**North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

**Steering Committee Conference Call**

**June 16, 2015**

**Action Items and Minutes**

**Action Items**

* Scott Schwenk and Steve Fuller will work with Scot Williamson to get sole source contracts completed and Requests for Proposals out and recommendations for projects to select by fall Steering Committee meeting.
* LCC Staff to move forward with additional science delivery meetings and trainings with State Agencies, Fish and Wildlife Service staff and partners and report on feedback. Agencies should contact LCC staff if interested in arranging visits.
* LCC staff will update Strategic Plan matrix with partner input.
* LCC staff will suggest criteria for winnowing down Strategic Plan update topics.
* LCC staff will provide update on feedback from lessons learned from implementation on Connecticut River Pilot Landscape Conservation Design.

**Minutes**

**Introduction and Roll Call** - Ken Elowe (USFWS), Andrew Milliken (LCC)

* There were 27 partners and staff on the call including 18 agencies and organizations represented (including written input) representing a quorum (list at end of minutes).
* Minutes accepted from April 22, 2015 Steering Committee meeting, with minor clarifications from Karel Allard, Canadian Wildlife Service regarding his statements

**Action Items –** Andrew Milliken

* Reviewed progress on Action Items from April 22, 2015 Steering Committee meeting
* Requested that Steering Committee members identify staff that might be interested in participating in Information Management team
* Requested feedback on 2014 annual report, project fact sheet sample, newsletter
* Requested that Steering Committee continue to provide input on Science Delivery in terms of adoption and use of North Atlantic LCC products to Andrew, Ken, Bill Hyatt or any LCC staff.

**2015 Science and Science Delivery Needs -** Scott Schwenk (LCC), Steve Fuller (LCC), Ken Elowe

General comments

* Working to draft science needs our partners asking for.
* We insure they are relevant to decision making, involve users in development, involve science delivery
* We don’t expect people to flock to what we’ve built without their engagement from the start
* New work complements existing work
* North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative, Regional Conservation Opportunity Area, Connecticut River Landscape Conservation Design, Eastern Brook Trout JV are examples of places where partners are testing and providing feedback on tools.

Summary of the status and recommendations for 2015 Science Needs

* Five priority science needs for Steering Committee consideration, reduced from the original set of 12
* The aquatic classification for eastern Canada need is proposed to be addressed through a sole source agreement with Nature Conservancy of Canada
* The assessment of tidally influenced road-stream crossings is proposed to be addressed through modification of an existing agreement with UMass Amherst
* Two science needs – consistent floodplain assessment and rare plant prioritization – are proposed to be addressed through an Request for Proposals (RFP)
* The planning for marsh migration is proposed to be addressed through separate Hurricane Sandy resiliency funds, if they become available as requested

*Floodplains and cultural resources*- Addresses specific need to better map and assess floodplain habitats to prioritize conservation sites, identify areas of high flood risk, and develop strategies to conserve these challenging systems while providing benefits to local communities. Should build on existing efforts including “Active River Area”, FEMA updated floodplain maps, EPA flood risk and resilience, TNC Natural Capital project, UMass peak flow models and National Register Historic Places cultural resources information.

*Rare plants* - A more refined assessment of which plant species need specific conservation action in the region; would provide a regional context for plant rarity and vulnerability and be of great value in rare plant conservation in the region. Reduced amount down to $50K to take first steps.

Questions and Discussion on Science Needs

Kim Royar (VT Fish and Wildlife) - why plants lumped into floodplains? Two separate topics, separate applicants likely for each topic. Scott – single RFP with two distinct topics

Chris Hilke(National Wildlife Federation)—are there two specific entities submitting under these proposed topics? Scott, no a wide-open RFP.

Written NOAA comments- Darlene Finch and Ellen Mecray- make sure LCC is leveraging not replicating existing efforts for floodplains and marsh migration.

Amanda Babson (NPS)-how much field work involved w. the tidal culverts? Megan- just a little to test a draft protocol, funding is $75K so not much field work as currently envisioned. Andrew- get it into the NAACC so its part of their toolbox in the future, can be incorporated within the existing efforts and future assessments.

Pete Murdoch (USGS)- big amount of work that USGS, FEMA and ACOE have done with regards to floodplains, keep in mind when building the database.

Anne Kuhn (U.S. EPA) - in her experience with Critical Linkages tool for Taunton and impact scores for connectivity, would be helpful to join the databases together; it is currently not straightforward in GIS. She would like to be involved with this project. Andrew- intent is that crossing assessment results and updated modeled crossings scores will feed into critical linkages prioritization for culvert upgrades.

Overview on Science Delivery

Steve Fuller noted thatone year out on implementation, LCC has conducted many workshops and trainings and approach is improving.

Science delivery needs as refined since Steering Committee meeting in April

* Six science delivery needs with adjusted funding amounts and descriptions addressed through a mix of existing staff capacity, additional contract staff, sole source contracts and RFPs
* Improved User Interface for Data Basin: reduced estimated cost from $75,000 to $30,000 based on staff discussions on what staff and contract time were needed
* Initial Knowledge Transfer: maintained full budget ($150,000) as this category emerged as highest immediate priority; estimated specific contract staff and RFP costs to fully implement; steering Committee input needed to implement.
* Facilitation of Multi-scale Planning: reduced tasks to a survey and analysis of complementary regional, sub-regional (watershed, ecoregion), state and local applications of tools. First iteration can be done with existing staff capacity; budget zeroed out.
* Focused Science Applications for Terrestrial/Aquatic/Coastal Systems: support for GIS applications for terrestrial example potentially focused on early successional management; convening and training land managers with existing staff capacity and issuing RFP for new applications that could include tidally influenced culverts discussed at Steering Committee meeting; cost reduced from $100,000 to $70,000.
* Technical Assistance Provider Grants: reduced to $25,000 to be utilized for a demonstration small grant to provide “on demand” partner technical assistance capacity.
* Coordination of Conservation Networks: reduced to $25,000 to be utilized for a demonstration small grant to build capacity in partner networks to help deliver LCC information and tools

Ken- Science Delivery Team helped developed science delivery needs. Find ways to get you what you need with information and training, help with specific categories, we can/should tailor to your needs

Bill Hyatt - lots of what we discussed at the meeting fits into these science delivery proposals. Connection-between initial knowledge transfer with LCC staff visits to each state and with partners seeking inputs on adoption and use. Much of what was discussed in April is beautifully addressed here but only if agencies and organizations take advantage of what the LCC is offering.

Andrew- We are continually seeking feedback on what will be most useful and easy for partner agencies and organizations in terms of method of delivery and training.

Ken- we have requests from 3-4 states already. We will reach out to more states that haven’t contacted us already to dive in further. We have reached the threshold to have enough tools to put focus on delivery.

Zoe Smith (WCS)- this summer Wildlife Conservation Society is surveying what states and partners need. At the joint technical and science delivery meeting in Hadley this winter-we talked about science delivery, questions regarding end users, mechanisms for delivery that are effective. Feels some further work needs to be done, e.g. where are end-users considered among Initial Knowledge Transfer?

Ken- We have a July meeting of LCC staff with others to help strategize science delivery and we’ll need more input from you to give you the flexibility you need

Steve agreed and noted that capacity to develop surveys, focus groups is included in the proposal.

Zoe- surveying current science delivery grantees and getting their feedback is key as well.

NOAA comment (submitted in writing), does the small amount of funding for technical assistance and coordination of conservation networks make sense? Steve noted that these will be pilot efforts.

Motion on approving science and science delivery projects

Ken- asked for a motion to accept these science and science delivery recommendations.

Pete Murdoch made a motion to accept. Bill Hyatt seconded .

Discussion on Motion

Pete - NFWF has an RFP for developing metrics for assessing socio-economics of changing resilience on the coast. May be of use to Steve Fuller in their development of science delivery- Can put Steve in contact with the key folks

Zoe- agrees with motion but with understanding that end users considered. Sounds like we are on the same page and trusts that it is in there. Steve noted that it’s in the detailed description as well.

Ken- flexibility is our calling card for insuring relevancy.

Ken called the vote by asking if any were opposed to the motion - no opposition (passed unanimously)

Scot Williamson (WMI)- wants to confirm that for the motion and a vote, anyone that needs to recuse themselves did and for those that haven’t turned in a conflict of interest statement, please sent to him

Scott and Steve will work with Scot Williamson to get sole source, RFPs, and contracts out.

**LCC Strategic Plan Update** Andrew Milliken, Ken Elowe, Bill Hyatt (CT DEEP)

Andrew provided a brief review of progress on strategic planning updates.

Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop (Albany II) sponsored by LCC and Northeast states in 2011 resulted in Northeast Conservation Framework, which became the organizing framework for the LCC Strategic Plan. Five years out- it is time to revisit that? Also coincides with State Wildlife Action Plan updates and discussion about the NEAFWA Regional Conservation Needs program.

Some steps that are needed

* + Communications and science delivery not fully laid out in our strategic plan and should be added
  + Matrix to existing plan- intended to be kept up to date. We have done well on the categories that were identified four years ago but have not fully addressed all of them. Need to update matrix; ensure that we are on track.
  + Some time at next April steering committee meeting- maybe not make it the last agenda item, set aside some real time to talk about strategic planning
  + Need to decide on timeline for updating plan and about need for a Northeast Conservation Framework Workshop to update needs with a broad set of partners. Should this be done with NEAFWA. Their Competitive State Wildlife Grant application for workshop was not successful

Some topics for additional consideration by LCC that should be in Strategic Plan update

* + Cross-border Conservation with Canada
  + Enhanced Involvement with Tribes
  + Complementary process to include priority cultural resources
  + Plant Conservation
  + Urban/metropolitan Conservation
  + Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry
  + Engage Additional Socio-economic Sectors
  + Marine and Ocean Planning
  + Work across LCC Borders
  + Match up conservation designs with South Atlantic, Appalachian, Upper Midwest Great Lakes
  + Next steps for Information Management
  + Implementation and Monitoring of Conservation Designs and Actions

Are we doing too much? Spread too thin? Some things may not be in the “LCC sweet spot”. Thoughts on the general process? Timing? Linking w. SWAP upadates? Want LCC staff to work with you?

Pete- send us the list, then food for thought. Happy to help in the discussion.

Ken- it is a broad list. Everything has been mentioned that it should be addressed better. We’ve been asked to be like an extension service for tools already developed. How do you want your LCC to work? We want to be responsive to your needs. Look at this list. We will spend more time in October and April, but think about what you need out of your LCC.

Andrew- relative to linkage to SWAP updates and regional workshop - interest came from LCC staff and from Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical committee. Looking for affirmation that this would be useful for partners. Would this be useful for strategic planning? What is best timing.

Ken- any concerns about moving forward? Anything that is left out?

BJ- how is the process going to be done? Staff write up for steering committee input?

Ken- looking for input on two parts of this. List- in handout 11, we need on-going input on what’s most important to you. Is tying to SWAPs and Albany III concept useful?

Andrew- can use information management, science delivery teams as existing. For some topics, we may want additional partners to really think through (e.g., how to do cross border work with Canada).

Pete suggest that we create topical teams

Zoe- went over this list last fall. Need to hone it down. May not get to all of these issues. What is the process for further refining this list?

Pete- all these are important, which are most urgent? Zoe agrees.

Andrew- Steering Committee needs to go through process of prioritizing this.

Ken-we need to discuss and prioritize them together as a group. There will be competing priorities. Urgency can be part of ranking criteria. Winnow down using criteria to be developed.

Pete- Need discussion about role of LCC in cooperative extension like model. Needs a topical team that focuses in on primary role of LCC to be interface between scientists and managers. How to best deliver this under current budgets? How should science be done by other people? Liaison piece is challenging and will continue to get more so unless we establish it well. Ken- without addressing it, we aren’t relevant at all. Pete- what sets LCC apart is the delivery.

Chris Hilke (NWF)- broad list, narrow down to operationally feasible might be best.

Mary Ratnaswamy (Northeast CSC) - LCC can help CSC with science delivery path forward. Thanks for your leadership in that area. Pete- CSC and LCC partnership is how these things can be done.

Ken- hearing that we need criteria to winnow it down. We’ll work on that part and bring it at the next meeting and will be a major part of the discussion for the next several meetings.

**Charting a way forward for conservation design and delivery** - Ken Elowe

Ken reviewed a few next steps needed.

Connecticut River Watershed conservation design pilot - starting to move toward implementation, agencies feedback due in October on lessons learned from implementation that can be reported back to Steering Committee.

Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas- moving forward, learning from Connecticut River work, recommendations will be made to Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee at fall meeting and reported back to Steering Committee.

Science and Science Delivery needs- continue to find balance between developing and maintaining foundational science to provide decision support across jurisdictions -- balanced with an increasing need to get existing tools into partners hand, to increase understanding and train their staff and for them to know how to use the tools in the future.

**Fall Steering Committee Meeting -** Ken Elowe, Bill Hyatt

Fall meeting tied to Northeast Fish and Wildlife Directors meetings in the fall. Scheduled for Portsmouth, NH. Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning would be LCC meetings (start at lunch on October 26 and go through lunch on October 27)

Andrew will follow up with requests via email for Steering Committee input

**Call Adjourned.**

**Table of Call Participants**

| **Organization** | **Representatives** | **Title of Representative** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection | Bill Hyatt | Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources |
| Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife | Jim Connolly | Director of Resource Management |
| Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife | Kim Royar | Director of Operations |
| Eric Sorensen | Community Ecologist |
| Houlton Band of the Maliseets | Sharri Venno | Environmental Planner, Houlton Band of the Maliseets |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Ken Elowe | Assistant Regional Director, Science Applications |
| U.S. Geological Survey | Pete Murdoch | Regional Science Advisor, Northeast Region |
| Department of the Interior Northeast Climate Science Center | Mary Ratnaswamy | USGS Director, Northeast Climate Science Center |
| National Park Service | Amanda Babson | Coastal Landscape Adaptation Coordinator |
| Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement | Mike Rasser | Marine Ecologist |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs | David Saunders | Archeologist. Eastern Region |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | Bill Jenkins | Director, Office of Environmental Information and Analysis |
| Anne Kuhn | Office of Research and Development  National Health & Environmental Effects Laboratory  Atlantic Ecology Division |
| Trish Garrigan | Region 1 Wetlands |
| U.S. Forest Service | Roger Simmons | Natural Resources Staff Officer  White Mountain National Forest |
| National Wildlife Federation | Chris Hilke | Program Manager  Climate Adaptation Program  Northeast Regional Office |
| New England Wildflower Society | Bill Brumback | Conservation Director |
| Wildlife Management Institute | Scot Williamson | Vice President |
| Wildlife Conservation Society | Zoe Smith | Director, Adirondacks Program |
| Staff |  |  |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Andrew Milliken | North Atlantic LCC Coordinator |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | BJ Richardson | Regional GIS Coordinator |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Megan Tyrrell | Coastal Resiliency Coordinator |
| North Atlantic LCC | Scott Schwenk | Science Coordinator |
| North Atlantic LCC | Steve Fuller | Science Delivery Coordinator |
| North Atlantic LCC | Renee Farnsworth | Data Manager |
|  |  |  |
| Written input |  |  |
| National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | Darlene Finch for Ellen Mecray | Northeast Climate Services Director |
| Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada | Karel Allard | Landscape Conservation Coordinator |