
Northeast Regional Conservation Synthesis for State Wildlife Action Plan Revisions

BACKGROUND and NEED

The Northeast Region has a long and productive history of collaboration and coordination for the protection and management of natural resources. This partnership has been enhanced in recent years through the teamwork of the Northeast Fish & Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee, the RCN program and the LCCs (e.g., North Atlantic and Appalachian). States have collectively contributed nearly \$1.4M to completed regional projects since the inception of the RCN program, and have committed an additional \$1.6M to RCN projects in-progress. In addition to these direct expenditures, state agency staff, many of whom are supported by State Wildlife Grants, have dedicated substantial hours attending meetings and reviewing proposals and reports. The RCN and LCCs have been highly effective at producing volumes of regional data and information, tools and other products. Now NEAFWA states are at a critical crossroads: We urgently need to organize and fit together these multiple RCN and LCC products in time to efficiently assist states with incorporating a regional context into their mandatory SWAP revisions.

This project will produce a **synthesis of the growing volumes of regional conservation data and information produced through the Regional Conservation Needs (RCN) program and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs); see attached Synthesis Table of Contents.** This synthesis will provide the regional context for the elements that states are required to review and revise in their State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) by 2015. Producing a synthesis of regional information on behalf of all states in the Northeast will save each state significant time and effort in reviewing and determining how to incorporate regional data and information products into their respective SWAP revisions. This synthesis is envisioned as a set of components organized by the required elements of SWAPs that can be readily incorporated into each state's SWAP revision process. Web access to this synthesis of regional information will not only improve use of this information for SWAP revisions, but will also improve access to and use of regional information by states and conservation partners during continued implementation of priority actions. Synthesis and delivery of data, maps and other tools generated through the RCN program and LCCs will ensure they are adopted and thus realize the cost savings and efficiencies originally envisioned when these collaborative efforts were conceived.

OBJECTIVE

To synthesize regional conservation information including ongoing and completed work from the RCN program and LCCs into a format that states can easily access and incorporate into their SWAP revisions, and to influence continued implementation of regional priorities by making this information easily accessible to states and conservation partners.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

For the Northeast region, this synthesis and associated components will:

- Enable more effective use of existing regional and landscape-scale information from RCNs, LCCs and other regional efforts;
- Improve efficiency and reduce costs to individual states in addressing regional needs in their SWAPs;
- Better incorporate regional information into SWAP updates;
- Provide information that allows states and conservation partners to make state and local level decisions within a regional or landscape-scale context and to assess how state work contributes to regional priorities; and
- Facilitate creation of multi-state proposals for alternative funding (e.g., competitive SWG, NFWF, Duke)

APPROACH

Completing the first iteration of this regional synthesis will require a dedicated staff person or contractor to serve as Project Coordinator with overall responsibility for compiling, synthesizing and organizing information and producing documents as well as coordinating with groups and staff who are working on sections of the document. Major sections of this synthesis are already underway, including the development of regional species of conservation need through the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee and the synthesis of habitat information through the North Atlantic LCC's Northeast landscape conservation design project.

A Steering Committee will provide direction and oversight to the Project Coordinator, including feedback and approval of draft and final information. State agency Directors will need to provide clear direction to state agency staff to ensure that assistance and requested information are made available to the Project Coordinator in support of this synthesis.

TIMELINE and MEASURES OF PROGRESS

This synthesis process would be initiated as soon as practicable after the NEAFWA Conference in April 2012, with a target completion date and presentation of results at the NEAFWA Conference in April 2013. The project Steering Committee will meet as needed throughout the year, via webinar, conference call, and occasionally in person. Draft results will be presented to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee meeting in September 2012 and to the Northeast Directors and North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee in November 2012. This timeline is expected to allow completion of the initial components to inform SWAP updates, and to allow time for each state to incorporate components into their SWAP review and revision process across the Northeast Region.

BUDGET

Justification:

1. This funding will support contractual services of a Project Coordinator (as noted above) who will lead interstate coordination, compile and synthesize regional data and information from RCN, LCC, NEFWDC, SWAPs, and other regional work (see attached Table of Contents) in a format that can be easily used by states as desired in their SWAP review and revision process, including development of web-based access to compiled and synthesized information for easy access and use by states updating their SWAPs.

Estimated: \$110,000

2. Travel for State Representatives to attend up to 3 meetings for this project.

Estimated: \$10,000

**Table of Contents
for
Northeast Regional Conservation Synthesis**

A. Introduction:**Background**

- RCN Program
- Albany workshops
- LCCs

Organization

- SWAP required elements

Need

- Provide regional context
- Priority needs from Albany II workshop
- Organization of existing information
- Synthesis to develop/compile landscape designs
- Translation to make data useful at various scales and formats
- Assistance with conservation adoption

Intended audience/use

- SWAPs coordinators leading SWAP review and revisions
- States and conservation partners implementing SWAPs

B. Chapters (matching SWAP elements 1-7)

1. Regional Species of Conservation Concern - Regional assessment, organization and prioritization of SGCNs from all plans; development of regional lists from NEFWDC using NEPARC approach.
 - A. Freshwater Mussels
 - B. Freshwater Fishes
 - C. Amphibians
 - D. Reptiles
 - E. Mammals
 - F. Birds
 - G. Odonates
 - H. Vulnerability assessments

2. Habitat description, conditions

Numerous RCN and other regional projects; work underway through LCC Northeast Landscape Conservation Design.

A. Northeast Habitat Classification and Maps

- i. Terrestrial
- ii. Aquatic
- iii. Coastal and Marine

B. Habitat condition – How much of what habitat is where at various scales:

- i. in the region
- ii. in each sub-region
- iii. in each state

C. Assessments (See proposed NE Habitat Management Database)

D. RCN TNC Condition Assessment

E. Landscape designs that will allow partners to map and prioritize focus areas for conservation

- i. Regional focus areas
 - a. RCN
 - b. Regional partnerships (JV, PIF, NEPARC, FHP, etc.)
- ii. Overlay of individual SWAP/state focus area maps (e.g., MA Biomap, ME Beginning with Habitat)
- iii. Ecological Integrity
 - a. TNC, LCC/UMass
- iv. Species-habitat models
 - a. LCC/UMass
 - b. Other modeling efforts

F. SGCN and rare species locations and associated habitat

G. Vulnerability assessments (RCN, LCC)

H. Assessments of Landscape Change (LCC)

- i. Urban growth
- ii. Climate change

3. Regional threats and drivers (Contract Project Coordinator)

A. Compilation of regional threats from SWAPs (use IUCN/TRACS nomenclature and tie to NE SWAP database)

- B. Compilation of threats from regional plans
 - C. Assessments of landscape change
 - i. Past changes
 - ii. Predicted future conditions
 - a. Urban growth (LCC)
 - b. Climate change (LCC, CSC)
4. Regional strategies/actions (Contract Project Coordinator)
- A. Compilation of regional strategies from SWAPs
 - B. Compilation of strategies from regional plans
 - C. Northeast Conservation Framework and Components
 - D. Albany II and other priority regional needs
 - E. Tying regional information to actions by partners
 - iii. NFWF keystone initiatives
 - iv. NRCS focal species
 - F. Regional work that resulted from synergy between SWAP directed work – NE Cottontail (RCN and Comp SWG), Tidal marsh birds (RCN and Comp SWG), Blandings (RCN)
5. Monitoring and Evaluation (Contract Project Coordinator)
- A. Northeast Performance Monitoring Framework
 - B. SWG Effectiveness Measures
 - C. Taxa-specific Surveys (e.g., Northeast bird coordinated monitoring, frog call monitoring, shrubland)
 - D. Protocols and databases
6. Planned Review of SWAPs
7. Coordination – Regional coordination
- A. RCN
 - B. LCC
 - C. Regional I&M
 - D. Competitive SWG
-