**North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

**Steering Committee Meeting, December 12, 2012, Gardiner, New York**

**Minutes**

***Action Items***

LCC staff will work on the scope of work and contract with Downstream Strategies to ensure full consideration and integration of coastal habitats and species.

LCC coastal team will look in to developing a joint RFP with NOAA/NMFS restoration grants, address Steering Committee recommendations and reissue RFP.

LCC staff will put archived broadcasts from the Designing Sustainable Landscapes workshops on the LCC website.

Former ad-hoc demonstration project team members will work with LCC staff to establish a science delivery team and develop a set of science delivery needs for consideration at the April Steering Committee meeting.

LCC staff will work to find detailee and/or pull together a team to plan the North Atlantic LCC NEAFWA workshop. Steering committee members should contact him with the names of any of their staff that may be interested in helping to plan the workshop.

LCC Information management team and staff will evaluate existing database and web efforts to develop a recommendation for moving forward with the implementation of information/knowledge management system.

Megan Nagel will develop a complete communications strategy for the LCC for calendar year 2013.

Conservation targets discussion to be held on next call. Team will be pulled together based on a list of names that resulted from the September steering committee conference call. Suggestions for additional staff to be included in this group should be forwarded to Andrew Milliken.

Andrew Milliken will send out a Doodle poll to establish the date of the next steering committee call (early February).

***Introductions, roll call, minutes from last meeting***

Patricia Riexinger (NYS DEC) welcomed everyone to New York and the meeting and introduced Ken Elowe (FWS).

Ken Elowe opened the meeting with a discussion of the Hurricane Sandy relief-funding bill being discussed by Congress and the White House. The LCC has the opportunity to step up and help lead the recovery planning after Hurricane Sandy and play a leadership role in resiliency and adaptive planning in the Northeast. Patty noted that it was important that the LCC be prepared with a variety of long and short-term needs that we can identify immediately if necessary.

Ken Elowe asked for approval of the September 5, 2012 steering committee conference call minutes. Anne Kuhn (EPA) moved to accept and was seconded by Glenn Normandeau (NH Fish and Game). During the discussion, Andrew Milliken (North Atlantic LCC) noted that some of the notes reflect an email that was sent immediately after the call with information that we were unable to transmit over the phone due to technical difficulties with the line. Minutes were approved with no further discussion.

***Report on action items from last steering committee call and actions taken***

Andrew Milliken opened by welcoming Lori Pelech (North Atlantic LCC), the LCC’s new GIS analyst who will work to bring all of our spatial data together. Lori will initially be focusing on the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) synthesis project with Steve Fuller (North Atlantic LCC).

Andrew Milliken also welcomed Bill Brumback from the New England Wildflower Society and noted that he would hopefully help us think about how to better incorporate plants into our work.

He also thanked Adam Whelchel (TNC) both for attending the steering committee meeting for Phil Huffman and for helping the LCC with the structured decision-making workshop related to sea level rise in September 2012.

Andrew addressed the action items from the previous meeting,

* The LCC is forming a group to focus on community planning. A June meeting with the Regional Plan Association and a September meeting with a chapter of the American Plan Association (APA) have strengthened the LCC relationship with planners and highlighted the need for the LCC to provide practical and focused products that are accessible to the general public and useful at a town-by-town scale. APA is working to figure out how to bring landscape planning into their work.
* As recommended on the last steering committee call, he LCC will be developing an analogous approach to RCNgrants.org to streamline an online request-for-proposals process.
* A conservation targets team will be pulled together based on a list of names that resulted from the September steering committee conference call. If you have suggestions for additional staff to be included in this group, please contact Andrew.
* Workshops were held for the Designing Sustainable Landscapes project this fall in three sub-regions of the LCC with over 100 partners in attendance. These workshops were broadcast live and will be archived on the website. The project P.I.s and LCC staff received great feedback from managers on how to make these tools effective.
* The SWAP synthesis and data sharing agreements are moving forward - later in the agenda Lori Pelech and Steve Fuller will provide an update.

***Review of progress under Northeast Conservation Framework and LCC Conservation Science Strategic Plan as well as relationship to LCC benchmarks***

Andrew led a staff presentation on progress under the LCC guiding documents.

The Northeast Conservation Framework organizes the work of the LCC and other partners in the Northeast. The framework is also the basis for our scientific strategic plan and the LCC’s science work.

In addition to the conservation framework, the LCC will also be using the new Science Investment Accountability Schedule developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to guide the LCC’s work. The schedule is a set of benchmarks the LCC is to measure itself against relative to different activity areas. The information collected in the schedule will be used to guide budget allocation for the entire LCC network.

Some of the things we’ve accomplished under each section of the Northeast Conservation Framework and the LCC and NEAFWA Governance Documents (with new projects or needs in italics) are:

Biological Assessment/Ecological Planning

* Representative/priority species selection, compilation of information and modeling LCC/RCN
	+ Designing Sustainable Landscapes; amphibians & reptiles (PARCA); marine birds; brook trout; piping plovers
	+ Northeast Regional Synthesis - regional SGCN of high responsibility/concern; consistent SWAP format, database
* Regional Habitat and Species Vulnerability Assessments RCN/LCC
* *Conservation Targets LCC*
	+ *Representative Species targets*
	+ *Targets for other indicators*
	+ *Cultural resources targets*

Habitat Mapping

* Users guides (terrestrial and aquatic) RCN
* Revisions to aquatic habitat classification RCN/LCC
* Extending consistent maps into Canada LCC/CSC
* Permeable Landscapes (connectivity) LCC
* Coastal and marine mapping (CMECS) LCC/NROC
* Coastal NWI mapping updates LCC/USFWS
	+ *Assessing other coastal mapping needs*
* Compiling all spatial data through Northeast Regional Synthesis RCN/LCC

Conservation Design

* Regional consistent spatial data RCN/LCC
	+ NEAFWA/LCC Regional Synthesis
* Habitat condition, capacity & objectives LCC/RCN
	+ Designing Sustainable Landscapes; geospatial condition analysis; secured and *managed lands status*
* Predicting Landscape Change
	+ Designing Sustainable Landscapes; brook trout; piping plovers & SLR; PARCA amphibians and reptiles
* Landscape Designs/ Decision Support tools
	+ Designing Sustainable Landscapes; PARCA; marine birds; brook trout; piping plovers, geospatial condition analysis

Conservation Adoption and Delivery

* Science Translation
	+ Northeast Landscape Conservation Design: Conservation Design Specialist, GIS Analysts, NEAFWA/LCC Regional Synthesis
* Assess Decision Support Needs
	+ Decision-maker workshops: Designing Sustainable Landscapes; Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems
* Conservation Adoption
	+ Demonstration Projects
	+ Conservation Design Specialist (Steve Fuller)
	+ *Science Delivery Team*
	+ *Support for regional geographic partnerships (e.g. Gulf of Maine, Connecticut River Watershed, Chesapeake Bay…)*

Information Management

* + Information Management Needs Assessment LCC
		- *Next steps for information management system*
	+ Content Management Website LCC
	+ NOAA/NWF/LCC Coastal Climate Adaptation Database
	+ Northeast Regional Synthesis RCN/LCC
		- GIS Analysts in FWS (Lori Pelech) and TNC (Alex Jospe)
	+ *NEAFWA Habitat Management Database*

Monitoring

* Collaboration
	+ Coordination with FWS and NPS I&M Networks
* Validation of models
* *Monitoring needs for indicators and targets*
* *Monitoring of indicators*
	+ *Representative Species and other indicators*
* *Monitoring of Landscape Change*
	+ *National LCC network*

Research

* Annual review and update of science needs
* Coordination with adjacent LCCs and LCC Network on common research needs
* Coordination with Northeast Climate Science Center
* RCN research projects on regional priority SGCNs
* Research needs related to contaminants and climate change

Organizational Operations

* Steering Committee
* Technical Committee and sub-teams
* *Science Delivery Team*
* LCC Staff
* Governance documents and Strategic Plan
* Communications

***Review of approved annual process for science needs and projects and budgets, relationship to RCN process***

Scot Williamson gave a report on the LCC’s current budget and outlined the different cost-share agreements the LCC holds with WMI. There are different agreements for both science capacity (1410) and science project (1420) funds, which are kept segregated.

Andrew clarified that not all projects the LCC is involved in, such as the National Wetlands Inventory and Monitoring and UMass Amherst projects, are funded through the WMI cost-share agreements but are instead funded directly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Each project is being tracked on the website and the quarterly reports will be posted there. Additionally, anything produced by principal investigators will be made available through the website.

***Review of ongoing and approved projects, RFP results, science needs and priorities and next steps for FY 2012 and FY 2013***

Scott Schwenk (North Atlantic LCC) presented the new projects section on the website that houses all project related products, information and quarterly reports (http://www.northatlanticlcc.org/projects)

This summer, the LCC put out two RFPs and used the following process to make a selection:

* January to March: Technical Committee review of science needs
* April 18: Steering Committee approval of topics
* July 6: WMI issues RFP
* August 17: RFP closes; 14 proposals received
* August – October: technical review panel assembled and reviews proposals

Andrew Milliken requested that the steering committee provide any feedback on the process used for developing RFP recommendations.

The RFP results were presented for discussion. After lunch, the steering committee will make a decision on whether they support the recommendations.

The first RFP was developed to better understand distribution, habitats and threats for key aquatic/coastal species across the North Atlantic to enhance conservation decisions. It is a high priority need for both the North Atlantic LCC and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership (ACFHP). It complements existing LCC projects like the brook trout, stream flow and temperatures and aquatic integrity.

Emily Greene, chair of the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership helped develop the RFP and has chaired the process for developing a recommendation. She noted that the process worked well and allowed the team to pick the best project. The review involved 15 reviewers including 4 state agencies as well as EPA, NOAA, USGS, USFWS.

The final recommendation to the steering committee is to accept the proposal from Downstream Strategies that will result in a decision support tool that will visualize, rank, and manipulate inputs to prioritize conservation. Downstream Strategies has already been doing this kind of work with other fish habitat partnerships and LCCs.

Eric Walberg (Manomet) asked if the team considered funding multiple, smaller scale projects. Scott acknowledged that the team did consider that option, but that even combined they could not accomplish as much as the Downstream Strategies proposal.

Adam Whelchel (TNC) asked that the coastal piece complement and be integrated with the freshwater project moving forward. LCC staff will work on the scope of work and contract to ensure the full consideration and integration of the coastal work.

The second RFP was developed to evaluate salt marsh restoration methods to help design approaches for adaptation, monitoring and resiliency. The team identified opportunities to build on existing efforts, monitor what is happening and issue recommendations or best management practices. Only three proposals were received and none fully met the intent of the RFP. The review team was co-chaired by Amanda Babson (NPS) and Susan Adamovicz (FWS NWRs) with 11 reviewers, 2 state agencies, EPA, NOAA, CWS, USFWS, LCC. The consensus recommendation of this team was to refine and reissue the RFP.

The discussion then addressed the impact of the White House’s Hurricane Sandy relief funding bill that is currently will be considered by Congress. Andrew asked that the steering committee consider how the LCC might best provide guidance for identifying science needs and resiliency projects.

Ellen Mecray (NOAA) suggested that the LCC look to NOAA/NMFS restoration grants as a way to leverage opportunity and develop a joint RFP. There could be $20 million opportunity for restoration efforts.

Bernie Marczyk (DU) suggested the National Wildlife Refuge Systems as having numerous places devastated by Sandy. He provided the feedback that wide applicability of results and getting things done in the short term may be mutually exclusive. There should also be an acknowledgement that there may not be results for at least two – three years.

Anne Kuhn noted the LCC should look in to building resiliency and inputs as a part of the bigger picture. In addressing salt marsh resiliency, Anne suggested looking at the work Linda Deegan at Woods Hole has done to show that a lot of the sloughing off is due to nutrients.

Ken Elowe inserted into the discussion that Congress wants to put money into restoration and needs guidance on how to spend it. Being able to identify short-term needs is important, but so are long-term needs. Examples of long-term needs include looking in to methods and whether or not they are effective, why they are needed and where. Ultimately, the LCC needs to be able to articulate what we are doing now and in the face of available information, and identify where we should change course and what we should do.

Patti Riexinger suggested that the LCC not use the term “restore”. The LCC should be considering how to make the landscape suitable for future conditions and the new paradigm the conservation community is working under, not restoring to the way things were 20 years ago. Ellen Mecray (NOAA) suggested that responsible would be a better word choice than sustainable. Andrew also suggested that for the same reasons, the more realistic goal is to increase persistence as opposed to resilience.

Jad Daley (TPL) supported the idea of seeking synergy with NOAA funding and crafting the proposal around Hurricane Sandy, identifying the most strategic places to make investments and working to be really strategic about how the LCC might help channel those investments and make them work.

Adam Whelchel supported Jad Daley’s points, but cautioned that we could easily over promise and that when it comes to evaluating and addressing ecosystem services, that the LCC be as quantitative as possible.

***Update on Designing Sustainable Landscapes workshops and available tools***

Scott Schwenk, Andrew Milliken and Ken Elowe provided an update on this project.

The Designing Sustainable Landscapes project is led by Kevin McGarigal at UMass Amherst and has completed its initial phase and is now moving in to developing decision support tools and expanding its scope to the entire region in phase two. The project assesses the capability of current landscapes to sustain wildlife and ecosystem integrity, predicts the effects of landscape-scale changes like climate change and urban growth and provides decision support tools to help managers target conservation work.

In October 2012, a series of three, day-long workshops was held in the north, middle, and south sub-regions of the North Atlantic LCC to gather feedback from over 100 partners. The workshops were broadcast live and are to be archived on the North Atlantic LCC website.

General Feedback

* + Enthusiastic about progress; envisioned using tools in conservation planning
	+ Downloading and using regionally consistent raw and synthesized data will be useful, especially in conjunction with local data;
	+ Standard products will also be useful at multiple spatial scales (region, state, watershed, ecoregion);
	+ Ability to develop custom analyses (on the web) could be desirable in the future;
	+ Packaging and marketing information in relatively simple form will be important for some audiences

Decision Support Tool Feedback

* + Deciding on goals and how to weight various tools is both important and challenging;
	+ Being able to use these tools to begin answering the “how much” question will be important;
	+ Consideration of agricultural lands as ecological systems and habitats important;
	+ Suggestions that tools address how to prioritize restoration of agricultural lands;
	+ Addressing coastal areas in the future will be critical;
	+ Indices of species response to climate change will be useful .

As a result of the feedback provided at the workshop, the next steps are: to have partners download, use and test data for decision support work groups in the three LCC sub-regions; standardize scales; and articulate goals (conservation targets) for landscape designs and decision support tools.

Glenn Normandeau noted that the results of this project should be able to help managers talk about what they are going to give up on and evaluate where they are spending their money.

Patty Riexinger also commented that with so much uncertainty regarding what is coming fast we need to articulate what we know and what we are currently working on to reduce uncertainty.

Ken Elowe noted that we bring those ideas together to create a functional landscape under current and predicted future conditions. Scot Williamson reminded the group to remember that the LCC needs to be addressing all stressors, not just climate change. For example, in this region, stressors like urban growth have perhaps a more significant effect.

Jeff Horan (MD DNR/USFWS) suggested that the Designing Sustainable Landscapes project could better deal with forest structure, particularly for the early-successional forests.

In terms of trying to understand conservation design and the vulnerability of species and considering all the work that has been done on the exposure side, John O’Leary (MA DFW) asked that the sensitivity part, the biological response of these animals and their adaptability – there should be an opportunity to bring this up in the LCC agenda to bring this up to the level of effort we are putting in to the exposure side. Andrew acknowledged that this is a good point and that it should get increased attention perhaps in conjunction with the CSC.

***Update on Conservation Synthesis and SWAP Update***

Steve Fuller provided an update on the regional conservation synthesis and the relationship to State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) updates.

Stemming from the needs articulated at the Albany II Northeast Conservation Framework workshop in 2011, the objective for the Northeast Conservation Synthesis for SWAPs is 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.

The expected outcomes of the project are to:

* Create baseline landscape conservation designs, without which past, present, and future investments in landscape analysis will remain unrealized, underutilized, or ungrounded:
* Identification of landscape elements important to diverse partners, including cultural elements, rare species, ecological systems, landscapes, or watersheds;
* Provide data layers summarizing environmental conditions that describe the status of each landscape element;
* Provide data layers summarized at multiple scales to describe the collective status of all the landscape elements within important geographies or jurisdictions.

Terwilliger Associates, who helped develop many of the states’ SWAPS is the contractor assisting with this project. The North Atlantic LCC and TNC have hired two full time GIS analysts to facilitate spatial data acquisitions for the projects. This includes assembling landscape data for the U.S. and Canada and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), as well as aligning TNCs ongoing RCN products with the needs of the SWAP synthesis. Additionally, FWS Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration has identified a point of contact to be dedicated to work with each of the 13 states to better streamline the SWAP updating process. This is separate from the LCC project, but related.

The project is collecting data for 500 SGCN species with the help of staff from each of the states. NatureServe has agreed to share data directly with the LCC and they are also working with Canadian partners to get the pertinent species data. Ken requested continued help and support from the steering committee in assembling the best information. If the project encounters any problems in acquiring data, it was requested that Ken let the appropriate steering committee member know.

The eventual distribution of the data is still being considered, but for now, the data will be available for upload and download on the North Atlantic LCC website. The distribution of the synthesized data is still a challenge, but in the short term are piloting the RCN funded process for collecting data and the website for distributing it.

Gwen Brewer (MD DNR) and Patty Riexinger expressed concern that there is a lack of clarity about how each part of these projects are related, especially the appointment of the 13 FWS liaisons came as a surprise to many of the states.

Patty Riexinger stated a concern that by the time we establish the method for rolling-up all of the regional spatial data, it will be to late to incorporate the information into SWAPs. States need to be able to access the data and have similar ways of thinking so that we have the ability to use the database once you get it together. States wanted to have a way to crosswalk information across the Northeast and it was part of the ongoing project to deliver to the state users a tool we could use. If states are not getting that roll-up of data, then we are not getting what we asked for.

Andrew Milliken (NALCC) said the LCC would work on collecting the regional spatial data and a separate group of partners would be working on the roll-up and consistency of the data through the RCN process and Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee. The two processes are working together, but the LCC is focusing on the collecting and distribution of that regional spatial data per the direction of the steering committee.

Ken Elowe (FWS) noted that the group developing the roll-up database was waiting on TRACS, which is no longer the case. This is something that may need to go back to the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee for consideration, but in the meantime the LCC can help fill that gap.

Patty Riexinger made the request that the LCC endeavor to use plain language instead of jargon as much as possible.

John O’Leary pointed out that managers will only be able to use the data that is available in time to update SWAPS, but the capability to adapt and accommodate for changes in the future should be built in to the project as much as possible.

***Science Translation, Conservation Adoption and Delivery: Revised process for needs and projects related to science translation and adoption***

George Gay, Jad Daley and Steve Fuller led this discussion.

An ad hoc demonstration projects committee was convened in 2011 to address demonstration projects. The work of the ad hoc committee resulted in submission at the April meeting of the North Atlantic LCC of three proposals for the application and testing of science and tools. The proposals were advanced for further development, were submitted and were approved by the LCC steering committee in September.

The ad hoc demonstration projects committee was asked to develop a framework for demonstration projects. The committee recognized that demonstration projects are part of a broader need for assessment of science delivery projects in the North Atlantic LCC and there needed to be better inclusion of land managers, NGOs, land trusts, including NEHTC and other delivery oriented entities in the development of projects.

To date, certain science translation, conservation adoption and conservation delivery needs have been identified through the Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop, the North Atlantic LCC Conservation Science Strategic Plan and prior LCC science needs assessments. Several LCC projects are now developing decision support tools and engaging partners to get their input on what their decision support needs are.

Some examples of existing conservation translation and delivery include:

* Science Translation
	+ Northeast Landscape Conservation Design: Conservation Design Specialist, GIS Analysts, NEAFWA/LCC Regional Synthesis
	+ Assess Decision Support Needs
	+ Decision-maker workshops: Designing Sustainable Landscapes; Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems
	+ Conservation Adoption
	+ Demonstration Projects
	+ Conservation Design Specialist
	+ Science Delivery Team
	+ Support for regional geographic partnerships (e.g. Gulf of Maine, Connecticut River Watershed, Chesapeake Bay

Potential science delivery efforts could include:

* Engaging implementers such as NGOs, NE Habitat Technical Committee, and Regional Planners in assessment process
* Developing desktop GIS tools for local management decisions
* Developing strategies to use science to identify and recruit specific landowners for conservation
* Developing step-down products from regional plans
* Providing training and support to users of NALCC science
* Developing database tools to track habitat management and land protection

The committee recommended these next steps:

1. A science delivery needs assessment process in parallel with the science needs assessment over the next year to reflect the broad need of managers and decision-makers to develop and use specific applications of North Atlantic LCC science products in support of the implementation of landscape conservation.

2. Integrate demonstration projects broadly as one of the approaches to address priority needs identified by the Science Delivery needs assessment.

3. Dissolve the ad hoc demonstration committee established in November 2011. Establish a standing Science Delivery Team that would focus on the tasks above and would complement the LCC Technical Team.

Zoe Smith (WCS) stated that managers need a delivery mechanism and regional tool like this. What partners need is the ability to apply a regional tool to the landscapes in which they are working. A quick example is a program to take habitat classification and look at private land at a really fine scale and decide how managers can use the information about SGCNs to help with private land use planning.

George Gay (NFWF) moved to dissolve the ad hoc demonstrations team and establish a standing Science Delivery Team.

Ken asked that we table this vote until after lunch when the steering committee will also vote on the RFP recommendations.

***Proposed Session at Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference on LCC and RCN project results***

Patty Riexinger, Andrew Milliken and Steve Fuller led a discussion on this proposed workshop.

NY DEC will be hosting this year’s NEAFWA Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. The North Atlantic LCC is proposing to hold a workshop as a part of NEAFWA. The workshop would be an opportunity to discuss the history of LCCs and RCNs, a demonstration of the SWAP synthesis process and show and tell of current LCC projects.

The steering committee indicated that the workshop should be similar to a “train-the-trainer” workshop to enable and empower attendees to reach back to their colleagues. This is important because there is still a lack of awareness about LCCs and their role in the conservation community in the Northeast. Also important would be highlighting the National LCC Network and the national strategy for LCCs.

John O’Leary (MA DFW) suggested that the workshop focus on the SWAP synthesis as a powerful way to draw an audience. Steve Fuller indicated that the synthesis framework would be available at that point to start looking at.

Bernie Marczyk suggested that the workshop be mindful of who the audience will be comprised of and provided the suggestion that the workshop start with an update and background information leading to where we are now then highlight success, then move forward with where the LCC was going from here.

Andrew articulated that, based on the discussion, would have two parts: providing the context and setting the stage and showing the products, and demonstrating the projects, how managers could use them for SWAPs and get that active feedback.

The proposed workshop would fit into one, four-hour session on Monday or Tuesday.

The steering committee requested that planners pay attention to the schedule to ensure this workshop does not conflict with another, potential popular session to ensure that people will attend.

As a follow-up, Andrew will work to find detailee or pull together a team to plan the workshop. He requested that steering committee members contact him with the names of any of their staff that may be interested in helping to plan the workshop.

***Review of morning discussions and decisions on science projects, needs and science translation process***

After lunch, the steering committee reconvened to discuss the recommendations put forward by the technical committee regarding both RFPs and the proposal to establish a standing Science Delivery Team.

The first RFP was developed to better understand distribution, habitats and threats for key aquatic/coastal species across the North Atlantic to enhance conservation decisions. The technical committee recommended funding the proposal put forth by Downstream Strategies. Ken Elowe (FWS) asked for a motion to accept the recommendation of the technical committee to fund the proposal from Downstream Strategies. The motion was accepted by Glenn Normandeau and seconded by Bill Hyatt (CT DEP). Ken Elowe asked for discussion on the motion, during which time John O’Leary declared MA DFW would abstain from the vote because they had submitted a proposal for consideration under the RFP. Scot Williamson also abstained as WMI is managing the RFP process. Ken Elowe (FWS) thanked John O’Leary for abstaining and also noted that the Technical Committee, perhaps through the proposed Science Delivery Team, would look into a regional habitat management database. Seeing no more discussion, Ken Elowe (FWS) called for a vote and the vote in support of the motion was unanimous.

The proposal for the second RFP was to table it for now and revise according to recommendations from this committee. Previous discussion indicated that part of the revision should included looking into leveraging the RFP with the NOAA/NMFS grants, for which the letters of intention are due on February 15.

Discussion around the recommendation included questions to be answered during the revision process:

* Will the RFP ask for a compilation of existing information to guide work in the short term or a longer-term evaluation of existing effort to develop best management practices or a framework for marsh restoration?
* Can this RFP be developed to leverage the funds available through NOAA/NMFS?
* Does this need to be reviewed again by the coastal sub-team?
* How quickly can this revision be turned around, it needs to be done quickly if the committee hopes to leverage the NOAA money?
* Can the language be refined according to the recommendations of the technical committee?

Adam Whelchel asked whether the NOAA/NMFS money focused on delivery and restoration as opposed to science? He stated that it was important that this RFP focus on providing science, rather than delivery.

Ken Elowe moved to accept the recommendation of the technical committee to table the second RFP until the coastal sub-team can revise it according to the recommendations from both the steering and technical committees. The coastal sub-team should also focus on whether this RFP is providing short term versus long term possibilities. The motion was accepted by Patty Riexinger (NY DEC) and seconded by Glenn Normandeau. Seeing no more discussion, Ken Elowe called for a vote and the vote was unanimous in support of the motion.

The final recommendation to be considered by the steering committee was to dissolve the ad-hoc demonstration projects team that was looking only at tools and establish a standing Science Delivery Team that more broadly addresses how we are providing science to managers on the ground.

Ken Elowe noted that this was a fairly broad directional change as establishing this team would indicate the LCC’s responsibility to make things available on the ground.

PattyRiexinger accepted the motion and was seconded by Kim Royar (VT F&W). Ken Elowe asked for discussion, noting that the technical committee will bring forward science needs in April and the science delivery committee would be a part of that process.

John O’Leary said the new team may not be established enough to participate in the science needs process for April, but hopefully will be fully formed and have refined their objectives. He also noted that it will be important to consider who is most appropriate to sit on that committee.

Steve Fuller said LCC staff could have the team up and running in enough time to participate in the needs process for April.

Ellen Mecray asked that the team conduct an assessment of what sort of conservation delivery mechanisms are needed.

Bill Hyatt suggested that invasive species be included in both science agendas as a cross-cutting issue or program.

John O’Leary asked how science priorities would be translated up to the national level and Ken Elowe responded that to the extent possible, LCC staff, per the guidance of the steering committee, would push them up.

Seeing no additional discussion, Ken Elowe called for a vote and the vote in support of the motion was unanimous.

***Relationship to LCC and priorities for Northeast Climate Science Center (CSC)***

Mary Ratnaswamy (USGS) and Rick Palmer (UMass Amherst) gave an update on the Northeast CSC. Mary is the Director of the CSC and Rick is the principal investigator. The Northeast CSC provides scientific information, tools, and techniques that managers and other parties interested in land, water, wildlife and cultural resources can use to anticipate, monitor, and adapt to climate change in the Northeast region. The CSC will actively engage the LCC and other partners in translating science into management decisions. The Northeast region includes 22 states, 10 of the 22 LCC regions, over 130 million people and multiple ecoregions. The Northeast Climate Consortium includes UMass Amherst, College of Menominee Nation, Columbia University, Marine Biological Laboratory, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri Columbia and University of Wisconsin-Madison.

For the CSC, UMass Amherst is the lead academic institution. Base funding is $1.5 million, with 60% going to UMass Amherst and the rest distributed throughout the consortium. The vast majority of the funding goes to support post-docs and graduate students. In addition to the base funding, USGS provides annual research to address specific climate science needs of stakeholders and is competitively awarded. The funding from USGS for 2013 will be $1 million, though some funds are allocated to complete year one projects. The CSC anticipates that this USGS funding will grow over time.

The 2013 science agenda includes:

1. Climate change projections for decision making by resource managers.
2. Climate impacts on freshwater resources and ecosystems.
3. Coastal and near shore response to climate change.
4. Climate impacts on land-use and land-cover change.
5. Ecosystem vulnerability and species response to climate change.
6. Impacts of climate change on cultural resources.
7. Decision frameworks for evaluating risk and managing natural resources under climate change.

The fiscal year 2012 projects include:

* Temperature inventory mapper to evaluate climate change impacts on regional streams;
* Impacts of climate change on stream temperature;
* Evaluation of sea-level rise impacts in the NE U.S.;
* Terrestrial and wetland habitat classification and mapping including of climate sensitive systems;
* Variability in fish response to climate change;
* Developing fish trophic interaction indicators of climate change for the Great Lakes;
* Mapping the terrestrial habitats of Atlantic Canada; and
* Interaction of agriculture with climate change.

Next steps for the CSC include developing a:

* Draft Science Agenda (2013-2018);
* Interim Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC);
* Formal Stakeholder Meetings in January;
* Tribal Outreach Strategy;
* FY13 Annual Priorities and RFP;
* FY14 Annual Priorities and RFP; and
* Building Science Capacity/Mentoring Students.

The CSC schedule for submission, review and awards for projects is as follows:

* February 8, 2013: Deadline for submission of Statements of Interest
* Week of February 11: Reviews with Regional Partners and Technical Review
* February 25: Applicants Notified and Full Proposals Requested
* March 25: Invited Full Proposals Due
* Mar. – Apr.: Technical and Other Reviews
* NLT May 1: Final Candidate Projects Identified
* May: Cross-Project and Cross-CSC Reviews
* NLT June 1: Applicants Notified of Intent to Award

Andrew Milliken noted that LCC staff, particularly Science Coordinator Scott Schwenk has worked with the CSC to bring both science needs and RFP processes into alignment and along similar schedules.

The steering committee expressed some concern regarding the funding of post-docs and graduate students relative to who will be advising them and ensuring that the work they produces meets established short or long term needs in the Northeast. Patty Riexinger suggested the process for monitoring and advising the work of post-docs and graduate students should be similar to that of the co-op units. This includes ensuring practitioners are on the committees selecting projects, keeping the process true to those who will use the end results.

***Information Management Needs Assessment results***

B.J. Richardson (FWS) introduced and Michael Turner (AppGeo), presented the results of the information management needs assessment project.

Over 110 people responded to the online survey, 19 people participated in focus groups and eight stakeholder interviews were conducted with individuals from the NALCC, FWS, WMI, states, UMass Amherst and TNC.

The assessment found that there were two significant drivers, or needs, that were common throughout the process. They were: 1) The ability to provide a holistic view across the region and to place local actions within a regional context and 2) The ability to see all NALCC sponsored activities, especially what the LCC is spending money on, where data is available and which partners are doing what.

Respondents indicated that the LCC should provide a regional context, assess the effectiveness of management activities and align priorities across organizations. To help accomplish those goals, the LCC could establish an online information management system that provides a holistic, region-wide view, is information rich and readily available and provides data and tools to facilitate planning and conservation delivery.

Michael Turner (AppGeo) provided a cost estimate of $550,000 for 24 months if AppGeo were to follow through with the implementation of the information management system process they are proposing (and assuming that none of the infrastructure already existed).

LCC staff noted that it was important to see that the results of this assessment supported the work that had already been underway, especially in the development of the new North Atlantic LCC website that is now available for use. The steering committee asked that LCC staff look at all of the different efforts currently underway, including the website, existing LCC projects, SWAP synthesis and habitat and SGCN databases to figure out the best path forward for addressing the needs identified in the needs assessment.

Funding an additional project from AppGeo was tabled at this time until the information management team and staff conducts an evaluation of existing efforts and provides the steering committee with a recommendation to move forward.

***LCC national and regional communications and LCC website***

Megan Nagel (North Atlantic LCC) provided an update on national LCC communication and the new LCC website.

Nationally, the LCC network is working on a social media guidance policy and establishing national Facebook and Twitter accounts, developing a national website and writing a draft national strategy. Additionally, FWS has hired Ann Froschauer, formerly the national white-nose syndrome communications leader, to serve in a dedicated capacity on national LCC communications.

The new North Atlantic LCC website is meant to serve as a knowledge (or information) management system. To view the new website, please visit <http://northatlanticlcc.org>. The website will serve as a resource for regional science data, include the GIS and SGCN information being collected by the regional SWAP synthesis project. Additionally, it has capability to provide private workspaces for any of the LCC workgroups or teams. The workspaces have SharePoint like capabilities and can be used by any partner or organization.

Megan Nagel, based on previously provided communications strategy outline, led a discussion on communications goals for calendar year 2013. The steering committee articulated its overarching communications objective in 2013 as ensuring that people know what the LCC has been doing and why the LCC is a useful and necessary part of the Northeast conservation community.

Additional communications goals articulated by the steering committee include:

1. Ensuring proper communications at all meetings, ensuring that required technology, phone systems and web conferencing capabilities are available.
2. Communications to Congress, identifying the key players and highlighting the LCC’s relevancy and efficiency, how the LCC is helping constituents and how the conservation community is using the results produced by the LCC.
3. Developing a series of testimonials from partners for use in fact sheets, on the website, etc.
4. Creating and distributing news releases for every funded and complete project.
5. Sharing the story from each project.
6. Emphasize partnerships, specifically the partnership between NEAFWA and with state wildlife grants.
7. Create and provide communications materials that highlight each state’s story and participation in the LCC.

Megan Nagel will take these recommendations and develop a complete communications strategy for the LCC in calendar year 2013.

***Conservation Targets***

Due to time constraints, the discussion of developing conservation targets was tabled until the next steering committee meeting, which will take place via conference call.

***Other Business, next meeting, closing remarks***

Patty Riexinger thanked everyone for attending. Ken Elowe said to look for the Doodle poll in the coming weeks and thanked everyone for their participation.

Andrew Milliken (NALCC) will send out a Doodle poll to establish the date of the next call (sometime in early February).

The next in-person meeting will be on Wednesday, April 10 in Saratoga Springs, NY immediately following the NEAFWA Conference.

**Steering Committee Meeting Attendees**

Bill Hyatt – Connecticut Department of Environemntal Protection

Gwen Brewer – Maryland Department of Natural Resources

John O’Leary – Massachusetts Division of Natural Resources

Glenn Normandeau – New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

Dave Chanda - New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

Patricia Riexinger - New York Department of Environmental Conservation

D. Day – Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Cathy Sparks – Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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

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

Ralph Abele - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Jacqueline LeClair - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Anne Kuhn - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Diane Burbank – U.S. Forest Service

Kim Mawhinney – Environment Canada Canadian Wildlife Service

Bernie Marczyk – Ducks Unlimited

Eric Walberg – Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences

George Gay – National Wildlife Federation

Adam Whelchel – 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

Bill Brumback – New England Wildflower Society

Emily Greene – Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership

Michael Terner – Applied Geographics