**Recommendation of Technical Review Panel to the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative Steering Committee for funding project under RFP Topic 2:**

***Evaluation of restoration methods that allow salt marshes to adapt to sea-level rise***

Summary Recommendation

The Technical Review Panel and North Atlantic LCC Staff do not support funding any of the submitted projects as submitted under RFP Topic 2. They recommend that the Steering Committee approve the reissuance of the RFP for this topic with goal of a recommendation and decision on winter call of the Steering Committee.

Background

On April 18, 2012, the North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee approved a science need developed by the coastal sub-team of the LCC Technical Committee to address evaluation of restoration methods that allow salt marshes to adapt to sea-level rise. North Atlantic LCC staff then worked with members of the Technical Committee to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit projects to address this science need. On July 6, WMI announced the RFP (full details at <http://northatlanticlcc.org/rfp_2012.html>). Three proposals were submitted in response to the RFP, which closed on August 17.

Review Process

Amanda Babson (NPS) and Susan Adamowicz (USFWS) co-chaired and Andrew Milliken, (North Atlantic LCC) facilitated the Technical Review Panel. Reviewers consisted of volunteers from the LCC Technical Committee and several additional representatives to ensure a wide range of scientific and restoration expertise, geographical perspectives, and knowledge. The panel consisted of the following 11 members:

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| **Reviewers** | **Organization** |
| Susan Adamowicz (co-chair) | U.S. FWS, NWRs |
| Karel Allard | Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service |
| Amanda Babson (co-chair) | NPS, Coastal Landscape Adaptation |
| Tai-ming Chang | U.S. EPA, LCC Liaison |
| Eric Derleth | U.S. FWS, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program |
| Hunt Durey | MA Division of Ecological Restoration |
| Dorina Frizzera | NJ DEP |
| Eric Hutchins  | NOAA National Marine Fisheries  |
| Tim Jones | U.S. FWS Atlantic Coast Joint Venture |
| Andrew Milliken (facilitator) | U.S. FWS North Atlantic LCC |
| Scott Schwenk | North Atlantic LCC |

Following an initial screening by WMI, the three proposals were reviewed by the full panel. The reviewers scored the proposals according to a set of criteria listed in the RFP and were encouraged to provide narratives that explained their reviews. On October 3, once the written reviews were complete, the panel discussed the proposals by teleconference.

Results of the Reviews

To ensure consistency in scoring and an informed decision, each panel member reviewed all the proposals. Ten reviewers submitted written scores before the teleconference and one reviewer recused herself because of involvement in one of the projects. The submitted scores and ranks were highly variable with each project having a nearly even number of highest and lowest ranks and scores. There was no project that had strong support among the group. On the teleconference each project was discussed in detail and there were concerns expressed about the approach or applicability of all of the projects including the highest average scoring project. Concerns related to project design, ability to collect adequate data in the amount of time available, completeness of proposal and applicability of approaches across the LCC. The group agreed that none of the projects as currently written would adequately meet the need of the RFP. Their recommendation to the steering committee is to not fund any of the three submitted proposals.

The panel recommends that the RFP be revised and reissued and agreed to work together on the revised RFP. There was agreement that the topic areas were applicable to the science need and that the RFP expectations did not reach beyond available science and restoration capabilities. The revised RFP will be more specific about the need for broad applicability and on an approach that produces meaningful results in the short term. It will likely also include a component to produce a regional synthesis of information on where salt marsh restorations are being planned to help marshes be more resilient in the face of sea level rise.

Supplemental Information: Proposal Review Criteria

1. Degree to which the project addresses the priority themes and products described in the RFP announcement.
2. Scientific and technical merit.
3. Programmatic capability and feasibility. Are project objectives/goals clearly defined, measurable, and connected to specific milestones/deliverables and timelines? Will/can proposed methods accomplish/produce the project’s objectives/goals, deliverables, and timelines?
4. Engagement of partners.
5. Demonstration that products will be accessible and useful in conservation and resource management decision-making.
6. Degree to which project builds upon, rather than duplicates, existing efforts.
7. Geographic scope.
8. Leveraging of other resources (not required but encouraged).