat groups. Downscaling this science (model) to the local level will enable municipal land managers to utilize it efficiently.

Demonstration Project Opportunity (ongoing) – funding a target municipality’s effort to protect vulnerable/targeted habitats within its jurisdiction by supporting associated tools and training that advance the application of operationally feasible, site-specific adaptation strategies.

Suggested Process for Determining Annual Demonstration Project Support

An assessment of demonstration projects suitable for NALCC support should proceed in a transparent manner parallel with “science only” funding allocations. The process could include

the following steps much like other NALCC Steering Committee processes utilized to refine/mature issues for consideration:

1. Steering committee establishes demonstration project subcommittee
2. Subcommittee establishes project recruitment strategy, ranking criteria (e.g. diversity of partners, connection to NEAFWA priorities, etc.) and subcommittee decision-making process
3. Subcommittee recommends suitable demonstration projects to Steering Committee for its consideration at same time the “science only” projects are determined.

Conclusion

NALCC support of “on the ground” projects that apply NALCC science is desirable. It is an efficient way to test and improve NALCC science and will result in examples of NALCC science fueling collaborative natural resource conservation on the landscape scale. A subcommittee of the Steering Committee can effectively help identify such projects. Demonstration project funding decisions should be made at the same time in the NALCC budget cycle as “science only” funding allocations.