

**North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee Meeting  
October 26-27, 2015  
Portsmouth, New Hampshire**

**Action Items, Highlights, and Discussion Summaries**

**Action Items**

**Committee and Partner Action Items**

- Please contact Ken Elowe or Andrew Milliken to set up specific science delivery opportunities for your agency, organization or partnership
- Ask any of your staff that are starting to use LCC information and tools to provide feedback on what is useful; what would make these tools more useful; and what LCC information and tools are resulting in actions and share this feedback to Andrew Milliken
- Review and provide feedback on state fact sheets (in your meeting folders or [on the website](#)) and on product website to Bridget Macdonald (she will share link when ready)
- Contact Andrew Milliken to volunteer or identify staff to help scope out specific additional strategic plan components (see list in [Handout 19](#)); LCC staff will work with these teams and bring back results to Steering Committee
- Bill Hyatt will coordinate with non-federal employees about communicating with their elected officials to let them know their support for LCCs prior to the December 11 appropriations deadline

**Staff Action Items**

- LCC staff will post upcoming science delivery events on LCC website and calendar, including forthcoming RFP
- Invite technical team members and other key partners to participate in Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas including review of the scientific elements used in design
- Document comparisons of approaches used in the North Atlantic LCC to other conservation design approaches, including the assessment of alternatives by the RCOA team, and provide that to the Steering Committee
- Monitor feedback from the implementation of the Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot (“Connect the Connecticut”)
- Work with WMI to notify successful P.I.s for floodplain and rare plant proposals and develop agreements that reflect review team recommendations
- Follow-up with Sharri Venno and other tribal contacts to enhance tribal science delivery opportunities
- Work with Maryland DNR, state and other partners to gauge interest in a Symposium or Workshop focused on LCC products at the NEAFWA Conference in April

## **Highlights and Discussion Summaries**

Forty-one North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee members and partners met for two half days (in person and on the phone), reviewed the state of LCC work, and discussed strategic directions and next steps on several key fronts including conservation design and science delivery. A summary of updates and accomplishments along with key points of discussion are summarized below.

### Introductions

Ken Elowe (FWS) introduced the meeting noting the importance of focusing on whether the products developed by the LCC are useful and relevant; how to most effectively deliver them and how to integrate information in conservation designs at regional and sub-regional scales.

### Highlights and Discussion on Science Projects and Resulting Products

Scott Schwenk (LCC) and Megan Tyrell (LCC) provided updates on LCC science projects and resulting products focused on recently completed work. Peter Murdoch (USGS) added information on the metrics that have been developed to measure success.

#### *Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *Consistent habitat mapping across the border into Canada useful for working across provincial borders in Canada as well as across the border into the U.S. especially in the face of climate change*
- *North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative database, protocols and prioritization tools are useful for organizing assessments and prioritizing aquatic connectivity work in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maine and elsewhere*
- *Coastal resilience work is critical; important to keep linking to existing partnerships*
- *Discussion of feedback received during science delivery visits including opportunity to deliver to tribes; using approaches that can be updated easily; need for partners to use specific tools and provide feedback; importance of frank discussions about what is useful and not useful*

### Landscape Conservation Design

Steve Fuller (LCC), Scott Schwenk (LCC) and Bridget Macdonald (LCC) provided updates on conservation design and related communications, including:

- Updates on and lessons learned from “Connect the Connecticut” (Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot)
- Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas: approach and recommendations – outcome of Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee meeting supporting the recommendations and next steps

#### *Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *Learn from implementation of the Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot and apply to future conservation design work*

- *Involve additional partners in regional conservation design by broadening the participation in the Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas process, including members of the LCC Technical Committee*
- *Peer review, ground-truthing, partner feedback and comparisons to other approaches is important as we move forward*
- *Need to emphasize value added and complementarity of regional context with higher resolution state and local information*
- *More aquatic expertise and input needed for conservation design efforts*

#### Review of Project Budgets and Contracts

Scot Williamson (WMI) provided a summary of the existing contracts and budget including total budget, spent, obligated, and placeholders.

#### Review of Projects Selected and RFP Results

Scott Schwenk (LCC) summarized the FY 2015 science projects already approved and the recommendations for proposals under the RFP for two topics.

- Sole source agreement for Aquatic Classification and Mapping with Nature Conservancy of Canada completed
- Sole source agreement for a tidal culverts component to the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative database completed
- River corridors and floodplains assessments RFP - The recommendation is to proceed with a proposal from Christine Hatch at UMass Amherst, which has established a River Smart Task Force already focusing on many of the issues identified in the RFP
- Prioritization of rare plants RFP - The recommendation is to proceed with a proposal by Nature Serve, which has already been doing this kind of work, has data in hand across the region, and is committed to updating global ranks for species that occur in this region.

#### *Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *Steering Committee accepted the recommendations to select the UMass Amherst proposal for floodplains and the NatureServe proposal for rare plants.*
- *UMass proposal stronger in needs assessment and incorporation of cultural resources; may not initially cover entire region*
- *Need to include Tribal Historic Preservation Officers in project team for floodplain project*

#### Progress on Science Delivery and Communications

Steve Fuller and Bridget Macdonald reviewed progress on Science Delivery and Communications.

Steve noted that original four science delivery grants making great progress.

- Highstead completed four workshops across region with Regional Conservation Partnerships (groups of land trusts and other local organizations)
- Envision the Susquehanna is meeting with Susquehanna communities and utilizing LCC information for prioritizing conservation actions

- Wildlife Conservation Society prioritizing and working with municipalities
- Open Space Institute has developed a series of guidance documents for land trusts to incorporate LCC and other climate information into their planning

This year's science delivery is a combination of capacity and projects some of which is obligated

- Improvements to Data Basin and ensuring interoperability w. Landscape America for data archiving tools - obligated
- Initial knowledge transfer and Facilitation of multi-scale planning - staff and contract capacity focused on getting information out to partners in various ways and venues
- Focused science applications - identifying opportunities e.g. woodcock initiative helping to prioritize land management
- Technical assistance and network support provider grants- waiting on feedback from users prior to RFP

Over 20 science delivery visits since June with state agencies, NGOs and partnerships.

- Feedback reinforces the need to continue these face-to-face visits to expose and train partners in the available information and tools

Expanding reach of communications

- Implementers – fact sheets specific to state, watershed, topic; searchable products website about to go live; used in combination with face-to-face visits; feedback on these tools would be helpful;
- Stakeholders - take advantage of multiple outlets and approaches for telling a story and have it spread – newsletter articles, press releases, blog posts that are picked up and reposted
- Communications from users through audio/video

*Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *Visits with states showed different needs, understanding and level of support and interest in follow-up training with their staff*
- *Visit in Virginia with three LCCs helped increase awareness and coordination for using LCC tools.*
- *Visit with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will result in their using tools and designs to figure out where priorities are.*
- *Need to document use of the information and tools to make decisions*
- *Would be helpful to post upcoming science delivery events*
- *Should take better advantage of NOAA expertise in science delivery*
- *Need better documentation of products but also may need to scientists to work with managers to use and apply complex information*
- *NEAFWA meeting in April good opportunity for science delivery with states and other partners*
- *Conduct training in the context of applied conservation on the ground when its less abstract*
- *Capacity of staff may limit the amount of face-to-face training; need to leverage others to help*
- *Experimenting with online training courses to supplement in-person training*

- *Working with watershed and other existing partnerships will help generate science delivery networks*
- *Build science delivery requirement into science projects so that P.I.s have responsibility for initial delivery*

#### Technical Committees, Science Needs Process and Science Delivery process for 2016

Andrew, Scott and Steve proposed a revised annual process and focus for the LCC staff and teams on:

- Completing ongoing work towards an initial draft of regional conservation design
- Guiding strategic science delivery to LCC partner agencies and organizations
- Applying learning from these efforts to guide strategic planning and future investments

Bring together subset of Technical Committee and RCOA team (and others as needed) to:

- Review existing regional conservation design efforts
- Assess alternatives given our current state of development
- Assess needs, approaches and timing for validation
- Recommend additional investments if needed (by April Steering Committee meeting)

#### *Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *Review needed by users with a clear understanding of intended use as well as technical staff*
- *Review is not a pause; part of iterative, learning process of moving forward with RCOAs and bringing in additional partners for regional conservation design*
- *May need additional expertise outside of technical committee*
- *Science delivery and communications should take advantage of existing capacity out there in state and federal agencies*
- *Need to show socio-economic benefits of conservation designs*
- *General agreement with focus for coming year on science delivery and conservation design*

#### LCC Network Updates and Budget

Andrew, Ken and Bill Hyatt reviewed status of LCC Network and Budget

- Network of 22 LCCs trying to work together as seamlessly as possible. LCC Council now meeting regularly includes NEAFWA representative - David Whitehurst (VA DGIF).
- LCC Network Strategic Plan and Network Science Plan now available.
- National Academy of Sciences (NAS) conducting review of LCCs expected in late November - John O'Leary (MA F&W) is on the NAS panel.
- President's 2016 budget included proposed increase in LCC funding
- House and Senate mark-ups of budget resulted in a proposed 50% cut in appropriations over previous years with language about "funding LCCs where they are wanted."

- Currently federal budget under a Continuing Resolution until December 11. Budget agreement agreed to between administration and Congress but still need to come together on omnibus spending bill.

*Summary of feedback and discussion*

- Bill Hyatt– non-federal employees can communicate with their elected officials to let them know their support for LCCs. He will follow up after the meeting.
- In the future LCCs should take advantage of Hill visits planned by partners (e.g., AFWA, TNC)
- If there are major cuts, Ken and Bill will convene an emergency meeting of the Steering Committee to make decisions on how to move forward with North Atlantic LCC priorities.

Discussion on LCC Strategic Direction

Andrew proposed a shift in the process and timing for strategic planning for the LCC noting that the outcome is less about a revised strategic plan than about learning from the last five years and adjusting the strategic direction of the LCC to make sure we are still meeting partner's needs. Specific steps recommended:

- Continue focus on science delivery to a broad range of LCC partners in 2016, seek and document feedback to inform strategic direction
- Prioritize and address additional components not yet fully addressed in existing strategic plan by engaging partners most interested in those issues and summarizing these issues by October, 2016
- Draft strategic plan by April 2017 and co-host a Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop in June 2017 in order to align timing with Northeast States regional synthesis of updated State Wildlife Action Plans

*Summary of feedback and discussion*

- *General agreement with proposed process and timing*
- *Agreement with aligning with SWAP synthesis timing and common priorities; relationship between LCC and Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee important.*
- *Need coordination with regional ocean planning groups and clear articulation of LCC niche and value-added in marine zone including connections to watersheds*
- *LCC at good point of development to revisit and increase tribal participation, especially with available restoration tools*
- *Important to learn from other LCCs as well*
- *A lot of potential additional components to the strategic plan. Focused groups can scope out each, compare to criteria and bring back to Steering Committee*
- *Need to gauge interest in a NEAFWA conference symposium or workshop in April*

Other Business, Next Meeting

Ken reiterated that he is happy to step down as chair at anytime

Next Steering Committee meeting is Wednesday, April 6, 2016 after the NEAFWA Conference at the same location - Westin Annapolis in Annapolis, Maryland.

Andrew will be reaching out to gauge interest in a Symposium or Workshop focused on LCC products at the NEAFWA Conference