* **North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee**
* **February 3, 2012 Conference Call**
* **DRAFT Minutes**
* **Action Items**

Andrew Milliken will summarize areas of the National Fish, Wildlife and Plant Climate Change Adaptation Strategy that are relevant to the LCC and provide that information to the Steering Committee.

Scott Schwenk will provide a up to date list of technical committee and subcommittee members to the Steering Committee at the April meeting.

Steering Committee members are encouraged to view the Designing Sustainable Landscapes seminar on February 23. LCC staff will provide a link.

The Technical Committee will meet and decide on list of recommended high priority needs for the LCC which will be delivered at the April Steering Committee meeting.

* Steve Fuller will put together a conservation design team meeting at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference.

Dee Blanton and Andrew will work to put together a meeting place and draft agenda for a meeting of state partners to develop proposals for developing regional information for State Wildlife Action Plan updates.

Ken Elowe will forward approved boundary proposal to Steering Committees of other affected LCCs (Upper Midwest Great Lakes, Appalachian).

Megan will use the proposed logo combinations on the next set of LCC documents.

* **Introductions, Roll Call, Review agenda Approve Minutes from November meeting**
* Ken Elowe (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) started the call by welcoming the Northeast Regional Director, Wendi Weber (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Wendi expressed how excited she is to be part of this partnership; how great the progress being made by the North Atlantic LCC is; and thanked everyone for their commitment to working at the landscape scale. Pat Riexinger (New York Department of Environmental Conservation) commended Andrew Milliken (North Atlantic LCC) and Ken for making the partnership work.
* Ken conducted a roll call - there were a total of 47 members and partners present in person on the phone (see table at the end of the notes) constituting a quorum.
* Ken reviewed the agenda and asked for approval of the November 2, 2011 minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was proposed, seconded and accepted.

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

Andrew then reviewed the action items and actions taken from the November meeting including the following items:

* The LCC is continuing conversations with Canadian Fish and Wildlife agencies about developing consistent data layers (such as habitat maps) across the border;
* All the changes requested by the technical and steering committees were made on the LCC conservation science strategic plan and the final has been posted on the LCC website;
* All projects approved in November are on track for contracting
* The information management needs group is currently reviewing proposals for contractors;
* The demonstration projects work group will go through a parallel process to the technical committee and will go through a selection of important themes and geographic areas they want to focus on;
* Pat Riexinger pointed out that the National Fish, Wildlife and Plant Climate Change Adaptation Strategy is out for public comment.

Scot Williamson (Wildlife Management Institute) asked if there would be an aggregated comment from NEAFWA on the national climate change adaptation strategy. Pat answered that she was not aware of that being proposed and asked the group if they thought it would be useful. Scot said he thought it would be, Ken mentioned that the group could also consider doing it as an LCC community. It was mentioned that it would be stronger coming from NEAFWA since the LCC is facilitated by a federal agency. Pat said that there is no reason there can’t be two comments made. Pat offered to contact the NEAFWA Directors chair and ask them what their opinions are on the matter. Scot offered to help Pat out with that if she gets the green light from the chair. Rachel asked if any of the other regional AFWAs were taking the opportunity to work together on climate change like NEAFWA. Pat answered that the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is on the ball and really doing a lot with climate change; she is not sure about the others. Ken wanted to clarify that his earlier suggestion of having the LCC as a group make a comment was not to suggest that the LCC as a federal agency make a comment but that the LCC as a partnership make one. It was an offer of facilitation for the partnership. Pat said that she sees the value of an LCC comment in that it would show the importance of collaboration and partnerships. Andrew said that one possible way forward would be for staff to summarize areas of the document that are relevant to the LCC and provide that information to the Steering Committee.

**Science Needs Assessment Process for 2012 and Technical Committee Update**

Scott Schwenk (North Atlantic LCC) started off by talking about the schedule and process for science needs that the steering committee approved last November. Scott asked the group to focus on the April deadline, which is the next NEAFWA meeting as well as the next Steering Committee meeting. The technical team is going to present the LCC with a set of science need recommendations at that meeting. They will not be fully developed projects, but specific needs for the coming year built on the needs assessment and strategic plan. They could include not just needs that can be funded through the LCC but also things that can be supported through the Northeast Climate Science Center (CSC) and the Regional Conservation Needs process as well through partner agencies and organizations.

* Rachel Muir (U.S. Geological Survey) said that sooner she can get a draft of climate-related needs for the CSC, the better. Scott said that the technical team is working on getting it done for them.
* Rachel addressed a question about whether there are differences in issues the CSC will address vs. what the LCC could address through its project funding. She answered that in short yes, the climate science centers will focus on climate and the interaction between climate change and ecological impacts while the LCC will be more focused on understanding ecological impacts and providing decision support to managers.
* Scott began talking about this year’s process which is different than last years. Last year, in January a broad request for needs was sent out to partners and the technical committee reviewed, synthesized and ranked all those responses. The other major activity was the Albany II workshop bringing together partners to review ongoing or completed work and agree on additional high priority needs for the Northeast, many of which were relevant to the LCC. The results of those two steps (Albany II and the request for needs process) were folded together and out into the LCC science strategic plan. This year, it will be more about refining the existing needs, rather than gathering more needs. The technical committee is dividing into three subgroups: coastal/marine, aquatic and terrestrial (which will include freshwater wetlands) and bringing in additional experts to provide input. Those subgroups will be working over the next five to six weeks in those areas to figure out what the high priority science needs are for the coming year. They’ll be reviewing all of the prior work and reviewing the strategic plan as well as the progress that has happened under already funded projects and any new needs that arise.

Pat asked if the technical committee is drawing in any other resources at this stage. Scott answered that yes, they have asked other people to join these three teams. If the Steering Committee has any ideas of other people that would add value in those three areas, the technical committee certainly welcomes those suggestions.

Bill Hyatt asked if there was a list of people that were involved that could be circulated to partners. Scott will provide that list at the upcoming Steering Committee meeting.

* A list of what the needs actually are was requested and Scott answered that they are based on the science strategic plan (provided as a handout) and the top needs that were identified but not addressed last year as a starting point.

Ken reiterated that one of things that was accomplished at the Albany workshop was agreeing on and looking at framework and taking the steps necessary to achieve the LCC mission including an outcome of multi-species landscape designs. The strategic plan is built around that conservation framework so that each need fits into a step contributing toward that end.

* One other item Scott wanted to highlight is the *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* project being led by the University of Massachusetts Amherst that was supported in Fiscal Year 2010. Phase I of that project has addressed needs in three pilot areas and at the April meeting the Steering Committee will vote on whether or not to fund the second phase of this project to extend it to the entire northeast region. He encouraged Steering Committee members to view the upcoming webinar on February 23. LCC staff will provide the link.

Pat mentioned that wetlands often fall between the cracks and the EPA has done a lot of work with them. She wanted to know if the technical committee is involving EPA? Rachel Muir pointed out that there is quite a bit of wetland expertise within the LCC including USGS. EPA members of the technical committee include Tai-Ming Chang (Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2), Ralph Abele (Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1) and Anne Kuhn (Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development). Anne mentioned that the Narragansett lab has a huge wetlands effort that she will make sure gets included by the technical committee.

Ken told the group that any interested people were welcome to join the technical committee as long as they had the time to commit to it. He also asked the group to let him know if there are parts of the process that they think need improvement. Pat thanked Ken for the offer but pointed out that the LCC is still in the early stages of development and should be focusing on developing core capacity and addressing gaps. Andrew said that these comments bring up an important point that part refining these science needs is filling in the gaps or addressing areas that were missed or did not receive enough attention last year. A few areas that did not receive attention last year are being addressed through short-term details – invasive species and contaminants. Information from these details will be fed into the strategic plan.

Steve Fuller (North Atlantic LCC) voiced his concern about their not being a standing conservation design team that would address multi-species, multi-system projects. Scott answered that when the time is right, the technical committee can address these needs or create a subteam.

* Scott closed the discussion by noting that at the next Technical Committee meeting they will decide on list of recommended high priority needs for the LCC which will be delivered at the April Steering Committee meeting. The next steps after that meeting will be to translate those needs into projects through Requests for Proposals or direct sole source contracts if appropriate.

**Conservation Design proposal presentation, discussion, and decision**

Steve Fuller presented a more detailed proposal on landscape conservation design following the recommendation from the November Steering Committee meeting. The intent of the proposal is to carry out part of the mission of the LCC to define and design sustainable landscapes. It is also in response to the high priority needs identified at the Albany II meeting to compile, organize, synthesize and translate existing information from RCNs and LCCs. And finally it is intended to provide regional information in support of State Wildlife Action Plan updates. One of the motivators for this effort is that it’s been made clear through the RCN efforts that projects can’t continue to be funded without a continuous, parallel effort to synthesize, translate and adopt those projects within the partnerships of the LCC. This proposal sets the idea of a unified map or set of maps as the idealistic vision while recognizing that total unification across boundaries may not be desirable or even feasible but still aiming to find the best common denominator and address the collective priorities. The endpoint of this work is less important than embarking on a difficult process of creating a truly cooperative, technical commons to let the science facilitate the needs of the partners. The last point is that following this pathway, the conservation design team hopes that this will provide some checks and balances to ensure that the many different projects that are being worked on are as integrated and compatible as possible and that there is a continuous endeavor to define and improve science.

Ken added that the points Steve made were ones that came strongly out of Albany, one of those being to use existing information to the best advantage which is what this project intends to do. It doesn’t intend to undermine or make obsolete anything else the LCC is doing related to designing landscapes. This map that Steve made is not intended to be any kind of final conservation design, just to see what kind of data do we have available now and how can it be used most effectively.

Rachel Muir asked about efforts to make sure this is continuous and comparable with neighboring LCCs with all of these projects. Steve said that he views this process largely as a way to not just create products for use in the Northeast, but to find the common denominator in in the eastern U.S. or across the country. With regards to the Climate Science Centers, Steve hopes that they will be a player in helping to create seamless data layers that the LCC needs to do landscape design. Rachel said that the added value of the LCCs and CSCs is to add thematic layers that are particularly important to this region. One good example is the National Fish Habitat partnership and they developed some broad standards for data collection and developing their data partnership by partnership.

* Scot Williamson (Wildlife Management Institute) said that he thinks this is a very good proposal because of all the work the LCC has done and that’s it’s a good way to organize data and find what’s missing. It’s a very important step that the LCC should consider.
* Roger Barlow (U.S. Geological Survey) commented on the importance of coordinated information management for this effort. Gwen Brewer (Maryland Department of Natural Resources) added the need for building including decision making into this and other LCC efforts.
* Andrew told the Steering Committee that what they’re being asked for today is not to approve the detailed charges in the proposal but to have Steve and a conservation design team build from this proposal and develop the initial operational capacity for conservation design.
* Ken asked for a motion to initiate efforts and set aside the funds to initiate this project. The motion was proposed, seconded and accepted.
* Steve Fuller will put together a conservation design team meeting at the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference.
* Jad Daley (Trust for Public Land) mentioned that the Department of the Interior is contracting with ESRI, NatureServe, the Center for Biological Informatics and other contractors to develop an overarching spatial data contract for the agency. BJ Richardson (North Atlantic LCC) pointed out that there is also a National LCC working group targeting these data management issues to ensure that there is consistency across LCCs.
* **Role of LCC in developing regional information and consistent approaches for Northeast State Wildlife Action Plan Updates**
* Pat Riexinger and Dee Blanton (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) discussed northeast State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) Updates. They discussed the need for State Wildlife Action Plans to look at issues that need to be addressed across boundaries. Also, there is this huge body of work through the RCNs that needs to be captured and described in terms of context. The question is how to create a document to pick up as an appendix or chapter to give each SWAP Update regional context? Ideally they would get support from directors to get their people to a meeting in March or April and their blessing to use staff time on a proposal for this. Dee and Andrew will work to put together a meeting place and draft agenda. The group will also be putting together something for Pat and David Whitehurst to carry to the Directors. The LCC can help with travel. George Gay (National Wildlife Federation) volunteered to assist with this effort.

**LCC Boundary Revision Process**

* Andrew reviewed the national process for changing LCC boundaries. He referred to the boundary change proposal for the North Atlantic, Upper Midwest Great Lakes LCC, and Appalachian LCCs. If approved by the North Atlantic on this call it would go to the other two affected LCCs for their approval and then on to Washington. He asked any affected states as well as Canada for any input.
* Doug Bliss (Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service) said he has no concerns; he just needs some clarification on whether the new boundary will include Anticosti Island. Andrew answered that he did not think so but will check.
* Ken asked a for motion to approve the proposal to change the boundaries of the North Atlantic LCC. Pat moved and George Gay seconded. Motion accepted. Andrew will forward to other LCCs.

**Options for agency and partnership logos on LCC documents and web pages**

Megan Nagel (FWS) showed logo options and noted that the Steering Committee at its November meeting agreed that the Fish and Wildlife Service and LCC logo should be displayed together with the possibility of a by line that describes partnerships and the full set of partner logos should be included where possible. The group agreed that the logos are headed in the right direction and gave approval for to move forward with the logo development and application on the next set of documents. Megan will present some more examples in April.

* **Climate Science Center Update**
* Rachel Muir provided a summary of the status and next steps for the Northeast Climate Science Center. During this interim period, Rachel is acting as Climate Science Director and working on the governance of the climate science centers. A science plan to be developed will direct funding and science that the advisory board will approve for climate science needs over a 5-year period. Developing this plan in a relatively short period of time is important because there is 2012 funding that needs to be dedicated to projects soon. If anyone is interested in volunteering to put together a listening session regarding climate change topics of interest, contact Rachel.

**LCC National Updates**

* Ken began talking about the proposed National LCC Council, which has come out of a facilitated survey and assessment within Department of the Interior and partners to address national coordination needs. It’s also intended to demonstrate the areas where LCCs have moved beyond concept into reality and share some of the things that ought to be shared between LCCs (i.e tools, successes, etc) as well as to discover what is missing. This has evolved from a concept of LCC governance to more of a council that would look at national conservation vision. Part of it will be discussed as the National LCC conference in Denver on March 25th-29th. The conference isn’t just for LCC staff, it’s open to partners and states as well. Anyone interested in going should contact Ken to let him know. Pat mentioned that she is not very supportive of the national council idea because it feels like more bureaucracy on top of more bureaucracy. It may be overly structured and demand too much time from people on multiple levels that would be better off spent on other things. Pat said that as she understood it, there were many colleagues around the country that didn’t feel this was something that should be pursued. She hasn’t heard enough about what value it has to understand what it will do for the LCCs. Ken said he thinks that was clear to a lot of folks and nothing that he knows of is set in stone and there have been plenty of opportunities for feedback. Ken offered Doug Austen’s (National LCC coordinator) contact information so that people can directly send him their feedback. Pat said she thinks the concept of coordinating among LCCs is good, she just fears creating another council. Ben Thatcher (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Assistant National LCC Coordinator) said that all the people that were interviewed on the assessment said that it should move forward with the idea of a national council. Pat asked for clarification as to the need and value of a national LCC council that would be helpful. Ben said that there would be a proposal up for review via email in about a week as well as a webinar that will go over all that information. Jad pointed out that the national meeting should cover the substantial differences in how LCCs are developing and that this could be a good opportunity for LCCs to share best practices and for the North Atlantic LCC to be used as a model. Ken said the group can continue to talk about their thoughts on a national council and that the LCC will go along with the partnership’s desires.
* Ken asked the group to review the draft national LCC fact sheet on mission and vision. He said this isn’t something that the authors are looking for word-smithing on so much as fatal flaws. He would like the group’s feedback on whether or not these are umbrella statements under which the North Atlantic LCC can see itself working. The group agreed that the fact sheet was acceptable. Andrew will provide feedback to authors.
* Ken said the last thing he would like to talk about is this year’s fiscal year allocations. There is a movement being made on aligning the allocations nationally to performance metrics. These metrics will determine in part the future allocations to LCCs. The North Atlantic LCC ranked in the top group and was one of the LCCs receiving the greatest allocation of funding.
* Other business - Anne Kuhn mentioned that the International Association of Landscape Ecologists meeting is on April 8-12 in Newport, Rhode Island and that she and Andrew organized a full day session on LCCs including several talks on the North Atlantic.

The next Steering Committee meeting is April 18th, the day after the NEAFWA conference in Charleston West Virginia.

The call was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

**Call Attendees**

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| * **Name** | * **Organization** |
| * Wendi Weber | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Ken Elowe | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| * Rick Bennett | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| * Andrew Milliken | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Megan Nagel | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Lora Mathers | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Scott Schwenk | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Steve Fuller | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Bill Hyatt | * Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection |
| * Ben Thatcher | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| * Steve Walker | * Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| * Gwen Brewer | * Maryland Department of Natural Resources |
| * John O’Leary | * Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife |
| * Larry Herrighty |  |
| * Patricia Riexinger | * New York Department of Environmental Conservation |
| * Zoe Smith | * Wildlife Conservation Society |
| * Dave Day | * Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission |
| * Cathy Sparks | * Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management |
| * Kim Royar | * Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department |
| * Becky Gwynn | * Virginia Department of Inland Game and Fisheries |
| * Roger Barlow | * U.S. Geological Survey |
| * Lyn Neifert | * U.S. Geological Survey |
| * Rachel Muir | * U.S. Geological Survey |
| * Mary Foley | * National Park Service |
| * Mike Rasser | * Bureau of Ocean Energy Management |
| * Ralph Abele | * U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| * Anne Kuhn | * U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| * Steve Roy | * U.S. Forest Service |
| * Doug Bliss | * Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service |
| * George Gay | * National Wildlife Federation |
| * Lise Hanners | * The Nature Conservancy |
| * Jad Daley | * The Trust for Public Land |
| * Scot Williamson | * Wildlife Management Institute |
| * Ken McDermond- South Atlantic LCC | * South Atlantic LCC |
| * Rick Bennett | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| * Pete Murdoch | * U.S. Geological Survey |
| * Dee Blanton | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| * BJ Richardson | * North Atlantic LCC |
| * Jeff Horan | * U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |