**Recommendations of the Science Delivery Technical Review Panel to the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative Steering Committee to fund projects proposed under two topics described in the 2014 Science Delivery RFP:**

1. ***Science Delivery Partner Support Grants***
2. ***Demonstration Projects***

Summary Recommendation

The Technical Review Panel and North Atlantic LCC Staff recommend that the Steering Committee select the following applicants to receive full funding for proposals submitted under the topic A, *Demonstration Projects*, noting that both proposals thoroughly address elements of both topics (Demonstration Projects and Science Delivery):

Chesapeake Conservancy $100,000

Wildlife Conservation Society $ 99,965

Cumulative Total $199,965

The Technical Review Panel and North Atlantic LCC Staff recommend that the Steering Committee select the following applicants to receive full or partial funding for two proposals submitted under topic B, *Science Delivery*, noting that if both proposals are awarded full funding or partial funding under option 1 below, the cumulative total award will exceed the allocated $300,000. The applicants have agreed to work together on common elements of their proposals and reduce costs and respective tasks under partial funding. Staff recommend partial option 1 as getting most of the desired tasks accomplished and only exceeding the total allocated for science delivery by $20,000.

Full funding Partial Option1 Partial Option 2

Highstead Foundation $ 40,000 $20,000 $20,000

Open Space Institute $100,000 $100,000 $80,000

Cumulative Total $339,965 $ 319,965 $299,965

If the Steering Committee is willing to allocate additional funding, Technical Review Panel and North Atlantic LCC Staff recommend consideration of one or both of the following applicants to receive full funding for their proposals:

Green Infrastructure Center Inc. $ 67,504

New Jersey DEP $ 60,000

Background

In the Northeast, the North Atlantic LCC and partners have been actively investing in landscape conservation science.  In November, 2013, LCC initiated a Science Delivery Program to ensure that information and tools from LCC and partner science investments are available in the scales and formats needed by various partners in the Northeast conservation community and that they are adopted and applied by the intended users successfully.   In January, 2014, the NALCC sought proposals through a Request for Proposals to advance Science Delivery in two categories, Science Delivery Partner Support and Demonstration Projects:

* The purpose of Science Delivery Partner Support is to promote the use and adoption of our landscape conservation science investments by **teaching and providing assistance to others;**
* The purpose of Demonstration Projects to promote the use and adoption of our landscape science investments by **creating examples of on-the-ground applications** of landscape conservation science.

Applicants were allowed to apply for one or both categories of funding, with total request not to exceed $100,000.  Applicants were provided with screening criteria pertinent to each category and instructed to address science products described in the attached document titled “Guidance on NALCC Science Products for Science Delivery Grants”—the body of products described therein is what Science Delivery Grants are intended to deliver.

Review Process

Steve Fuller, North Atlantic LCC Science Delivery Coordinator, chaired the Review Panel. Collectively, the reviewers encompassed a wide geographic scope and range of expertise. Given the importance of state agencies as both a source of data and as users of the project results, we made an effort to enlist broad state participation in the review. The review panel consisted of the following nine members:

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| **Reviewers** | **Organization** |
| Becky Gwynn | Virginia |
| Kevin Kalasz | Delaware |
| Pete Murdoch | USGS |
| Jacqueline LeClair | EPA |
| Amanda Babson | National Park Service |
| Mike Slattery | U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Program |
| Andrew Milliken | North Atlantic LCC |
| Steve Fuller | North Atlantic LCC |
| Scott Schwenk (co-chair) | North Atlantic LCC |

Following an initial screening by WMI, all 13 proposals were reviewed by each member of the panel. The reviewers scored the proposals according to a set of criteria listed in the RFP (see below) and were encouraged to provide narratives that explained their reviews. Separate criteria and rankings were conducted for each of the two topics. One reviewer provided rankings only for topic B, *Demonstration Projects*. There were 7 and 6 proposals reviewed for topics A and B, respectively. On April 2, once the reviews were complete, the panel discussed the proposals by teleconference. While not required for the final selection, the review panel and Science Delivery Team desired a balance of projects from both topic areas. The review panel also considered the geographic spread of projects, so that science investments may be disseminated across the entire North Atlantic LCC geography. The review panel also considered the variety of target audiences. Further, the panel heavily weighed the degree to which the project will reach and members of the conservation community and the efficacy of the approach to influence their adoption of landscape science products.

Results of the Reviews

While all 13 of the proposals had merit, only three proposals in each group were ranked as the top proposal by at least one of the 9 reviewers. Each of the 4 recommended proposals was ranked as the highest by at least 3 reviewers. These were the proposals from the Chesapeake Conservancy (highest or tied for highest rank by 5 reviewers), Wildlife Conservation Society (highest or tied for highest rank by 4 reviewers), Highstead Foundation (highest or tied for highest rank by 5 reviewers), and Open Space Institute (highest or tied for highest rank by 3 reviewers).

Scores provided by reviewers were converted to ordinal rankings to standardize the results across reviewers. To test for sensitivity of the review to individual bias, individual reviewers’ scores were iteratively removed and the average rankings were re-calculated and compared to the original average of the rankings for the entire group. For group A, the top 1-3 and 7th of 7 ranks were unchanged by removing individual reviewers. Scores in the 4-6 range shifted up or down one rank. For group B, the top (1-2) and bottom (5-6) of 6 rankings were unchanged. Scores in the 3rd and 4th position shifted up and down. To test for bias by the 4 LCC and FWS reviewers, average rankings with all reviewers weighted equally were compared to average rankings where FWS scores were averaged and weighted as one reviewer. For group A, the rank order was unchanged by equal vs. averaged FWS ranks. For group B, the 3rd and 4th ranks were reversed by the test. The recommendations for top ranked projects were thus considered free from bias.

The discussion surrounding these proposals is described below.

Nine reviewers participated in a teleconference to discuss the 13 proposals. Following discussion, participants agreed unanimously to recommend that the Chesapeake Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Society, Highstead Foundation, and Open Space Institute be selected. Although selection of additional proposals would require a larger allocation of funding, several reviewers also advocate strongly for the Green Infrastructure Center Inc. and New Jersey DEP proposals. Both proposals address the needs of important state and federal partners and provide clear connections to land conservation and management needs. There not as strong a consensus on these two proposals and there was a significant drop in score between the top four recommended projects and these two projects.

Regarding the 3rd and 4th ranked proposals in group B, (Biodiversity Research Institute and Connecticut River Watershed Council), these were projects that the review panel recognized in discussion as primarily science projects emphasizing new science development or future data analysis, as opposed to emphasizing delivery of our current products. The proposal submitted by Pennsylvania State University was also viewed as new science development. All three projects either lacked a strong plan to deliver science to users or required data or significant analysis beyond currently available landscape science products. Nonetheless, these projects have strong science merit and strong potential applications to landscape conservation. The panel recommends that Biodiversity Research Institute, Connecticut River Watershed Council, and Pennsylvania State University proposals are better suited for technical review with other science projects in a future RFP. The focus of the Biodiversity Research Institute on coastal wetlands may also be better addressed in the future when the coastal wetland and sea level rise tools are more fully developed. The panel recommends that the LCC science technical teams consider these proposals as they assess science needs in May and June.

The remaining proposals are not recommended for one or more of the following reasons: 1) failure to specify current LCC landscape science products or emphasis on future landscape science; 2) lack of GIS or experience to deliver landscape science; 3) lack of experience communicating conservation planning or a lack of a clear method articulated to address science delivery; 4) redundant geographic scope relative to higher ranking proposals; and or 5) limited geographic scope.

Recommended requirements for Grant Agreement

* Grantees will be provided with introductory training as needed by NALCC on the use and application of specific landscape science products as needed by NALCC or project PIs (see below “Guidance on NALCC Science Products for Science Delivery Grants”);
* Grantees will coordinate with NALCC staff on grant implementation;
* Grantees will participate on a Science Delivery project coordination team (quarterly phone conferences) to ensure that projects are complementary and to promote a collaborative network of Science Delivery partners;
* Grantee will deliver an instructional document or manual describing a training program for specific science products, OR training on applications of advanced research or newly developed resources;
* Grantee will deliver a summary report documenting training events and recipients of training and recommending next steps, OR report on the methods, results, and applications of research and development activity;
* Grantee will deliver all media, derived data, and other resources developed in course of providing training, research, or development;
* Grantee will provide a project summary page according to NALCC specifications and publish deliverables on NALCC web services;
* Grantee will deliver training to the expected number of recipients of training (and/or justify a shortfall), or Grantee will implement the proposed demonstration, including proposed communications and knowledge transfer activities.

Supplemental Information: Proposal Review Criteria

A. Science Delivery Partner Support Grants:

1. Describe project staff experience of in conservation planning and communicating with conservation practitioners about how to apply, interpret, and adapt landscape conservation science to prioritize or inform conservation actions;
2. Demonstrate GIS proficiency and capacity sufficient to teach mid-level natural resource professionals about interpreting landscape science products and to provide assistance as needed on basic GIS to access and apply landscape data layers to specific problems—our intention is for grantees provide assistance on using landscape science, which often requires use of GIS, but not to provide a general GIS training service (GIS may not be required for some forms of technical assistance and some products, proposals should indicate if that is the case);
3. Demonstrate a track record and continuing commitment to advancing landscape conservation science as part of the NALCC and/or other Northeast partnership;
4. Identify a well-defined target audience of mid-level natural resource professionals, land use planners, and/or other technical assistance providers to be the recipients of training on landscape science applications, focusing on State and Federal employees and other organizations who are positioned to further extend assistance, deliver, and teach landscape science to multiple towns, land trusts, and NGOs implementing conservation action (the audience need not be dedicated technical assistance providers, but does need to be able to disseminate information to conservation practitioners); alternatively, the applicant may describe a novel process to identify, organize, network, and engage an audience of adopters or technical assistance providers;
5. Describe a well-defined approach to a “training the trainers” curriculum teaching a stepwise technical process that project staff (and other technical assistance providers) may use to help others better understand and translate landscape science or data layers (see below “Guidance on NALCC Science Products for Science Delivery Grants”) into useful conservation applications for towns, states, or conservation partnerships, including the method, resources, and media the applicant will use to provide training; alternatively, the applicant may focus on advanced research and development of innovative resources to support technical assistance providers, such as developing high quality learning media. collaborative tools, tools to identify target audiences, or tools to evaluate use and adoption of “delivered” science;
6. Specify modes of delivering training to the target audience, such as large multi-day workshops, webinars, targeted workshops to small groups, and person-to-person transfer;
7. Specify the expected number of training events, technical assistance providers and/or conservation practitioners that will be trained, and discuss the feasibility of achieving that goal;
8. Describe a project scope large enough to provide technical assistance to multiple partners, jurisdictions, and organizations across a multi-state area or large-landscape geography—our emphasis is on the number of partners and organizations science is delivered to rather than the size of the project geography.

B. Demonstration Projects

1. Ensure that the project is relevant within the proposed geography by cooperating with a multi-state or large landscape conservation partnership involving multiple natural resource agencies and other partners;
2. Explicitly state a relevant conservation objective or problem, explain how the demonstration project will address the objective/problem, and relate the result to the conservation mission of the cooperating partnership; letters of support from partnership members or the coordinating entity should explicitly confirm the expected benefit;
3. Apply or translate landscape science products developed/identified by NALCC or its partners (see below “Guidance on NALCC Science Products for Science Delivery Grants”), or provide a strong case for the relevance of an alternative science product;
4. Clearly articulate the process that will be used to apply or translate landscape science to improve ongoing conservation; improvements in conservation may be achieved, for example, by translating science products or specific landscape data layers to result in prioritized conservation actions, improved efficiency of implementation, or improved likelihood of success;
5. Describe measures of success that clearly link landscape science and project results to changes or improvements in on-the-ground conservation implementation;
6. Explain how the methods, results, tools or approaches used in the demonstration project will be transferrable to other kinds of data, landscapes, conservation problems, and/or conservation practitioners across the NALCC;
7. Describe the approach the project will use to communicate and deliver the knowledge, lessons learned, tools and derived data to the relevant conservation practitioners, including a method to verify that transfer occurred.

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| **Summary of 2014 Science Delivery Proposal Review** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Number | Applicant | Organization | Project Type | Request | Cum. Request | Team Rank |  |
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| **Recommended for full funding** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014-9 | Joanna Ogburn | Chesapeake Conservancy | Demo | $ 100,000.00 | $ 100,000.00 | 1 |  |
| 2014-12 | Heidi E. Krester | Wildlife Conservation Society | Demo | $ 99,965.00 | $ 199,965.00 | 2 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Recommended for full or partial funding** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014-8 | Emily M. Bateson | Highstead Foundation | Delivery | $ 40,000.00 | $ 239,965.00 | 1 |  |
| 2014-6 | Abigail Weinberg | Open Space Institute (OSI) | Delivery | $ 100,000.00 | $ 339,965.00 | 2 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Recommended for funding under additional allocation** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014-2 | Karen Firehock | Green Infrastructure Center Inc. (GIC) | Delivery | $ 67,503.75 | $ 407,468.75 | 4 |  |
| 2014-11 | Peter Winkler | New Jersey DEP | Demo | $ 60,000.00 | $ 467,468.75 | 3 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Recommend for review by science technical committee** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014-4 | Andrew Fisk | Connecticut River Watershed Council | Demo | $ 50,000.00 |  |  |  |
| 2014-5 | Tyler Wagner | The Pennsylvania State University | Delivery | $ 100,000.00 |  |  |  |
| 2014-13 | David Evers | Biodiversity Research Institute | Demo | $ 92,400.00 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Not Recommended at this time** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2014-7 | Margo Morrison | Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) | Demo | $ 60,225.00 |  |  |  |
| 2014-1 | Heidi Ricci | Massachusetts Audubon Society | Delivery | $ 99,472.00 |  |  |  |
| 2014-10 | Chris Hilke | National Wildlife Federation | Delivery | $ 100,000.00 |  |  |  |
| 2014-3 | Matthew D. Ross | Quality Deer Management Association | Delivery | $ 76,500.00 |  |  |  |
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