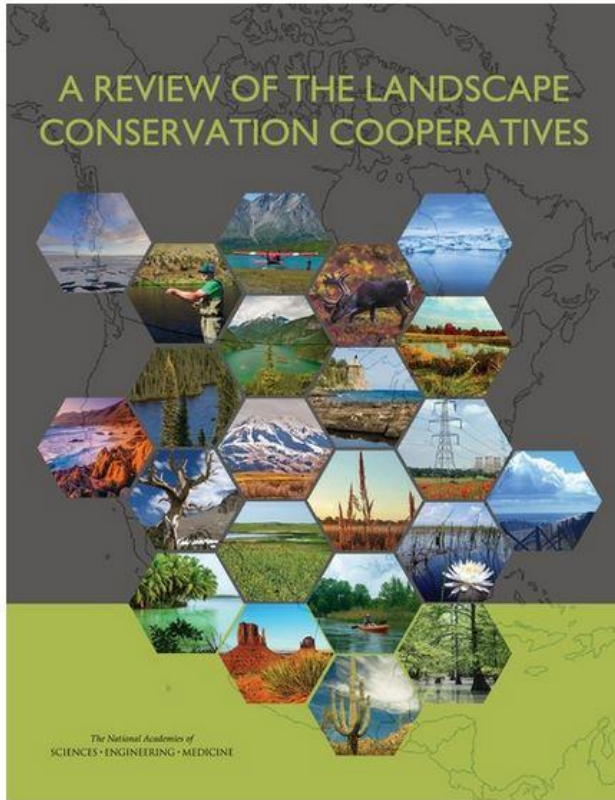




NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES REVIEW OF THE LCCS



ABOUT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES REVIEW

In 2014, Congress directed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to engage the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to review the LCCs. After considering significant input from state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders from the conservation community, the Academy released its *Review of the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives* on December 3, 2015.

The report is available at www.nasonline.org.

NAS REVIEW: OBJECTIVES

The objective of the NAS review was to evaluate the purpose, goals and scientific merit of the LCC program within the context of other similar programs, and to determine whether there has been measurable improvements in the health of fish, wildlife and their habitats as a result of the program. The Academy was also tasked to examine the evaluation process for the program.

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NAS REVIEW: FINDINGS

The 12-person NAS review committee concluded:

THERE IS A NATIONAL NEED FOR A LANDSCAPE APPROACH
The nation needs to take a landscape approach to conservation and that the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) is justified addressing this need with the LCCs.

LCCS ARE UNIQUE

The committee determined that there is no other federal program like the LCCs that is designed to address landscape conservation needs at a national scale for all natural and cultural resources that bridges research and management.

The committee also noted the LCCs' ability to create opportunities for identifying common conservation goals and leveraging efforts of diverse partners at a much greater scale than any one entity could achieve alone.

Moreover, the committee found that consolidation of the LCCs with other "similar" types of programs such as Migratory Bird Joint Ventures and Climate Science Centers is not needed given the distinct roles of each of the programs.

LCCS CAN POINT TO EARLY SUCCESSES

While noting that the LCCs are still relatively new, the committee recognized that the LCC Network has made progress toward its high-level strategic goals of addressing conservation strategy, developing collaborative conservation and advancing science.

NAS REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS

The NAS review committee offered specific recommendations and a number of observations for guiding improvements to the LCC Network and LCCs:

LCC STRATEGIC PLAN & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- » LCCs should strive to measure positive changes to species and habitats when feasible in lieu of process measures.
- » LCCs should conduct a network-wide evaluation on an ongoing basis to guide the work of the LCC Network as a whole. LCCs should also perform periodic evaluations for specific LCCs that have existed long enough to have had a perceptible impact on "end outcomes." Performance measures should align with LCC Network strategic goals.
- » The LCC Network should improve its evaluation process to better capture the contributions made by all partner agencies or groups toward common objectives.

NAS REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS, CONT'D

COLLABORATIVE CONSERVATION

- » DOI should review the landscape and habitat conservation efforts, especially the Joint Ventures and the LCCs, to identify opportunities for improved coordination between these efforts.
- » Special consideration should be given to the limited capacity of state agency partners to participate in multiple efforts simultaneously.
- » The LCC and Climate Science Center programs should: be more clearly delineated; explicitly state how research efforts differ and complement each other; identify and build on existing examples of network-wide coordination; and make adjustments as appropriate.

NAS REVIEW: NEXT STEPS

Since the report was released in December 2015, the LCC Network has been conducting a deeper analysis of the review to fully distill the impact of the findings and recommendations to the LCC community.

Ultimately, the LCC Network will use the report to set a trajectory for continual improvement; ensure the program is addressing landscape-scale conservation priorities; and demonstrate the benefits of landscape conservation and the LCCs to stakeholders and the nation.

NEXT STEPS TEAM & ACTION PLAN

The LCC Network has established a “Next Steps” team consisting of four working groups to develop and prioritize actions for addressing the NAS recommendations – Strategic Plan, Performance Evaluation, Collaboration & Coordination, Landscape Conservation Design, and Communications.

The Next Steps team is currently developing a draft action plan, which will be shared with partners in March 2016 for additional input and assistance in implementing the tasks.

Recently, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) convened a task force to assess the states’ relationships with LCCs. The outcomes of AFWA’s effort also will be incorporated into the LCC Network Next Steps Action Plan.

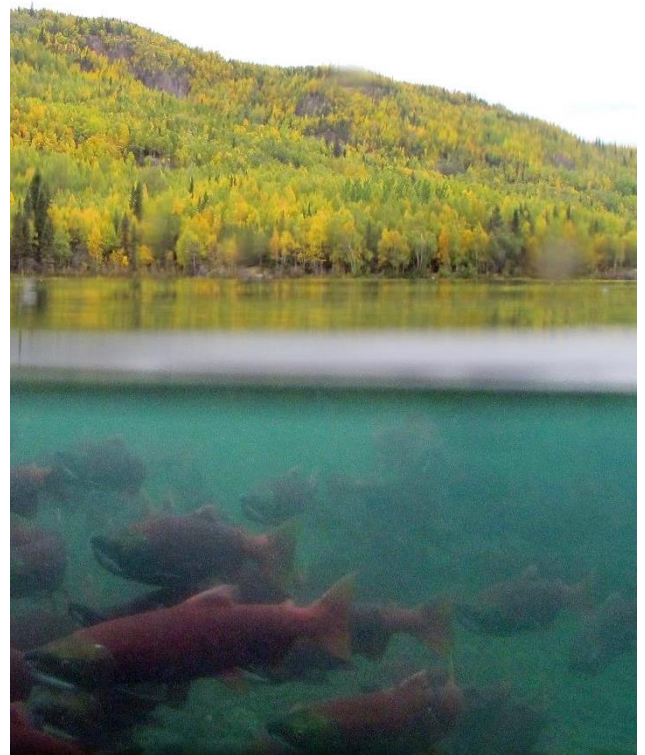
The full body of LCCs and key federal and state partner representatives will meet in June 2016 to focus on the improving the alignment of performance measures to the LCC Network Strategic Plan.

COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

The LCC Network is committed to reporting on progress made to address the NAS review over the course of the year. Activities will include presenting at national and regional fish and wildlife conferences, holding coordination meetings with partners, sharing updates with LCC Steering Committees, and posting articles on the LCC Network website (lccnetwork.org) and in the LCC Network e-newsletter.

ABOUT LCCs

Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are public-private partnerships composed of states, tribes, federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, international jurisdictions, and others working together to address landscape and seascape scale conservation issues. There are 22 LCCs across North America, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands.



Sockeye salmon schooling in Hidden Lake on the Kenai Peninsula, Alaska KATRINA MUELLER/USFWS