

**North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee Meeting  
October 28-29, 2014  
Rhinebeck, New York**

**Action Items, Highlights and Summary of Discussions**

*All meeting handouts and presentation remain available on the [meeting website](#)  
Full meeting minutes will be available prior to the next Steering Committee meeting*

**Action Items**

- All Steering committee members need to fill out and sign a [conflict of interest disclosure statement](#) and provide it to [Scot Williamson](#).
- LCC staff will assign a staff member as point of contact for help in understanding and using each project or product and include that contact information on project web pages and in Conservation Planning Atlas.
- LCC staff will work with contractors to develop one-page handouts for each LCC project, outlining project goal, objectives, P.I.s, products, and links to spatial data and other products. The fact sheets will include socioeconomic issues addressed by project if relevant.
- LCC staff will add information to the LCC website that shows how projects fit together and support LCC goals and objectives.
- Steering Committee members should contact [Pete Murdoch](#) (USGS) if they are interested in being part of a peer review of the Department of the Interior Hurricane Sandy Common Metrics document. Pete will provide the final metrics document when available.
- Steering Committee members and partners should contact LCC Data Manager [Renee Farnsworth](#) if they are aware of other relevant regionally or nationally consistent spatial data that should be added to the LCC [Conservation Planning Atlas](#)
- The Connecticut River Pilot Core team will evaluate the [implementation](#) of the tools developed through the Connecticut River Pilot and include that as part of lessons learned for future applications.
- LCC staff will work with the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee to ensure that tools developed and lessons learned from the Connecticut River Watershed Pilot are incorporated in the methodology for Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas.
- LCC staff will work with contractors to develop demonstrations of regional products and designs based on approaches piloted and decisions made in the Connecticut River Watershed and provide those products to the technical and steering committees for review before and at the April Steering Committee meeting.
- Steering Committee members can provide written input on LCC strategic direction to [Andrew Milliken](#) by December 15 if they were not able to provide that input at the Steering Committee meeting using the [form provided](#) or an informal email.
- LCC Steering Committee members and partners with additional input on the draft [communications toolkit](#) and/or interest in participating in a LCC communications work group should contact [David Eisenhauer](#) or [Bridget Macdonald](#).

- LCC staff will work with Sharri Venno and EPA to participate in Northeast Tribal Forum as an opportunity to reach more tribes.
- LCC staff will continue to provide in-person training opportunities and will also develop online training modules describing products and showing how to access use them.
- Steering Committee members will provide suggestions to [Steve Fuller](#) on extension agents within their agencies or jurisdictions that they think would be able to provide LCC information to others if trained.
- LCC Steering Committee members should contact [Ken Elowe](#) or [Andrew Milliken](#) to set up opportunities to visit with staff in their state or organization to provide information on the LCC including existing meetings that the LCC can tag onto.
- LCC Technical Teams and Science Delivery Team will meet this winter to draft revisions and additions to the strategic plan and to recommend science and science delivery needs for 2015 to be presented to Steering Committee at April meeting. LCC Steering Committee members interested in participating in this process should contact [Scott Schwenk](#).
- LCC Steering Committee will meet in person on Wednesday April 22, immediately following the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference in Newport, R.I. A steering committee conference call will be set up in February if needed to provide guidance to technical committees.

### **Highlights and Discussion Summaries**

Over 40 North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee members and partners met (in person and on the phone), reviewed the status of LCC work, and discussed strategic directions for the LCC including key next steps for conservation design, science delivery and communications. A summary of updates and accomplishments along with key points of discussion are summarized here.

#### Science Projects and Products

LCC Science Coordinator Scott Schwenk summarized LCC Science Projects and Products to date by system and product type. A total of 23 projects are in progress or completed including:

- Coastal and marine: 3 projects completed, 4 in progress
- Aquatic: 2 projects in progress
- Terrestrial: 2 projects completed, 5 in progress
- Cross-cutting: 3 projects completed, 4 in progress

These projects include several categories including foundational mapping, vulnerability assessments and conservation design. The resulting products will help conservation decision makers answer questions about where we need to take how much of take what actions in order to sustain natural resources in the face of change.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Need a process for reviewing products and articulating next steps that builds upon the existing peer review process and involves project oversight and/or technical teams.*
- *Need to continue to articulate how projects and products fit together in larger framework and link to specific conservation objective objectives. Also need to link to and give credit to previous projects.*
- *Products should be transparent about uncertainty and clear about whether results are based on models vs. on the ground surveys.*

- *Need to catalogue products by resource, application, and target users (e.g. vernal pools, beach resilience, conservation commissions)*

#### Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Projects

LCC Coordinator Andrew Milliken reviewed three Department of the Interior [Hurricane Sandy Resiliency Projects managed by the LCC](#) including:

- Resiliency of beach habitats and dependent species
- Resiliency of tidal wetland habitats and dependent species
- Restoring aquatic connectivity and increasing resiliency for road-stream crossings

Andrew noted the importance of these projects in addressing high priority coastal and aquatic science needs that had been identified by the LCC prior to the hurricane but were underfunded. He also noted the role the LCC is trying to play in coordinating among Hurricane Sandy projects.

USGS Steering Committee member Pete Murdoch discussed common metrics being developed to evaluate the effectiveness of Hurricane Sandy restoration projects for increasing coastal resiliency and invited interested LCC partners to review the draft documents.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *LCC should reach out beyond the LCC and other DOI Hurricane Sandy projects to address broader coastal and stream resiliency issues.*
- *Other partners should be involved in or be made aware of common metrics.*

#### Science Delivery Program

LCC Science Delivery Coordinator Steve Fuller reviewed the status of the LCC Science Delivery Program including:

- Science delivery project grants
  - *Envision the Susquehanna*, Chesapeake Conservancy
  - *Enhanced Stewardship of Priority Habitats and Species on Private Lands using NALCC Science across Four Northeast States*, Wildlife Conservation Society
  - *Science to Practice in Regional Conservation Partnerships*, Highstead Foundation
  - *Catalyzing Land Trust Capacity for Data and Science Integration*, Open Space Institute
- Science delivery training workshops for state, federal and other partners as well as science delivery grantees that were held in 2014.
- Information management through the LCC website and Conservation Planning Atlas (Data Basin)

LCC Data Manager Renee Farnsworth reviewed the >100 regionally consistent, scalable, spatial data layers now available through North Atlantic LCC Conservation Planning Atlas site.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Should look at science delivery in terms of where there is greatest need.*
- *Conservation Planning Atlas should add relevant data layers from other partners that are not already there. Steering Committee members should let LCC staff know about additional data layers to include.*

#### Northeast Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas

Steve Fuller reviewed the collaborative effort between the northeast states and LCC towards Northeast Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas.

- Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas (RCOAs) are spatially delineated places within the Northeast Region where actions to support or enhance populations of regional Species of Greatest Conservation Need and/or their habitats are likely to be most effective.
- North Atlantic LCC staff will provide technical assistance and facilitation to complete and test an RCOA methodology in close collaboration with the states through the Northeast Fish and Wildlife Diversity Technical Committee.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Need to clarify on how next steps for conservation design after Connecticut River landscape Conservation Design Pilot fit in with other efforts including the Regional Conservation Opportunity Areas.*
- *LCC conservation design efforts will to add value by adding regional context to those areas already identified through state efforts.*

#### Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot

Scott Schwenk reviewed the objectives, accomplishments and next steps on the [Connecticut River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design Pilot](#) including objectives, accomplishments and next steps.

#### Objectives:

- 1) Bring partners together to prioritize places, and identify the strategies and actions, necessary to conserve ecosystems, and the fish, wildlife, and plants they support, into the future.
- 2) Deliver information, maps, and tools with design options at scales and in formats needed by partners to guide conservation decisions and inform planning.
- 3) Establish a process for conducting landscape conservation design that can be applied and adopted elsewhere in the region.

#### Accomplishments to date:

- 1) Partnership development and process: assembled a leadership team; convened a “core team” of partners; conducted eight monthly, in-person meetings of the core team plus multiple meetings involving the aquatic ecosystems and terrestrial/wetlands ecosystems subteams of the core team.
- 2) Technical progress: agreed to two overarching species and ecosystems goals to guide the process; developed objectives needed to achieve the conservation design goals; agreed on major elements to be incorporated into the design including a connected network of core areas.

#### Next Steps:

- 1) Finalize designs, including integration of ecosystem and species results, consideration of future change (i.e., climate, development, and forest change), and restoration priorities.
- 2) Communicate and distribute results and tools.
- 3) Foster implementation in the watershed.
- 4) Help partners apply approach and tools to new landscapes in the region and develop initial Northeast region-wide tools and designs.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Need to learn from and modify the complex approach in the Connecticut River Watershed so that it is a feasible and sustainable approach that can be applied across the region.*
- *Demonstrations of regional products and designs based on approaches piloted and decisions made in the Connecticut River Watershed would be helpful. Need to balance with support for other watershed-scale efforts.*
- *Need clear documentation on species-habitat models so that partners can evaluate and use them.*
- *Need to ensure that conservation design matches and informs decisions at the scale that funding is being spent and areas that are important both locally and regionally in the long term.*
- *Use the pilot to learn about the implementation part of the process with stakeholder in the watershed.*
- *Need more consultation with more tribes to ensure that conservation design tools meet their needs. Need to understand implications of regional planning on competitive funding.*

- *Maps need to tell a story and be explicit and clear about what values are being portrayed and what the intended purpose of each product is to avoid misuse or unintended consequences.*
- *Conservation design efforts for landscape/habitat protection need to also show intersection and value with infrastructure protection and resiliency.*
- *Conservation partners will use information if it is from a trusted source of information and it is relevant to what they do. Continue to communicate with stakeholders to understand what is relevant for their needs.*

### Communications

Communications Coordinator David Eisenhauer reviewed existing communications tools including a [virtual toolkit](#) containing a range of materials that can be shared directly with constituents or used as reference for conversations about the cooperative. These materials are intended to help explain the LCC approach, highlight LCC partnerships, and showcase LCC science and delivery and need feedback to ensure that these materials reflect specific communications needs.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Product fact sheets should include socioeconomic issues and reframe scientific content in a way that's understandable and relevant to stakeholders and the public.*
- *Use communication and outreach to inform science development, not just to disseminate final products*
- *Develop fact sheets and success stories tailored to appeal to specific audiences*

### LCC Strategic Direction

North Atlantic LCC Steering Committee Vice Chair Bill Hyatt led a discussion on what is missing or needs additional attention from the North Atlantic LCC to make it stronger and more relevant.

He provided the perspective from Connecticut where outside of a small group of involved staff, DEEP staff biologists are either not aware of or don't see the relevance of LCC projects and products. It would be good to meet with those staff because of their interest not because of a top down organized meeting. There is a need to think of LCC partners as customers and sell the products to them. Need to have a LCC "help line" so that staff and partners can and will regularly go to the LCCs for guidance on using LCC tools. Maps and tools that show core areas and connections that would add to existing tools and inform existing plans such as Connecticut's "Green Plan" would be useful and powerful in influencing decisions.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *In order to be a trusted source, you have to build up that trust, through engagement by bringing information and training out.*
- *Need to take advantage of and integrate with cooperative extension type programs that already exist such as NOAA, NRCS, state agencies that work with consulting foresters, private landowners and others. LCCs need to work with extension people on messages LCC wants delivered. LCC should directly reach out to those people and organizations who already have relationships and trust built.*
- *LCC has and can continue to train GIS staff in state agencies and NGOs who can then be resources for other staff in their agencies and organizations.*
- *Need to reach beyond the small number of staff in state agencies that know about LCC products to other staff in other divisions potentially by bringing training to their meetings.*
- *Consider joint meetings with other federal agencies and partnerships in each state so state staff get to hear about the tools available from all of these agencies (and partnerships) to address their top questions. NGOs should also be part of these meetings.*
- *Developing training modules to be hosted online (in partnership with NCTC) would also be useful as long as there is a person available to answer questions.*

### LCC Strategic Plan Revisions and Science Needs

Scott Schwenk summarized the current [LCC Conservation Science Strategic Plan](#) and annual process for selecting science needs and science delivery needs through the LCC technical committees and science delivery committees and asked for feedback on a process for this year.

#### *Summary of Feedback and Discussion*

- *Agreement that the current strategic plan for science should be expanded to include partnership development, science delivery and communications. Existing technical teams and science delivery team should meet and develop a draft revision for consideration at the April Steering Committee meeting*
- *Areas that need additional attention include cross-border work with Canada, coordinated work with tribes, cultural resources, socioeconomic considerations, urban conservation and marine resources. These areas should be included but there also must be a way to prioritize so that LCC staff and partners are not spread too thin.*
- *LCC should assist with development of standardized monitoring protocols and work with partners to help ensure that monitoring is part of grants.*
- *Cross-LCC work, particularly in the realm of conservation design will be an important strategic direction.*

### Review of Project Budget and OMB Requirements

Wildlife Management Institute Steering Committee member Scot Williamson reviewed project budgets and new requirements including conflict of interest disclosure form that all Steering Committee members must fill out.