**North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee**

**July 1, 2014 Conference Call**

**Minutes**

**Goals for Call**

Review and decide on technical committee recommendations for science funding; updates on science delivery, Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas and Hurricane Sandy resiliency funded projects; review options and plan for fall meeting.

**Action items**

FWS Chesapeake Coordinator Mike Slattery will contact representatives of Chesapeake states to organize visits with state directors and principal staff to focus on LCC support for landscape conservation design in the Chesapeake.

LCC partners should contact Elsa Haubold (USFWS) by July 8 if interested in participating in a National Academy of Sciences review panel for evaluating LCCs

LCC staff will prepare agreements for the two approved science projects *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* and *Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems and Resiliency of Brook Trout*.

LCC staff will work with Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee to seek consensus on RCOA process and provide support to complete a methodology for RCOAs that can be referenced in SWAP updates.

LCC staff and partners will organize information on Hurricane Sandy DOI competitive grant (NFWF) projects and contacts and post on the LCC website.

Pete Murdoch (USGS) will make Hurricane Sandy metrics assessment available to partners via the LCC website.

New England Wild Flower Society will send a survey to Hurricane Sandy cooperators to assess restoration project plant needs and use this information to base our collections.

LCC staff will send out more information on fall meeting including logistics by September.

**Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, Action Items**

Ken Elowe opened the meeting and conducted a roll call. There were 42 participants on the call representing 23 Steering Committee member organizations and constituting a quorum. An additional two members submitted email approval of the Technical Committee recommendation for funding projects. (Attendance list is at end of minutes). Ken asked for amotion to accept minutes from April meeting. Bill Hyatt (CT DEEP) so moved, Ellen Mecray (NOAA) seconded. Motion approved.

Andrew Milliken (NALCC) reviewed action items from the April meeting. Follow-ups and discussion on those action items noted here.

FWS Chesapeake Coordinator Mike Slattery said he planned to contact representatives of Chesapeake states to organize visits with state directors and principal staff and invite project leaders from the Service. Meetings will focus on LCC support for landscape conservation design in the Chesapeake and various northeast geographies.

Ellen Mecray noted LCC partners need to designate representatives for a National Academy of Sciences review panel for evaluating LCCs by July 8 and asked about requirements. Ken Elowe said a team will work with Elsa Haubold (USFWS) to define statement of work. Rachel Muir (USGS) said agencies regional in scale have experience that is particularly useful in the NAS review. Andrew recommended members contact Elsa with questions.

Ken Elowe discussed potential for using the Northeast framework as a model for the LCC network strategy. He said there is an opportunity to bring the LCC network under common conservation framework.

**Review progress and lessons learned from Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot**

Ken Elowe thanked states (VT, NH, MA, CT) for dedicating staff and organizations to the Connecticut River Landscape Conservation Design pilot process.

Scott Schwenk (NALCC) provided an update on the Connecticut River pilot, calling it the heart of what LCCs were established to do – bring together partners, agree on objectives and use the best available information and tools to decide where and how to best meet those objectives in the face of change. He said that this is an opportunity to test and demonstrate tools we’ve invested in past 3-4 years and learn from the process.

Bill Hyatt asked whether there were Connecticut River pilot core team meeting summaries and Scott mentioned that extensive notes, presentations and documents are posted all on the [Connecticut River pilot work space web page](http://northatlanticlcc.org/groups/connecticut-river-watershed-pilot).

Ken Elowe said the pilot team is learning what’s involved in the landscape conservation design process and product so we can apply it to other watersheds and landscapes across the Northeast region. The design will help streamline decisions and processes. The LCC is assisting in making sure tools are used by those who need to use them on the ground.

**Review recommendations for funding next phases of ongoing science projects by LCC Technical Team**

Ken Elowe recapped the Steering Committee conversation in April that included a deferred decision on the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) science delivery proposal, pending recommendations of the NALCC Technical Team on science projects. Andrew Milliken added that the NJDEP proposed to demonstrate the application of LCC tools for habitat management on their wildlife management areas (prioritize where and what actions to take).

Scott Schwenk outlined the Technical Team’s recommendation. He said the team placed a primary focus on continuing *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* and *Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems and Resiliency of Brook Trout*. These projects address high priority science needs and are at critical stage of translating and applying results through science delivery. The projects also will help build a user network and knowledge through efforts like the Connecticut River pilot, including the Gulf of Maine, Susquehanna, Chesapeake Bay and other locations; leveraging resources through Hurricane Sandy Resiliency projects and the Northeast Climate Science Center. The team had webinar presentations on both projects and calls to discuss recommendations in May and June.

Scott said that given the current limited budget situation the Technical Team recommended allocating $340,000 in remaining funds for emphasis on translation and communication of these two products. For the aquatic project, the funds would expand the project to a larger part of LCC region to integrate their work with management and policy.

Total funding for each science project is $230,000 for *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* and $110,000 for *Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems*.

Andrew Milliken said the two projects will use up remaining science funding for the LCC this fiscal year (2014). The Technical Team wasn’t asked to weigh in on the NJDEP science delivery project but did note that with the additional funding the *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* will further refine tools for habitat management and restoration. That work needs to be done in close coordination with states. One option is considering timing of NJDEP project for when the full management and restoration components of *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* are available.

Ken Elowe said it was clear in the April Steering Committee meeting that the committee believes the NJDEP project has value and so need to determine whether need and timing is better served to develop tools that can meet NJDEP needs in the near future or fund the NJDEP project (and cut back on the Technical Team’s recommended projects).

Rachel Muir said USGS is supporting Ben Letcher’s work (*Forecasting Changes in Aquatic Systems*). The Northeast Climate Science Center has a Mendenhall Fellowship and supporting $200,000 to move work forward. USGS in consultation with the LCC will also be putting funding toward a workshop to bring together and help integrate among brook trout, stream temperature, and stream flow research, modeling and databases resulting in a guidance document. Ken Elowe said those are great examples of how LCC funds leverage other efforts.

Ken called for motion to support recommendation as is or consider NJDEP project and ask LCC Technical Team to go back to reduce other science projects. Bill Hyatt made a motion to support the Technical Team recommendations. Larry Herrighty (NJ DEP) seconded noting that although his agency would benefit from getting a grant, he understands and agrees with the recommendation from the Technical Team.

Gwen Brewer (MD DNR) said that in light of when State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) reviews are due (in 2015), she looks forward to getting as many of these products as possible, translated and available to states so they can put as much of this as possible in their plans. Ken Elowe agreed that science translation is the direction we need to go ensuring that products are useful to guide on-the-ground conservation.

Andrew Milliken said that part of that translation for SWAPs is putting together information for Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas that the states can use to target actions for Regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need and recognizing the need for ongoing capacity for translation and training.

Becky Gwynn (VA DGIF) said she was one of the strong proponents of the NJ proposal. She thanked the Technical Team and concurred with Gwen Brewer’s assessment and appreciated the good and informative discussion.

Rachel Muir said the Technical Team does have a concern about long-term support for *Designing Sustainable Landscapes* tools. We should think about a teaching module to teach the teachers so there will be a core beyond original researchers to spread the gospel through region and help states to use information. She said perhaps a course could be regularly taught at NCTC. Ken Elowe said we need to get to a point where UMass doesn’t have to be directly involved in application of tools (so we can make design process work across larger geographic areas and not rely on them).

Ken asked for a vote of anyone opposed to the motion: there were none (unanimous support of recommendation).

**Update on next steps for science delivery**

Steve Fuller (NALCC) provided an update of the online library to download rich variety of landscape science products and use them for planning. Lori Pelech and Renee Farnsworth (NALCC) continue to gather and assemble data sets from LCC, Regional Conservation Need (RCN) researchers, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and others and post. They are now starting to show people how to use and interpret UMass, TNC and other products.

Steve said that in addition to delivering information online they been creating hard drive card catalogs that point to where data is and delivering to conservation partners including all states, grant awardees for science delivery and others.

Science delivery staff are continuing to provide training workshops. Earlier in the summer, training was provided for four science delivery grant awardees. Future workshops will be tailored to specific user groups.

There are four science delivery grants now under contract from Open Space Institute, Wildlife Conservation Society, Chesapeake Conservancy and Highstead.

Andrew Milliken noted the collaboration among the grantees that already had developed as they learn how deliver information within their networks. By bringing these partners together, the LCC is starting to develop a network of delivery partners.

**Update on next Steps for Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas (RCOAs)**

Steve Fuller said that as part of the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) synthesis effort the LCC initiated conversations about RCOAs last fall. The LCC supported a series of workshops in the winter to show state partners the available information. In April, a proposed process and timeline was put on the table and accepted by the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee (NEFWDTC) but there was not full attendance of the committee. LCC and states are now refining process to achieve consensus. LCC will provide support to the NEFWDTC to complete a methodology for RCOAs that can be referenced in SWAP updates.

The North Atlantic LCC was awarded additional funds through a grant from the LCC network Strategic Habitat Conservation funds to assist with this process (Scott and Lori developed a successful application for this competitive program).

Andrew Milliken recognized John O'Leary, Becky Gwynn, Kevin Kalasz and Gwen Brewer as members of the NEFWDTC who can act as liaisons to the LCC Steering Committee for this process.

Gwen Brewer said the committee had a good discussion and everyone is clearer on goals and best way to move forward.

Ken Elowe said the effort is a good evolution of discussion. When you look at SWAPs the idea of a living process and products makes sense because information can be refined and added to throughout the (10-year) life of a SWAP. So having something that you feel is the best way to portray RCOAs through a dynamic system is good outcome.

Mike Slattery said it's nice to observe people on the committee thinking about RCOA process in parallel with a larger regional conservation design efforts.

Andrew Milliken said the Connecticut River, Chesapeake Bay and other landscape conservation efforts are landscape or sub-regional in scale. A key question that came up with the NEFWDTC is when is it appropriate to be working on a regional scale vs. sub-regional vs. landscape scales?

Ken Elowe referenced discussions last Friday in Connecticut River pilot meeting – folks want ability to locate priorities at a local scale, but for organizations that work larger, knowing the watershed priorities and the regional priorities are all important.

**Hurricane Sandy Department of the Interior Resiliency Projects**

Andrew Milliken guided a discussion of which NFWF competitive grant projects have components of assessment, design, evaluation, and LCC science projects. LCC staff are seeking guidance from the Steering Committee on the role of LCCs in coordinating science components and linking to restoration.

Ken Elowe said LCC provides a communications forum for Hurricane Sandy partners to leverage resources and avoid redundancies. In competitive grants, nine states within the northeast region have projects in combination with the Army Corps, NOAA, and BOEM. Ken said there is a lot of coordination potential.

Becky Gwynn said she appreciated the synthesis of projects. She said it is valuable to have an integrated DOI database to help us find out information for contacts for projects funded by NFWF. She said information on NFWF projects and contacts would be useful. The Hurricane Sandy page on the NALCC website provides information on DOI and NOAA projects. We could integrate that information off of that page. Andrew Milliken said such a database hasn’t been organized by NFWF. He said the LCC will post the information if needed.

Pete Murdoch (USGS) said DOI is developing metrics on how to assess success (including NFWF). The results of this metrics assessment will be another product that can be made available. Andrew Milliken added that having restoration projects be part of scientifically designed approach by having common metrics, before after control design, and adequate monitoring with common protocols will all help increase understanding of what restoration approaches will help coastal systems withstand future storms and sea level rise. Metrics can apply to new projects as well as DOI.

Ken Elowe said a potential role of LCC is to help coordinate between agencies. Make sure science on ground in info being shared moves in the same direction. This is an evolving role for the LCC but one that has potential. Folks in coastal states that are identifying coordination needs please have conversations with us. LCC will be hiring a term coastal resiliency coordinator to help manage these projects and support the LCC coastal science needs.

Mary Ratnaswamy (USGS) said she would like to see scope of LCC-funded projects now that we know how projects fit and work together. Andrew Milliken said the main impact is that we now have broader set of sites we should incorporate into evaluation of restoration techniques and inform decisions support tools we are working on. Strategically, we can expand to include other projects. He also noted the interest by Bill Brumback and others in making sure restorations are done with native seed sources (locally sourced not just native).

Bill Brumback (New England Wild Flower Society) said the society applied for a NFWF grant (seed bank to collect seeds for DOI projects and initiate an Eastern Seeds for Success program) and through the efforts of the LCC, FWS and Bureau of Land Management is now funded directly by DOI and are moving forward through the process. He said the Society wants to understand needs and locations for restoration projects. They will send a survey of cooperators and others for restoration projects and use those to base our collections up and down the East Coast.

Gwen Brewer said LCCs play a key role in translating project results and conveying the information to a wide group of managers. Ken Elowe said sharing these results is a key part of the LCC role.

Eric Walberg (Manomet) asked if monitoring for urban resilience as well as natural is part of these projects. Ken Elowe said Rick Bennett (USFWS) had a meeting with the Army Corps and others to discuss the issue because the nexus of urban areas and green infrastructure (i.e. natural systems as buffers to storms) is an ongoing topic. Eric Walberg said the monitoring component is important and a big piece of this was to link natural and built environment. Pete Murdoch said there is a DOI committee developing metrics to assess Sandy projects. The committee includes two representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers and is looking at the nexus between natural and man-made resilience efforts so appears to be heading in the right direction.

**Agenda and planning for fall LCC Steering Committee meeting**

Ken Elowe said the meeting could be held a day and a half before Northeast Director’s meeting in New York (Rhinebeck in Hudson Valley) Oct. 28-29 (Tuesday and Wednesday). Ken said at a minimum the committee needs to meet Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning. Committee agreed with that scenario and indicated that for those not attending the State Directors meeting, if it is possible to avoid second night of travel that would save resources. Venue hotel is Beekman Arms - more information will be sent out by September.

Committee members thanked the LCC staff for their work. Ken Elowe thanked committee. He said “this couldn’t go without all of us pulling in the same direction.”

**Call Adjourned.**

**Call attendees**

| **Representatives** | **Organization** |
| --- | --- |
| Bill Hyatt | Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection |
| Jim Connolly | Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Gwen Brewer | Maryland Department of Natural Resources |
| John O’Leary | Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife |
| Glenn Normandeau | New Hampshire Fish and Game Department |
| Larry Herrighty | New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife |
| Patricia Riexinger | New York Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Diana Day | Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission |
| Becky Gwynn | Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries |
| Sharri Venno | Houlton Band of the Maliseets |
| Ken Elowe | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Mike Slattery |
| Pete Murdoch | U.S. Geological Survey |
| Rachel Muir |
| Mary Ratnaswamy | Department of the Interior Northeast Climate Science Center |
| Michelle Staudinger |
| Rick Palmer |
| Amanda Babson | National Park Service |
| Mike Rasser | Bureau of Ocean Energy Management |
| Ellen Mecray | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| Darlene Finch |
| Bill Jenkins | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency |
| Jaqueline LeClair |
| Anne Kuhn |
| Roger Simmons | U.S. Forest Service |
| Eric Walberg | Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences |
| Chris Hilke | National Wildlife Federation |
| Bill Brumback | New England Wild Flower Society |
| Scot Williamson | Wildlife Management Institute |
| Zoe Smith | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| Roselle Henn | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| Michelle Haynes |
| Paul Wagner | White House Council on Environmental Quality |
| Jean Brennan | Appalachian LCC |
| Ken McDermond | South Atlantic LCC |
| Jeff Willis | Northeast Regional Ocean Council |
| Andrew Milliken | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| David Eisenhauer | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Scott Schwenk | North Atlantic LCC |
| Steve Fuller | North Atlantic LCC |
| Lori Pelech | North Atlantic LCC |
| Maritza Mallek | North Atlantic LCC |

Email vote for technical committee recommendation also received from

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| --- | --- |
| Diana Day | Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission |
| Kim Royar | Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife |