**North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative**

**Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Newport, Rhode Island**

**Action Items, Summary, and Discussion**

**Action Items**

* Steering Committee members should contact BJ Richardson if they are interested in being a part of the Information Management team, or have feedback about using the North Atlantic LCC Conservation Planning Atlas (Data Basin).
* Steering Committee members should contact Renee Farnsworth if they are aware of relevant regionally or nationally consistent spatial data that should be included in the North Atlantic LCC Conservation Planning Atlas.
* Steering Committee members should contact David Eisenhauer and Bridget Macdonald with feedback about the 2014 Annual Report, the North Atlantic LCC Newsletter, or the sample North Atlantic LCC project fact sheet on “Increasing Aquatic Connectivity and Flood Resilience”
* Steering Committee members will consider next steps needed to facilitate adoption and use of LCC products, which might include creating a working group or seeking professional marketing assistance.
* LCC will address obstacles to using LCC science in Canada, beginning with Two Countries, One Forest data and TNC data products such as Freshwater and Terrestrial Habitats of the Northeast.
* LCC will outline transferable elements from the Connecticut River Pilot to inform the development of a regional landscape conservation design, including binning decisions made during the design process into those that need to be repeated, and those that do not.
* LCC will revise Science Needs priorities to include inland, river flooding in addition to coastal flooding.
* LCC will work to quantify foundational research that has already been done in Science Need priority areas in order to reduce redundancy moving forward.
* LCC will create RFPs for highest ranking Science Needs, and make desired outcomes and applications related to each Science and Science Delivery need more explicit.
* LCC will coordinate a conference call in May to revisit Science and Science Delivery needs, discuss the strategic plan, and consider when to have an “Albany III”

**1. Welcome and Introductions.** Review agenda, and approval of minutes from last meeting on October 28, 2014 - Cathy Sparks, Ken Elowe (FWS), Bill Hyatt (CT)

Cathy Sparks welcomed attendees to Rhode Island. Ken added his welcome, reviewed the agenda and his hoped for meeting outcomes including:

Ken asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the fall meeting. Anne Kuhn (EPA) moved, Becky Gwynn (VA) seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved with no discussion.

There were 43 partners attending in person and 4 on the phone representing 27 member agencies and organizations and constituting a quorum (see list at end of minutes).

**2. Action items** from last Steering Committee meeting and actions taken – Andrew Milliken (LCC)

Andrew reviewed the 17 action items from the fall meeting and corresponding actions taken by staff and partners. He noted need for continued steering committee input on project and product web pages, project fact sheets, strategic plan process, and extension agents within their agencies and organizations.

With regard to the Hurricane Sandy common metrics process, Rick Bennett (FWS) noted that a peer review was completed including input from Megan Tyrrell, that he and Pete Murdoch (USGS) are revising the document and that there will be in DC in May to review the metrics that have been chosen.

**3. LCC Network Updates** including LCC Council, National Academy of Sciences Review, FY 15 budget and outlook for FY 16 – Jad Daley (Trust for Public Land), John O’Leary (MA), Ken Elowe (FWS), Elsa Haubold (FWS)

* NAS panel will complete report on LCCs this fall
* LCC Network Strategic Plan Completed
* LCC Network Council focusing on partnerships and cross-LCC work
* FY 2016 President’s budget includes significant increase for LCCs that would help increase budgets for LCCs at lesser-funded levels

*Summary of feedback*

* Sustaining political support for LCCs demands focusing on relevancy and complementarity to other partnership effort,  and delivery and support for the use of LCC products, which may require adding capacity for market research and technical assistance
* Steering Committee members should consider what their organizations would need in order to ensure that LCC products are relevant and useful, including technological factors
* Cross-LCC efforts are important at this point

*Discussion notes*

John O’Leary (MA) is on the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel, and provided an update. NAS does this a lot, and provides support for the ad-hoc committee. So far there have been two meetings in which various LCC staff has been invited to come and provide information about work done so far. There is one more meeting coming up in California. The goal is to “evaluate the purpose, goals, and scientific merits of the program within the context of similar programs, and whether the LCC program has resulted in measurable improvements in the health of fish, wildlife, and their habitats” as detailed in Handout 6, write up the report over the summer to have it published in the fall.

Elsa Haubold (FWS): We’ve been providing a lot of information to NAS. We’re looking forward to the recommendations, so that we can make the network as strong as it can be. We’ll be looking at the report closely to find ways to improve.

Handout 5 is the LCC Network Strategic Plan based in part on input from a workshop last summer including two people from the North Atlantic LCC and members from all the LCCs, and was very much intended to reflect the LCCs, and not be a top-down plan. North Atlantic LCC work is consistent with this plan.

Very exciting to see that the FY 2016 President’s Budget included an increase in funding for LCCs, but recognize that it is unlikely to make it through the appropriations process.

The LCC Network Council, formed two years ago, met most recently in March. There are 22 members, including one from the North Atlantic (Jad Daley). The last meeting focused a lot on partnerships, for example between Joint Ventures and LCCs. They are also looking for a few more members: one or two representing tribes and two at-large to provide breadth.

Jad Daley (TPL): Looking to institutionalize the efforts of building partnerships and push for more cross or inter-LCC collaboration.

Ken Elowe (FWS): We hear from you and agree that relevancy is huge. That’s Relevancy with a capital “R”. We take this very seriously – we want to be useful and we need to be useful to be worthwhile. We’re here to staff this effort but the decision-making rests with the full steering committee.

Jad: I think you phrased that really well Ken. I think the North Atlantic LCC has been doing a really good job at making sure the science work that’s being funded is impactful. Recently I spoke with some folks at OMB, who are thinking about relevancy from a slightly different perspective. I think the litmus test of relevancy for them is the applied part of the applied science term. They agree that a lot of great science is being done, but the part that matters is delivery. The Connecticut River demonstration is really important. These kinds of things are huge for sustaining political support.

Bill Hyatt (CT): I want to draw your attention now to item #13, especially the third bullet. The bottom line is that LCC products need to be sold, they need to be translated, and we need to provide service to our organizations to get the products used. The question is, what are the mechanisms to doing this? We started talking about this in the fall, and the urgency has increased in the past 6 months. Science takes time, but people are also impatient. As you hear the presentations today, please think about your own organization, and what you need to take these tools and use them to implement conservation on the ground. I don’t have an answer yet for my own organization. So it’s not necessarily an easy question to answer. Do we need extension, helplines, a service center – do we need a workgroup to tackle this? If so, who should make up that group? Should we hire an outside person to do focus groups and market research to try and give us the answers we need about customer support? The only thing I’m certain of is that the ivory tower approach – build up a nice product and put it out there and assume people will use it – that approach will not work.

Jad: We also need to consider the role of technology and user interfaces for the decision support component. People are accessing the products many different ways. Depending on who they are, what they want or what works as far as a user interface differs. This is something I hope that the LCC Network will be thinking about too.

**4. State of the LCC and Strategic Planning.** Review of progress on goals and objectives of LCC, next steps for the coming year and recommendations for strategic plan revision process – Andrew Milliken (LCC)

Andrew provided a detailed presentation on the state of the LCC reviewing key points about where the LCC is, accomplishments from 2014 (as noted in the [Annual Report](http://northatlanticlcc.org/news/news-and-announcements-inbox/north-atlantic-lcc-2014-highlights-report)) and where it needs to go over the next year and emphasizing the need for continued efforts in information management, science delivery and conservation design.  He made initial suggestions for strategic planning process incorporating these elements.

*Discussion notes*

Wendi Weber (FWS): Rick mentioned a big meeting next week at HQ about Hurricane Sandy. We’re planning on having a full day dedicated to looking a science gaps. Every major relevant science agency will be there, plus NGOs and States. I think the science gap info identified at this meeting will help inform future LCC decisions. There is $22 million left of Hurricane Sandy DOI funds. There’s a socioeconomic RFP coming out. A source of funding specifically to address the science gaps will be identified this week. There is $80 million in resiliency funding in the President’s FY16 budget for DOI modeled after the Hurricane Sandy funding approach. It’s not dedicated to bureaus; might be put out as FRPs so anyone can apply for it.

Andrew Milliken (LCC): During our science needs assessment process over the winter we came up with some needs, including marsh migration. We’re hoping specifically that this will be funded through the science gap funding from DOI. The other thing is that the national LCC holdback funding that was provided to coastal LCCs is partially looking at ways to incorporate socio-economic resiliency needs and be aligned with the proposed DOI resiliency funding.

Elsa Haubold: I want to say that the progress and direction of this LCC is amazing. Thank you to everyone on the Steering Committee for participating and focusing on relevancy. I think the landscape level approach is the future of conservation.

Jad: One of the best advertisements for the strategic value of LCCs is the efforts made towards building resiliency using the Hurricane Sandy funding. My organization recently participating in a HUD-sponsored infrastructure resilience and it increasingly seems that there is a need for people who understand natural systems, and those who understand the built environment, to work together. LCCs may be poised to provide added value and coordinate the natural systems side of that.

Marc Matsil (TPL): Wendi talked about a really, really important facet – the socio-economic interface. TPL is looking at creating a decision support tool to try and reduce damage to property and infrastructure. The elected officials are really enamored with the project. When we look at how to make this relevant to management, then the economic interface piece is really crucial. Need to plan right now for marsh migration and for impacts to communities in the face of a meter of sea level rise. So to reiterate what Wendi said – if there’s money available to look at the social resilience and economic impacts, it’s likely to be very highly supported.

**5. Communications Update.** Review progress on communications and agree on next steps – Dave Eisenhauer (FWS) and Bridget Macdonald (LCC)

David and Bridget provided an update on the role of communication in bringing attention to the relevancy of the LCC by focusing on telling and placing stories that highlight people and actions, and on providing support for getting the word out about LCC and partner activities to target audiences.

* Stories about LCC partners and projects have been featured in a variety of outlets, including the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, the Northeast Climate Science Center website, and in FWS Northeast Region blog
* The  North Atlantic LCC has been recognized among the Top Five contributors of stories to the LCC Network national website
* The Aquatic Connectivity fact sheet was created in response to Steering Committee request for communication materials that provide clear overviews of projects that highlight practical applications

*Discussion notes*

Jad: I think the video/audio testimony at the end is really powerful. By training practitioners, they will become ambassadors for the use of our data, the vision of our LCC, and the LCC itself.

**6. Information Management Update.** Review progress on information management and reach consensus on next steps – BJ Richardson (FWS)

BJ provided an update on information management, emphasizing that more than just managing data, this effort involves support for sharing, interpreting, and utilizing data through maps, web services, outreach and education to ensure that LCC and partners have access to the best possible information in order to get coordinated conservation work done effectively across the region.

* There are now more than 200 datasets posted and available for download on the North Atlantic LCC website and Conservation Planning Atlas
* Key recent IM initiatives include developing a way for states, LCCs, and other partners to access the maps and products coming out of the RCN process, and supporting the development of a SWAP database to promote consistency moving forward

*Summary of feedback*

* Opportunities and importance of sharing data across the border with Canada
* Information management needs to focus on support for partners who don’t understand the underlying data, but want to visualize it and apply it and partners who want to get at the underlying basic data and models

*Discussion notes*

Andrew: How do the Conservation Gateway and Data Basin work together?

BJ Richardson (FWS): The Conservation Gateway is The Nature Conservancy's portal for distributing GIS data and other documents and reports. So instead of the NALCC hosting the data on our Amazon cloud, we simply point the download link on Data Basin and our website to their download location (URL) for data and/or reports. That way, they can maintain and update the data as necessary. This is how we handle data from other partners whenever possible, unless there is some change or value-add that we make to the data, in which case we will maintain and update it. We are also, whenever possible, importing web mapping services from partners if they are available, which again means we do not have to create and maintain those services.

Sharri Venno (Houlton Band of the Maliseets): What is the collaboration between you and the Canadian government? First Nations are used to working with the Canadian government – what are you doing to work with Canadian partners?

BJ Richardson (FWS): Most of our datasets are only in the U.S. It comes down to being a data issue. We’re working with the Canadian partners as much as we can.

Karel Allard (Canadian Wildlife): There are adaptation strategies in New Brunswick and the Maritime Provinces. There is a program to incorporate science developed by the LCCs. With better representation by Nature Conservancy of Canada, we have more opportunities to incorporate science. So more channels now exist for communicating science and doing landscape conservation in the Martimes. One of our biggest hurdles is that we don’t always have cross-walked foundational data. Some important steps have been taken recently – especially the terrestrial habitat map – and it looks like there is another potential project in aquatics. These are very, very valuable foundational datasets for us to use.

Sharri: Do you have a time frame that I can share?

Andrew: June for the terrestrial habitat map. But I would also say that we can work with you specifically on the Two Countries, One Forest data, and sit down and look at some of the TNC products that extend into Canada.

Ken: I hope you got the idea here that this data management part includes both the people who don’t understand the underlying data, but know what they want to do with it, and the people who want to get at the underlying basic data and models. We’re trying to span all these needs and it’s a big task. And this is a good segue into our next presentation, which is on the Landscape Conservation Design pilot in the Connecticut River, which is the most complex modeling effort at design in the country – maybe the world? I’m looking at Mark to see if I can say that.

**7. Landscape Conservation Design.** Pilot conservation design effort in the Connecticut River Watershed - Scott Schwenck (LCC)

Scott provided an update on the **Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot**. More than 30 conservation partners representing federal programs, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations completed the development of a landscape conservation design for the Connecticut River Watershed, and are now in the process of reviewing the final products within their organizations. The foundation of the design is core-connector network, which provides a spatial representation of the underlying ecological network, and strategic guidance in identifying priority areas that can contribute to conservation goals for the entire watershed. The suite of products also includes data layers representing species, ecosystems, predictions about climate and land-use change, and potential restoration opportunities.

*Summary of feedback*

* Each individual data layer that is incorporated within the design will be available for organizations to look at specific questions and information relevant to their goals
* Immediate relevance for the design will be for helping address issues related to flood resilience and aquatic connectivity that came to light in the wake of Hurricane Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene
* The Pilot offers lessons on effective team size and diversity for partnership efforts. In order to facilitate transferability of the process, all decisions and lessons learned were carefully documented
* Next steps will be to provide outreach and support for target conservation audiences to interpret and use the design

*Discussion notes*

Marc Matsil: Have you considered overlaying any Hurricane Irene flood data? Might have information on pollution, like non-point source, built environment, etc.

Scott: I’m not sure that we’ve specifically integrated that, but we are thinking a lot about culverts and aquatic connectivity. The LCC also has other projects going on that are looking at flood resilience.

Ellen Mecray (NOAA): How was the climate stressor made? Did you work with a climate scientist?

Scott: Yes, we worked closely with the Northeast Climate Science Center. The climate stressor measures the magnitude of stress at a given site based on climate conditions currently favorable to ecosystem type , and the predicted change in climate between 2010 and 2080.

Sharri: Did you involve stakeholders from agriculture?

Scott: We’ve been having a lot of conversations about the size of the group and how many sectors we can involve. We focused on the conservation community for this effort, which was more than 30 people. We thought about including foresters, transportation people, agriculture, etc. but we didn’t feel that we could do a collaborative effort with so many people.

Ken: The Beginning with Habitat project in Maine was similar. We got the feedback that the conservation community needed to get our act together, and say for the ecological resources, here are the things we care about. What does the landscape need to look like? And we can never have a design that addresses each individual need. With the group involved on the Connecticut River project, we drew primarily from the conservation estate. It looks at species and ecosystems to try and have sustainability on the landscape. The core areas and connectors are the strategic starting point, but are not sufficient. The group clearly articulated that they needed direction on where to start, acknowledging the fact that we need as much of the landscape as possible to sustain all these systems. This is the first cut at getting our act together.

Steve Fuller (LCC): Is there explicit buy-in from the partners that they will go with this average? And they’ll make decisions based on this – that comes with tradeoffs?

Scott: Kim, as a participant perhaps you could comment on this?

Kim Lutz (TNC): All the partners would say universally is that they were heard throughout the process. The process was excellent in soliciting partner input, documenting partner input, and documenting decisions. The conversations were incorporated. I think the original schedule was six months, and it became a year, which I think is still phenomenal that it was that fast. I think it was great that they took the time to hear concerns during the process, instead of rushing it along to meet the initial deadline. I think buy-in is yet to be determined, and since the process was so great I think it’s likely that there will be buy-in: but that’s not official yet.

Ken: Also, it’s not an average. We collaboratively decided on targets for species and ecosystems to conserve.

Kim: What I have also understood is that while there will be a final product, all the individual layers will also be available, so if your organization value is birds, then you can focus on the individual species layers, which I think is another good step. Each layer is available to any partner, as well as the collective.

Bill H.: I’ll add something to that – it may not directly answer your question. We had two staff involved in the process, and they are both definitely bought in to the process and happy with what’s coming out of it. That said, it’s also not good enough for them. This is true in general with these processes – the biologists will always see how it can be better and how it can be improved. The challenge coming ahead will be about how much we put effort and resources into improving the product, versus moving and doing designs in other areas.

Ken: Exactly. Models do two things: they point out information deficits as well as illuminating information we didn’t realize before. Another thing I’d like to stress is that the Connecticut River watershed was a pilot area, and the datasets that are represented in the design are available, for the most part, throughout the entire northeast region. So that is part of why we’re thinking about expanding.

Roselle Henn (USACE): The Army Corps of Engineers has been partnering with The Nature Conservancy for a number of years on an effort related to managing water flows. We try to have our projects be multi-purpose: serving energy and ecological needs. A report on our efforts so far will be out this fall, and I hope that there will be interaction between folks working on both of these products.

**8. Regional Conservation Opportunity Area updates.** Review and reach consensus on continued role of LCC in informing RCOAs for State Wildlife Action Plans – Steve Fuller (LCC)

Steve provided an update on the **Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas** (RCOAs) process.Representatives from the Northeast states along with NGOs and universities came together at the FWS Northeast Regional Office in March for a three-day workshop to how Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas should be developed in order to align with and inform State Wildlife Action Plans. During the workshop, participants utilized real-time survey tools to review and agree upon fundamental objectives, and refine a set of alternatives for consideration by the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee.

*Summary of feedback*

* The refined list of alternatives and percent of participants who supported each is available on the [LCC website](http://northatlanticlcc.org/the-cooperative/steering-committee/meetings/steering-committee-meeting-april-22-2015/handout-15-summary-of-rcoa-alternatives/index_html)
* The RCOA effort came out mandate arising from the Albany II workshop to determine species ranges and needs across the Northeast
* The LCC has committed to Northeast states to see the RCOA process through, involving another six months

*Discussion notes*

Steve: Conservation Opportunity Areas is specific example of conservation design.

Ken: For most of us it’s not necessarily to understand the technical details, except that there are thoughtful people thinking about RSGCN species. This was an intense part of the conversation at Albany II – what are species ranges and needs across the region? We’re trying to have a regional context informing the SWAPs.

**9. Discussion on Next Steps for Conservation Design.** Consensus on next steps for conservation design – Scot Williamson (WMI), Scott Schwenk (LCC), Steve Fuller (LCC), Megan Tyrrell (LCC)

Ken Elowe (FWS) led a discussion to gauge Steering Committee willingness to continue to pursue landscape conservation design, and to reach consensus on how to move forward.

*Summary of feedback and discussion*

* Realizing a regional vision for Landscape Conservation Designsurrounded moving forward on three fronts:
  + Connecticut River Watershed Designing Sustainable Landscapes project
  + Regional Designing Sustainable Landscapes data layer development
  + Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas
* While aspects of the CT River Watershed Pilot are transferable to different geographies, the design itself cannot be scaled up to the regional level. The RCOA effort will capitalize on the Pilot framework and decision making process in order to develop a regional plan, and also provide a means of comparing and testing the results
* There was support for moving forward with implementation of the Pilot, with careful attention to key questions that are relevant to the transferability of the process for the development of a regional design

*Discussion notes*

Ken: I want to do a pulse check and see if the steering committee is okay with us continuing to pursue the Connecticut River pilot, the regional Designing Sustainable Landscapes, and the RCOAs. We have already committed to the states to see the RCOA process through; that’s expected to take another six months.

Mark Anderson (TNC): A clarifying question: If you take the CT river design and extrapolate to the region, then you’ll have a regional map of cores and connectors. The RCOAs are scaling up from the states and it sounds like they will also have core areas. What is the difference between these two approaches?

Ken: Initially the RCOA process was promised to be much more accelerated. We had intended to already be done. Now the RCOA process is using a lot of data layers used in the Connecticut River pilot including those developed by UMass through the Designing Sustainable Landscapes project. In the long run it would probably be confusing to have two different maps, but the RCOA process is tied pretty tightly to RSGN species. So a regional design that is only the RCOA map does not do one important thing being done in the Designing Sustainable Landscapes project, which is to incorporate all taxa. So we have slightly different purposes and we need to figure out how best to proceed. One question that hasn’t been answered yet is whether an all-taxa approach could serve the needs of the states for RSGCN work.

Scot Williamson (WMI): I think there is a big enough difference between the Designing Sustainable Landscapes project and the RCOA project that we could have one – this is the only place where I disagree with what you’ve said.

Andrew: We’ve talked about alternatives and atlas pages. I think the easy part of this is to converge on a set of prioritization layers that we agree make sense to work with at the regional scale. We’re going to get there and have that atlas for the region. But I think there will be a highly refined set of decision support layers that we can use. The hard part is deciding whether or not to have a core-connector network at the regional scale, and if so does that draw primarily from the strategy piloted in the Connecticut River watershed or does it rely heavily on the RCOA process. I would hope we would learn from both processes.

Ken: A lot of the Connecticut River watershed pilot core team discussions centered around the fact that while some users want to see all the layers, others just want to see the final network as one map. So what layers to push and how to depict them is a major decision point that we’re at now.

Amanda Babson (NPS): I think with the Connecticut River watershed, hearing what Kim said earlier that process was critical for buy-in. I think there’s a benefit of having the two different processes. I’m concerned that the Connecticut River watershed process might not be able to be scaled up. So this could be like a sensitivity test: if the regional Designing Sustainable Landscapes and Connecticut River watershed designs have a lot in common, that shows the process is robust, perhaps. We also want to compare to RCOAs.

BJ: If the RCOA process uses the same inputs, then it might be likely to have similar results. The other thing is that we don’t know how we’ll scale up the Pilot to a regional scale, if we’re going to try and do it the same way. That’s not clear in my mind right now.

Ken: I want to put on the table that the process that Kim described for the Connecticut River watershed is not something that we can duplicate everywhere. It would take decades to do that everywhere. So we have to figure out which decisions that were done in the Connecticut River watershed can be exported to other geographies, and which need to be revisited and confirmed or adjusted. So we need to go through that process and have separation. Decisions about weighting, about population objectives, etc. probably need to be repeated, but many others do not. So we don’t have all the answers today, but to realize our vision of a regional design we need to continue on 3 fronts: the RCOAs, the Connecticut River watershed pilot, and a regional conservation design that draws from both. As we learn more over the summer months, we’re hoping to have a lot more input and feedback from the Steering Committee on what we should do for a regional design.

Mark Andrson: This is very helpful – thank you. The Connecticut River watershed draft final results are just coming out now – how will you know whether those results are accomplishing what you wanted them to?

Ken: On May 1 we’re going to have another core team meeting and get feedback from the agencies and organizations that our core team represents. But it’s an iterative design – it’s not one-and-done. We’re always going to learn more and be able to refine. The question is, however, is given the abilities and limitations of the model, does the Connecticut River watershed design bring added value to existing tools? Of course, we’re forced to make conservation decisions right now, so if this design helps, shouldn’t we use it, learn from it, and keep working while implementing? Rather than setting it aside for four years until we get more science.

Mark Anderson: You said it would be impossible to engage as many people for the region.

Ken: It wouldn’t be possible to spend a year in every watershed in the region, repeating this work. However, regionally we could have a team.

Mark Anderson: Are you planning to reach out to people who were not part of the process and don’t have buy-in based on that, and find out if they think it adds value? Because if they do, that’s great, but if they don’t and the Core Team does buy-in, then that would indicate that participation in the process is critical, which would then point you to continued participatory processes.

Sharri: I noticed that the RCOA looked at agriculture, as far as restoring agriculture. Is that something that could be added to the process when scaling up to the regional level?

Ken: Restoration are not limited to agriculture, either. Creating more early successional habitat is important management we need to do, and is also restoration.

Roger Simmons (USFS): These are great models and interesting work. I think it’s valuable. What comes to my mind is where do we really need to make conservation decisions today? Where is the funding, will, and ability to make some of these decisions. To me the Connecticut River watershed study may be too intense of an effort for the kinds of decisions that it would actually support and for which we have funding. RCOAs might be at a scale where you can get energy behind it. If you go to too fine a scale of conservation (easement, land trust) it is mostly about serendipity rather than intent. Intent is more controllable at a regional level. I fear we get entrapped by investments we’ve already made.

Ken: Your point has been the subject of much discussion. I’d like to ask Kim or Jim to answer that.

Jim Connolly (ME): I would say a couple things. First, I have a friend who says you can’t steer a parked car. We can look at the model and talk about who can use it, and wind up in paralysis of analysis. I think what happens generally is that people get engaged, they make suggestions, they make improvements. People can use it at all levels, and they can self-regulate. A town can look at an area they think is important, see that you think so too, and move forward on some action. You might not even know they went to the website and viewed the product. If you want to try and drive everyone along it’ll never happen. Regarding agriculture, we note that eastern farmers are not western farmers. They occupy riparian corridors, they’re close to wild lands. And they are interested in working with us a lot of the time. Sometimes a farmer puts an easement on the agricultural land, and sells us the rest. So I suggest that you move on, and move forward.

Roger: What I was trying to ask is, if we have limited funds, have we invested enough in the models that we can fund implementation instead of more planning.

Ken: And I think there’s a bridge between the two of you. We do want to push the button and go, and we want to support decision-making and implementation. We do have a way to move on.

Mark Anderson: I was thinking “go” meant go forward with the design and see what kind of traction it gets, vs. “go” to the regional scale.

Ken: I’m suggesting doing the regional analysis so that people can think of the Connecticut River watershed as contextualized within the regional scale, and it also gives people in the region a target.

Bill Jenkins (EPA): I support the idea of going forward for transference, but I would suggest that there should be some thought as to how to do that so that some key questions can get answered. What Mark said made me start thinking about how some people will want to revisit all the questions, not wanting to defer to the answers that the Connecticut River watershed made.

Ken: We’re going to bin the decisions made in the Connecticut River watershed into two piles: ones that need to be repeated and ones that don’t. That’s our plan for avoiding the pitfall you describe.

Bill H.: The science can be transferable, data maybe, but values not.

Ken: We’ll put you on the team!

**10. Review of budgets and progress for ongoing projects.** Review of science needs process, results from completed science and science delivery projects, and progress of ongoing projects as part of conservation framework - Scot Williamson (WMI), Scott Schwenck (LCC), Steve Fuller (LCC), Megan Tyrrell (LCC)

*Discussion notes*

BJ: It is worth noting that during the RCP workshops, Highstead brought in partners to share success stories about how they are using NALCC data to make decisions. So this data is being put to use.

**11 . Recommendation from technical committees on priority science needs for FY 2015.** Review of membership, process and major outcomes from technical committee, discussion of science needs and next steps - Scott Schwenck (LCC), Megan Tyrrell (LCC), Amanda Babson (NPS)

**12. Recommendation from science delivery team on priority science delivery needs for FY 2015.** Needs are all centered around trainings and call for contract staff or small grants to pay partners to implement NALCC science tools - Steve Fuller (LCC)

Scott, Steve, Megan, and Amanda shared the results of the Science Needs process, involving representatives from U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, state agencies, NGOs, and partnerships identifying the highest ranking priorities in three subgroups: Freshwater aquatic, coastal and marine, and terrestrial and freshwater wetlands ([Summary Table of Highest Ranking 2015 Science Needs](http://northatlanticlcc.org/the-cooperative/steering-committee/meetings/steering-committee-meeting-april-22-2015/handout-20-table-of-highest-ranking-science-needs/index_html)).

*Summary of feedback*

* In all areas, it is important not only to identify research needs, but to connect LCC tools to actions, agencies and organizations
* Steering Committee requested more specificity in RFPs, focusing on desired outcomes and specific applications to ensure relevance
* Several Steering Committee members brought attention to research needs related to inland flooding, rather than just coastal flooding
* There was support for the idea of seeking professional assistance from a facilitating or marking entity to help connect tools to practitioners, and demonstrate positive outcomes

*Discussion notes*

Karel: We are very supportive of this [aquatic classification in Canada]effort, and it is a critical foundational layer, just as the terrestrial mapping effort was.

Bill H.: Last week I looked at a similar [marsh migration]project that came out of TNC Connecticut, and our agency is producing a similar product. Have you looked at how much redundancy is out there?

Megan: We’re aware of the TNC effort for sure. Mark Anderson is affiliated with them and is also on our technical subcommittee. What we are proposing is an intensive ground-based surveys, in order to measure the edges of the marshes. I believe the TNC CT effort is based on remote sensing.

Bill Brumback (NEWS): I wasn’t at the meeting, but the flora project is really important and used for conservation, and we don’t have anything like that on a regional scale.

Heidi Kretser (WCS): Are any of the other topics able to be funded by the Hurricane Sandy resilience holdback funds, like the impact of SLR and storms, or connectivity?

Andrew: The needs vying for leftover funds are very tightly defined; only the marsh migration fits in with it.

Rick: I agree with what you said. Given the structure of how the workshop is going to work, I would like to have that information on what’s important to the LCC, and I can try to bring them forward and get them in the mix.

**13. Discussion and decisions on:**

* Science and science delivery needs for 2015
* Next steps for strategic planning
* Connecting LCC tools to actions, agencies and organizations

*Discussion notes*

Ken: We have approximately $600,000 to allocate. We have a recommendation for a particular starting point. Also keep in mind that we would have to put some things out for bid through an RFP, so the numbers are subject to change.

Bill H.: Hopefully everyone has been thinking about that third bullet all along today. My suggestion is that in thinking about these connections, and whether we want to continue what we’re doing, or expand, and how. Perhaps we should create a working group to think about how to get people to use the tools. We could also do a customer research study that we could contract out, similar to what is done in business and industry. The advantage of both of these is that they are two-way processes. We can gather additional data from the customers to implement, and you’re building, restoring, and strengthening that partnership. But I’m really curious to hear what people think and where your organizations are at. What do your organizations need?

Ken: This is something the Science Delivery committee has been wrestling with this too. We need to know whether what the Science Delivery team has been doing has been effective? Keeping in mind that much of it is very new, and the projects are just producing products now. But do you think what we’re doing now is viable, and is it the best way to do this work? Some of these investment decisions have bearing on that.

Andrew: From what you described Bill, it sounds a lot like Science Delivery need #2.

Bill Jenkins: I think #2-5 are all relevant. But to me #2 means status quo with regard to approaches, but enhanced effort. I think that’s a step in the right direction. But to me the more important question is whether or not that is sufficient, and I’m hoping the other Steering Committee members here today can speak to whether this will work for their organizations.

Cathy Sparks (RI): The word impatience has come up. To some degree it’s a two-way street. I think I’m less impatient than those who haven’t been able to attend as many of these Steering Committee meetings. I think the discussion about priorities could have more back-and-forth. Perhaps we could do something at the next director’s meeting in the fall – maybe a special presentation on the Connecticut River pilot. Maybe they’d like to see other projects in other states that have a different flavor. Getting the tools out there is going to require buy-in from the state leadership. Getting their attention could be tricky but it’s very important. With Rhode Island, I’m not very worried about how my staff is going to use it – we already finished our SWAP; it’s under review. I am also interested in how we can use these tools in the work with New England cottontail, which is focused on habitat management. Maybe that could be a demonstration project of sorts. There is a burden on the LCC to do and show and demonstrate, and there is a burden on others to learn and understand and capitalize. It’s a two-way street.

Bill J.: If I’m hearing you right, you feel that things are going well, although there is some anxiety. What I’m not able to tell is whether what we’re doing is enough, and what more would be needed.

Cathy: I don’t have a strong feeling that this is not going to work. I think we should be careful with how we spend the money. I like a sophisticated approach and a business model, but I can see the potential for criticism even doing that. I’m not ready to throw out the work that Steve has been doing.

Bill J.: My thoughts on making this relevant are that there probably needs to be more training. I think there is a big gap in capacity and the ability to use technology between the federal and state agencies and folks at the local level. So I can see the use in hitting those people with enhanced training opportunities.

Steve F.: We are also trying to think about the sophistication of the approach. We’d be interested in getting people with education background to help develop trainings, people with graphic design experience to design elements.

Bill J.: Recognizing that these are preliminary numbers, I’m concerned that something that you brought forward as $150,000 as $100,000 means you lose something important.

Karel Allard: Was there something else you used to come up with these numbers. How did you decide not to do #3 on science projects?

Andrew: Our strategy is to get the top 2. We thought science #1 could handle a little less, because it’s ongoing. We think #3 might be funded through Hurricane Sandy. Then we had not much money left, so we allocated it strategically. We wanted to leave plenty of money for the science delivery.

Amanda: Maybe we should first address whether we have an appropriate balance between science and delivery. I personally think science is a strength of the LCC and should be a priority, but I do recognize the need to do science delivery as well.

Kim: On S1, is that also something that could be funded with Sandy money, because it’s coastal?

Ken: According to Rick, it might be on the table, but #3 is for sure. We have little confidence that it would qualify.

Kim: There is a lot of attention to coastal flooding and very limited attention to river flooding, even though year over year it’s the most costly disaster. We’ve put a lot of money into coastal flooding; maybe it’s time to put some into inland flooding.

Mark A.: I agree with Kim. I notice that it’s separated from the cultural resources part here. Flood risk is a very high priority for TNC right now. My question is, what does SD4 mean to you? It seems like floodplains and flood risks is a specific problem. And now I’m not sure what SD4 really means.

Steve F.: It may not be a black and white difference. If there was a more focused project that fell under that category, then you could provide workshops and training to support tidally influenced road crossings.

Mark A.: So to me that could be a powerful combination.

Steve F.: If we’re going to put any money toward flooding, or damage assessments, or damage avoidance assessments, why aren’t we talking to FEMA or the insurance industry. Shouldn’t we be able to leverage funds?

Ellen: Could we go deeper in the list if you guys were to accurately quantify what’s already been done. NOAA’s total water initiative is doing a lot of this work, and so are other agencies. I think there are a lot of places where this work is being done and we don’t need to reinvent the wheel here.

Scott S.: It is hard for us to keep track of all the initiatives that everyone is doing, and we were splintered into different groups. We do want to avoid redundancies, but maybe Ellen wasn’t in that group.

Mark A.: Just on the floodplain – a number of existing good floodplain models have been created by FEMA, Vermont, etc. Most don’t cover the whole LCC, so the gist of it was to have a regional project/product.

Ken: I have to ask again with the split generally between science and science delivery.

Scot W: I’m going to go a totally different direction. The numbers we’re debating seem a little bit speculative because these are going to go out in an RFP, and there will be competition. So I would put everything out there. I don’t know why we’re constraining the categories when we really don’t know what we’re going to get when we put the RFP out.

Ken: We know we can’t fund all of what’s out there. So we want a ballpark idea of where we should put our emphasis.

Scot W.: Do you know you’re going to get something quality in every one of those categories?

Ken: No, but we can choose to invest staff time to try and make substantial, quality progress in these realms.

Andrew: Another consideration is that not all of these are things that would go out for RFP. Some are to increase staff capacity. And everything up here is a priority. Are there any items up here that you think should be dropped? We also have to be careful with RFP language, so we will probably need to put ranges on things. And this is intended to be a needs discussion and not a projects discussion.

Amanda: We have to be smart with time. We need to be respectful of people’s time who are developing RFPs and the people who are putting together proposals.

Sarah Fleming (Ducks Unlimited): We need more research on the flood question.

Mark A.: I think rolling together floodplains with science delivery would be a good idea.

Steve F.: If we went forward with SD4, we would need to go back and get input on where the priority applications would be.

Ellen: I think it’s just a matter of the level of specificity in the RFP. It’s not everything about floodplains or SLR. But the LCC’s RFP would be out in terms of the habitat degradation associated with it, so that you’re not wasting people’s time – that you want people to give you a study on the application, not on the study, so that you’re buying what you want to buy.

Andrew: So what we’ll do is move forward with S1,2,4,5,6 and create an RFP for your review, and make each item for S and SD more specific.

Ken: We can send you the RFP, or maybe the highlights from the RFP would serve your needs better. In terms of science delivery, are you satisfied?

Bill H.: I’m satisfied, but I’d like to speak with you about the details going into SD2 and get input from the other directors.

Ken: With the time left, I wanted to provide an opportunity to revisit conservation design, and get more feedback on how you want us to proceed with it.

Cathy: We should be self-evaluating success as we move forward, and look at whether we are making the connections and demonstrating positive, productive outcomes with partners. Then we should be ready to revisit the idea of getting professional assistance from some sort of facilitating or marking entity to help us with that.

Andrew: We will not be able to get to strategic planning today, and I’d like to suggest a conference call in May to make sure we get the science and science delivery desires correct, and then discuss a strategic plan and consider when to have an “Albany III”. I want to make sure people know we’re looking for feedback on that. Late May/Early June?

Bill H.: I think a key part is that this would be a target phone call, not an all-day meeting.

Scott S.: I also want to point out that sometimes we set up agreements with a party directly, so we don’t necessarily have to set up an RFP for every topic.

Ken: We’ve come a long way in the past five years. Cathy, I want to thank you for your remarks that being here makes you less anxious. It’s great to have you all at these meetings so that you can see the scope and complexity of what we’re doing here. I’m optimistic about this group’s ability to focus strategic conservation into the future.

Motion to adjourn meeting seconded and approved unanimously.

**Meeting Attendees**

| **Organization** | **Representatives** | **Title of Representative** | **Attend** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***States/Districts*** | | | |
| **Connecticut** | | | |
| Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection | Bill Hyatt | Chief, Bureau of Natural Resources | Y |
| **Maine** | | | |
| Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife | Jim Connolly | Director of Resource Management | Y |
| **Maryland** | | | |
| Maryland Department of Natural Resources | Gwen Brewer | Science Program Manager | P |
| **Massachusetts** | | | |
| Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife | John O’Leary | Wildlife Administrator | Y |
| **Rhode Island** | | | |
| Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management | Cathy Sparks | Assistant Director for Natural Resources | Y |
| **Virginia** | | | |
| Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries | Becky Gwynn | Assistant Bureau Director Bureau of Wildlife Resources | Y |
| ***Native American Tribes*** | | | |
| **Houlton Band of the Maliseets** | Sharri Venno | Environmental Planner, Houlton Band of the Maliseets | Y |
| ***Federal Agencies*** | | | |
| **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** | Wendi Weber | Northeast Regional Director | Y |
| Ken Elowe | Assistant Regional Director, Science Applications | Y |
| Rick Bennett | Regional Scientist | Y |
| Mike Slattery | Chesapeake Bay Coordinator | Y |
| Elsa Haubold | National LCC Coordinator | Y |
| Aaron Mize | Chief, NWR planning | Y |
| Rob Campellone | Landscape Conservation Design Policy Advisor | Y |
| **U.S. Geological Survey** | Stephen Faulkner | Supervisory Research Ecologist | Y |
| **Department of the Interior Northeast Climate Science Center** | Curt Griffin | Professor and Department Head  Dept. of Environmental Conservation, UMass | Y |
| **National Park Service** | Amanda Babson | Coastal Landscape Adaptation Coordinator | Y |
| **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement** | Mike Rasser | Marine Ecologist | P |
| **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** | Ellen Mecray | Regional Climate Coordinator | Y |
| **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** | Bill Jenkins | Director, Office of Environmental Information and Analysis | Y |
| Anne Kuhn | Office of Research and Development  Atlantic Ecology Division | Y |
| **U.S. Forest Service** | Roger Simmons | Natural Resources Staff Officer  White Mountain National Forest | Y |
| **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** | Roselle Henn | Deputy Director, National Planning Center for Coastal Storm Risk Management | Y |
| ***Canadian Partners*** | | | |
| Environment Canada Canadian Wildlife Service | Karel Allard | Landscape , Atlantic Region | P |
| Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies | Dean Smith | NAWMP Coordinator, Wildlife Liaison | Y |
| ***Non-governmental Organizations*** | | | |
| Ducks Unlimited | Sarah Fleming | Great Lakes Atlantic Region | Y |
| Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences | Eric Walberg | Climate Director | Y |
| National Wildlife Federation | Chris Hilke | Program Manager  Climate Adaptation Program  Northeast Regional Office | Y |
| Taj Schottland | Coastal Resilience Specialist | Y |
| The Nature Conservancy | Kim Lutz | Connecticut River Coordinator | Y |
| Mark Anderson | Science Director, Eastern Conservation Office | Y |
| New England Wildflower Society | Bill Brumback | Conservation Director | Y |
| Trust for Public Land | Jad Daley | Director, Climate Conservation Program | P |
| Marc Matsil | New York State Director | Y |
| Wildlife Management Institute | Scot Williamson | Vice President | Y |
| Wildlife Conservation Society | Michale Glennon | Adirondack Landscape Science Coordinator | Y |
| Heidi Kretser | Livelihoods and Conservation Coordinator | Y |
| ***Adjacent LCCs (Ex-Officio members)*** | | | |
| Appalachian LCC | Cal Dubrock | Appalachian LCC Coordinator | Y |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Staff** |  |  |  |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Andrew Milliken | North Atlantic LCC Coordinator | Y |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | David Eisenhauer | Science Applications  Communications Coordinator | Y |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | BJ Richardson | Regional GIS Coordinator | Y |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service | Megan Tyrrell | Coastal Resiliency Coordinator | Y |
| North Atlantic LCC | Scott Schwenk | Science Coordinator | Y |
| North Atlantic LCC | Steve Fuller | Science Delivery Coordinator | Y |
| North Atlantic LCC | Maritza Mallek | Pathways Intern | Y |
| North Atlantic LCC | Bridget Macdonald | LCC Communications Coordinator | Y |
| North Atlantic LCC | Stephanie Cuenoud | Science Delivery Assistant | Y |